



Northern Ireland
Assembly

OFFICIAL REPORT

(Hansard)

Volume 54

(28 June 2010 to 12 September 2010)

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Assembly Members

Adams, Gerry (West Belfast)	McCallister, John (South Down)
Anderson, Ms Martina (Foyle)	McCann, Fra (West Belfast)
Anderson, Sydney (Upper Bann) <i>(from 2 July 2010)</i>	McCann, Ms Jennifer (West Belfast)
Armstrong, Billy (Mid Ulster)	McCarthy, Kieran (Strangford)
Attwood, Alex (West Belfast)	McCartney, Raymond (Foyle)
Bannside, The Lord (North Antrim)	McCausland, Nelson (North Belfast)
Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)	McClarty, David (East Londonderry)
Bell, Jonathan (Strangford)	McCrea, Basil (Lagan Valley)
Boylan, Cathal (Newry and Armagh)	McCrea, Ian (Mid Ulster)
Bradley, Dominic (Newry and Armagh)	McCrea, Dr William (South Antrim) <i>(resigned 1 July 2010)</i>
Bradley, Mrs Mary (Foyle)	McDevitt, Conall (South Belfast)
Bradley, P J (South Down)	McDonnell, Dr Alasdair (South Belfast)
Brady, Mickey (Newry and Armagh)	McElduff, Barry (West Tyrone)
Bresland, Allan (West Tyrone)	McFarland, Alan (North Down)
Browne, The Lord (East Belfast)	McGill, Mrs Claire (West Tyrone)
Buchanan, Thomas (West Tyrone)	McGimpsey, Michael (South Belfast)
Burns, Thomas (South Antrim)	McGlone, Patsy (Mid Ulster)
Butler, Paul (Lagan Valley)	McGuinness, Martin (Mid Ulster)
Campbell, Gregory (East Londonderry)	McHugh, Gerry (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Clarke, Trevor (South Antrim)	McIlveen, Miss Michelle (Strangford)
Clarke, Willie (South Down)	McKay, Daithí (North Antrim)
Cobain, Fred (North Belfast)	McLaughlin, Mitchel (South Antrim)
Coulter, Rev Dr Robert (North Antrim)	McNarry, David (Strangford)
Craig, Jonathan (Lagan Valley)	McQuillan, Adrian (East Londonderry)
Cree, Leslie (North Down)	Maginness, Alban (North Belfast)
Dallat, John (East Londonderry)	Maskey, Alex (South Belfast)
Deeny, Dr Kieran (West Tyrone)	Maskey, Paul (West Belfast)
Dodds, Nigel (North Belfast) <i>(resigned 10 September 2010)</i>	Molloy, Francie (Mid Ulster)
Doherty, Pat (West Tyrone)	Morrow, The Lord (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Durkan, Mark (Foyle)	Moutray, Stephen (Upper Bann)
Easton, Alex (North Down)	Murphy, Conor (Newry and Armagh)
Elliott, Tom (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	Neeson, Sean (East Antrim)
Empey, Sir Reg (East Belfast)	Newton, Robin (East Belfast)
Farry, Dr Stephen (North Down)	Ní Chuilín, Ms Carál (North Belfast)
Ford, David (South Antrim)	O'Dowd, John (Upper Bann)
Foster, Mrs Arlene (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	O'Loan, Declan (North Antrim)
Frew, Paul (North Antrim)	O'Neill, Mrs Michelle (Mid Ulster)
Gallagher, Tommy (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	Poots, Edwin (Lagan Valley)
Gardiner, Samuel (Upper Bann)	Purvis, Ms Dawn (East Belfast)
Gibson, Simpson (Strangford) <i>(from 2 August 2010)</i>	Ramsey, Pat (Foyle)
Gildernew, Ms Michelle (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	Ramsey, Ms Sue (West Belfast)
Girvan, Paul (South Antrim) <i>(from 2 July 2010)</i>	Ritchie, Ms Margaret (South Down)
Givan, Paul (Lagan Valley)	Robinson, George (East Londonderry)
Hamilton, Simon (Strangford)	Robinson, Ken (East Antrim)
Hay, William (Speaker)	Robinson, Peter (East Belfast)
Hilditch, David (East Antrim)	Ross, Alastair (East Antrim)
Irwin, William (Newry and Armagh)	Ruane, Ms Caitríona (South Down)
Kelly, Mrs Dolores (Upper Bann)	Savage, George (Upper Bann)
Kelly, Gerry (North Belfast)	Shannon, Jim (Strangford) <i>(resigned 1 August 2010)</i>
Kennedy, Danny (Newry and Armagh)	Simpson, David (Upper Bann)
Kinahan, Danny (South Antrim)	Spratt, Jimmy (South Belfast)
Leonard, Billy (East Londonderry)	Storey, Mervyn (North Antrim)
Lo, Ms Anna (South Belfast)	Weir, Peter (North Down)
Long, Mrs Naomi (East Belfast) <i>(resigned 5 July 2010)</i>	Wells, Jim (South Down)
Lunn, Trevor (Lagan Valley)	Wilson, Brian (North Down)
Lyttle, Chris (East Belfast) <i>(from 5 July 2010)</i>	Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

Principal Officers and Officials of the Assembly

Speaker.....	Mr William Hay MLA
Deputy Speakers.....	Mr John Dallat MLA Mr David McClarty MLA Mr Francie Molloy MLA
Clerk to the Assembly/Director-General.....	Mr Trevor Reaney
Director of Clerking and Reporting	Mr John Stewart
Director of Engagement	Dr Gareth McGrath
Director of Facilities/Keeper of the House.....	Mr Stephen Welch
Director of Legal Services	Mr Hugh Widdis
Director of Resources	Mr Richard Stewart
Examiner of Statutory Rules	Mr Gordon Nabney
Clerk Assistants.....	Ms Nuala Dunwoody Mr Damien Martin
Editor of Debates	Mr Simon Burrowes
Clerk to the Assembly Commission.....	Mr Tony Logue

Ministerial Offices

The Executive Committee

First Minister	Mr Peter Robinson
Deputy First Minister	Mr Martin McGuinness
Minister for Employment and Learning	Sir Reg Empey
Minister for Regional Development	Mr Conor Murphy
Minister for Social Development	Mr Alex Attwood
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.....	Ms Michelle Gildernew
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.....	Mr Nelson McCausland
Minister of Education.....	Ms Caitríona Ruane
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.....	Mrs Arlene Foster
Minister of the Environment	Mr Edwin Poots
Minister of Finance and Personnel.....	Mr Sammy Wilson
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	Mr Michael McGimpsey
Minister of Justice.....	Mr David Ford

Junior Ministers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Mr Gerry Kelly
	Mr Robin Newton

Assembly Sittings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 28 June 2010

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Speaker: Before I proceed to today's business, I have a number of announcements to make. I have received a letter from David Simpson notifying me that he will resign as a Member of the Assembly with effect from Thursday 1 July. I have notified the Chief Electoral Officer. I have also received the resignations of Mr Stephen Moutray as a member of the Assembly Commission and of Mr Peter Weir as Chairperson of the Audit Committee and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning. The resignations take effect from today, and, therefore, a vacancy exists on the Commission. A motion in relation to that will come before the House later today.

I also inform Members that the nominating officer of the Democratic Unionist Party, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson, has nominated Mr Stephen Moutray as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development with effect from Wednesday 23 June. Mr Moutray has accepted the appointment. In addition, the nominating officer of the SDLP, Ms Margaret Ritchie, has nominated Mr Declan O'Loan as Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure with effect from Friday 25 June, to replace Mr Pat Ramsey and Mr P J Bradley, the current holders of the positions. Mr O'Loan has accepted both appointments.

I am satisfied that all correspondence meets the requirements of Standing Orders. Therefore, I confirm Mr Stephen Moutray as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development with effect from Wednesday 23 June and Mr Declan O'Loan as Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure with effect from Friday 25 June.

Public Petitions

Out-of-hours GP service in Limavady

Mr Speaker: Mr George Robinson has sought leave to present a public petition in accordance with Standing Order 22.

Mr G Robinson: I wish to present to the Assembly a public petition in relation to the 40% front line cuts that are being planned from 1 July 2010 to the vital out-of-hours GP service in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area and specifically in relation to Limavady borough. The petition contains the names of 5,868 residents from throughout the Limavady borough. The signatures were collected in a two-week period, and their number reflects the deep concerns of the Limavady population about the planned reductions to the service. As a public representative, I have been urging the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to rethink the planned 40% front line cuts. I do so in the knowledge that I have cross-community support for the retention of such a vital service in its present form. Mr Speaker, I present the petition to you in accordance with Standing Order 22.

Mr G Robinson moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward the petition to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and I will send a copy to the Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Summer Schemes for Children with Learning Disabilities

Mr Speaker: Mr Tommy Gallagher has sought leave to present a public petition in accordance with Standing Order 22.

Mr Gallagher: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to present this public petition to the Assembly on behalf of probably the most vulnerable group in society: children with severe learning difficulties. The petition has been signed mainly by people from the Western and Southern Health and Social Care Trust areas, but it also includes the signatures of people from all over Northern Ireland who contacted me to ask for the scheme to be reinstated, even at this late stage. The petition contains at least 2,000 signatures and, on behalf of the people who signed it, particularly the families who are affected by the decision, I present the petition to you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Gallagher moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward the petition to the Minister of Education, and I will send a copy to the Chairperson of the Committee for Education.

Executive Committee Business

Suspension of Standing Orders

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs Foster): I beg to move

That Standing Orders 10(2) and 10(4) be suspended for 28 June 2010.

Mr Speaker: Before I put the Question, I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That Standing Orders 10(2) and 10(4) be suspended for 28 June 2010.

Mr Speaker: As the motion has been agreed, today's sitting may go beyond 7.00 pm, if required.

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Tourism Sectoral Format

Mr Speaker: I have received notice from the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment that she wishes to make a statement.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs Foster): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement, in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, on a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in tourism sectoral format. The meeting was held in Armagh on 16 June 2010. The junior Minister Mr Gerry Kelly and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive. The Irish Government were represented by Mary Hanafin TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport. The statement has been agreed with junior Minister Kelly, and I make it on behalf of us both.

The Council received updates from the chairperson of Tourism Ireland, Mr Hugh Friel, and its chief executive, Mr Niall Gibbons, on the impact of the continuing difficult global conditions on the tourism industry. The Council also received reports on market campaigns, including the £18 million summer marketing campaign, and on the outlook for the rest of the year.

The Council approved Tourism Ireland's 2010 business plan and noted its plans to return to growth in visitor numbers during 2010 by focusing on best prospect markets and spreading the value message in tactical marketing campaigns. The Council noted the progress that Tourism Ireland has made to date in drafting its corporate plan for 2011-13 and the key marketing themes during the lifetime of the plan, including the Titanic centenary anniversary, the diaspora, the 1911 census centenary and the London Olympics.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

(Mr A Maginness): I thank the Minister for her statement, but I am a little surprised by its sparseness and lack of detail. I seek the Minister's reassurance that that is not indicative of any attempt to diminish in any way the nature of North/South ministerial contact. However, the statement included an important point on the impact of the continuing difficult global conditions on the tourism industry. The chief

executive of Tourism Ireland indicated ways and means to deal with that. Will the Minister expand on the chief executive's report on how to deal with difficult global conditions?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: I thank the Chairman for his comments. The statement reflects the topics that were discussed at the NSMC. The reason why there is not more detail is that I wanted to respond to questions rather than regurgitating the statement's contents, which is often what happens in the House. I am happy to go into detail about any discussions at the meeting.

There was a discussion with the chairperson and the chief executive of Tourism Ireland about the difficulties that we face in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland because of a downward trend and the fact that more people are holidaying within the confines of their own jurisdiction. As I have said in the House previously, that is partly due to a refocusing on marketing investment in Great Britain, which is Northern Ireland's biggest tourism market, Germany and North America to generate the best short-term returns. At present, the trend is for people not to book holidays until the very last moment. We are trying to ensure that, when people are considering last-minute holidays, Northern Ireland will be at the forefront of their mind. To that end, an £18 million marketing strategy has begun, with Tourism Ireland concentrating on those three markets and examining different ways to get people to consider Northern Ireland. There are people called "silver surfers", and we are trying to encourage such older people to consider Northern Ireland as a possible holiday destination. I hear laughter from Members sitting behind me, who may not be over 66 years of age but may count themselves as silver surfers.

We are also considering value golf breaks and trying to position ourselves in that market — and why not after what Graeme McDowell did for us in America last week? I was in America last week on a trade mission, and the focus on Northern Ireland was tremendous because of Graeme McDowell's win last Sunday in the US Open. People were congratulating me simply because I was from Northern Ireland. That market has tremendous potential. Tourism Ireland is examining that potential and seeking ways in which to benefit from it.

Mr Shannon: I thank the Minister for her statement. I also congratulate her on her efforts in promoting business in America. She is very photogenic; there are lots of photographs, and we were able to keep track of her the whole week. I am not a silver surfer, but I still have a little bit of silver hair left along the sides if not on top of my head.

I want to ask the Minister about visitor numbers. This morning, I spoke to Brian Ambrose, the manager of George Best Belfast City Airport, who told me that his numbers are up by some 8% from last year. That is good news. The Minister would accept that the past year has been difficult for overseas visitor numbers, and there has probably been a general fall in numbers because of the volcanic ash. What steps is the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment taking to address the general fall in worldwide tourism because of the volcanic ash and the economic downturn? It is important that we have a process in place to address that.

12.15 pm

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Member raised a number of issues. Tourist numbers have been a mixed bag. The number of people visiting from the Republic of Ireland is up year on year. In fact, the most recent figures that I saw showed that the number went up by about 39% last year. Indeed, when I was coming back from San Francisco last week, I noticed that a record number of tourists — around 9.3 million — visited Belfast last year. That is marvellous, and we want to see more of that. However, there has been an overall downward trend. As the Member said, that is down to a number of reasons, including the global downturn and the uncertainty that the volcanic ash caused.

As I said, Tourism Ireland is involved in a heavy marketing campaign in Great Britain, Germany and North America. In addition to that, I am hoping to meet the Minister for Regional Development in the near future to discuss the volcanic ash issue to see whether we can do more in readiness in case that becomes a problem again in the summer. We are looking for ways to deal with the immediate problems. However, it is also important to look to long-term strategies.

Mr P Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the Minister give us a breakdown of the amount of money that will be

spent on that marketing campaign, particularly in Britain? Now that England is out of the World Cup, we are looking for quick wins. Therefore, will we get more return from our money with more people from England holidaying here?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I wondered which Member would be the first to mention England's demise in the World Cup; full points to Mr Maskey.

I do not have a breakdown of the figures for the amount that will be spent on marketing in GB, North America and Germany. However, GB is our main tourist market, and I know that when I speak to the chief executive of Tourism Ireland he will tell me that, because of that, he concentrates heavily on it not only because of the direct flight access but because of the strong ferry links. We are seeing more and more emphasis on car touring, for example. It is important that we look at all the ways in which we can get visitors to come to Northern Ireland. People have been telling me how much they have enjoyed staying at home in Northern Ireland over the past two to three weeks because of the good weather. However, we also want to see more people coming into Northern Ireland to enjoy what is going on.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her statement. The question that I was going to ask has been fairly well answered. Recently, I have had two or three complaints from Americans who are on holiday in Northern Ireland. They said that, although they love the country and the people, there have been one or two times when they felt that the personal skills of the people helping them have been poor. Will the Minister tell the House whether we will be instigating a campaign, through Tourism Ireland, to improve how we look after tourists?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Howard Hastings, who is the current chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, takes a particular interest in that area. In fact, he has met the Minister for Employment and Learning to talk to him about skills in the hospitality sector. The Member is absolutely right: there is no point in our having a product if we cannot deliver it in a meaningful way in Northern Ireland.

I know of some good exemplars in the hospitality sector, not least those in my constituency. For example, staff at the Lough Erne golf resort are skilled up to deal with people when they

arrive. I hope that more skills and training can be put into the hospitality sector. Sometimes people are a bit snippy, if I can put it like that, about that sector in so far as they look at it as the poor relation. However, I have always said that, if we are to make tourism an economic driver in Northern Ireland, we need to work at every single level. I welcome the work that the Department for Employment and Learning has been doing to grow skills in the tourism sector.

Mr Neeson: I am somewhat jealous of the Minister's visit to San Francisco last week. A number of years ago, I worked out of San Francisco for a while on behalf of the then Department of Economic Development.

I am pleased that the Minister raised the issue of the Titanic centenary. Will she describe to the House the importance not only of the Titanic signature project but of other signature projects in the development of tourism? Will she explain how those projects are falling into line with the development of tourism?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: I thank the Member for his question. We were in San Francisco primarily on a trade and investment mission. However, we also took the opportunity to hold a Tourism Ireland reception to which all those connected with the tourism sector were invited. At that reception, we had an excellent presentation on the five signature projects that are moving forward, which was the basis on which I made my speech to the reception.

In respect of the Titanic centenary, at the end of September we will be taking part in a new Titanic exhibition in Grand Central station in New York. That will be a very exciting event, because millions of people — I do not have the exact figures in front of me — pass through that station every day. Therefore, the event will give us recognition for the fact that the Titanic was made in Belfast, as opposed to any of the other places that may try to take ownership.

In Northern Ireland, 2012 will be a hugely significant year for tourism, not least because of the Titanic projects. Also, the new visitors' centre at the Giant's Causeway will then be finished. We are waiting to hear about Londonderry's bid for the city of culture, which falls in with the Walled City signature project. Also, let us not forget that investment is still going on apace in the St Patrick/Christian heritage and Mournes signature projects. Having

started at different levels, I am pleased to say that all signature projects are now moving ahead and coming along nicely. I am delighted that I can use that offering to sell Northern Ireland when we go to places such as San Francisco.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for her statement. What is Tourism Ireland doing to increase the number of tourists that come to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: GB has always been our strongest market for tourists coming to Northern Ireland, not least because of the connection between friends and family. I see that as something that will continue. Unfortunately, however, last year saw a significant drop in numbers because of the downturn and the fact that people were staying in GB rather than coming across to Northern Ireland. Tourism Ireland's £18 million marketing campaign, which concentrates on GB, Germany and North America, will help put Northern Ireland as a proposition at the top of people's lists when they are deciding where to go on holiday. I commend Tourism Ireland for the work that it is doing on that marketing campaign and hope that it can make Northern Ireland stand out as it needs to.

Mr Bell: I thank the Minister for her statement. Will Tourism Ireland look directly at marketing Ulster-Scots heritage and culture, particularly over the next couple of weeks during which the Orange festivals will be bringing hundreds of thousands of tourists into Northern Ireland? Will Tourism Ireland be specifically targeting the southern states of the United States of America, where there is significant Ulster-Scots ancestry, through direct promotion and online promotion? I ask that as a junior silver surfer.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: Everybody wants to be a silver surfer today.

In relation to the Ulster-Scot campaign or, as it is sometimes known in North America, Irish Scots, Tourism Ireland has carried out direct mailing to people with Scots-Irish names. It found that to be very successful and hopes to build on that in its North American campaigns. Tourism Ireland has a strapline for the Giant's Causeway:

"Some People Call This the Eighth Wonder of the World. Your Ancestors Called it Home".

That is a very nice way of getting people interested in Northern Ireland from a historical context.

Also in relation to the historical context, at the NSMC we had a discussion on the 1911 census, the diaspora and trying to get more people to look at their genealogical roots in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I hope that people will take that up. Television programmes such as 'Who Do You think You Are?' will encourage people to look into their background, and we hope that tourism in Northern Ireland will benefit from that.

Mr McClarty: I thank the Minister for her statement. However, she has perhaps been listening to too much television coverage of the US Open in that she pronounced Mr Graeme McDowell's name as "Mr McDow-ell". On the north coast, it is pronounced "McDo'ell".

I take her point that golf and other sports could add tremendously to the tourism product of Northern Ireland. Therefore, would the Minister work with her colleague the Minister for Regional Development to ensure that the road signage into Portrush indicates clearly that it is the home of US Open champion Graeme McDowell?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Perhaps that is a question for the Minister for Regional Development, who is sitting opposite. I very much welcome the Member's correction. Obviously, those of us from west of the Bann need correction from time to time on Ulster-Scots pronunciation.

Whether he was a McDow-ell or a McDo'ell, last week I was incredibly proud of him when I was in the United States of America. It was almost a precursor to my arrival in California in that the Northern Ireland Minister for tourism arrived just as Graeme McDowell won the US Open. It was a tremendous occasion for us. I wrote to him — obviously, pronunciation does not come into it when writing to someone, so I am happy enough about that — to tell him that we are so proud of him and because he has put Portrush and north Antrim on the map. I met representatives of Royal Portrush Golf Club before his tremendous victory, and I hope to meet them again to see whether there is more that we can do about golf tourism.

Mr Shannon: Maybe some golf lessons.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Maybe some golf lessons. We

continue to discuss signage. We also continue to discuss the need for golf resorts and golf courses. I recently met my colleague the Minister of the Environment about that because, if we are putting Northern Ireland onto the world golf stage, we need to have the product and to be able to attract those who wish to come and visit the home of the winner of the US Open.

Dr McDonnell: As the Minister is on the issue of Graeme McDowell and golf, would it be possible to extend DETI's budget to include golf lessons for the Minister so that the next time she goes to the States we could pass her off as Graeme McDowell's cousin? That would be a major marketing ploy.

I compliment the Minister because whatever she is doing, she is doing it right. I switched on RTÉ the other day, and a panel of hoteliers and tourism people were screaming blue murder that Tourism Ireland was putting all its efforts into supporting the North and doing nothing for Munster. So, obviously something is working.

On a serious note, does the Minister agree that any serious or significant growth in our tourism depends on decent gateways? New gateways really mean airlines and new air routes. The Continental Airlines route that we have to Newark and New Jersey has been extremely successful and was well worth the investment that DETI made some years ago. Can we do a deal with someone to perhaps establish a route into Toronto? If we could get it as far as even Nova Scotia, that would be three quarters of the way, and then we could get connections from Nova Scotia. There are strong Titanic connections in Nova Scotia that we could work on.

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to ask his question.

Dr McDonnell: If we cannot at least get one route to Canada established, could we look at one to Atlanta, the Deep South and the Scots-Irish areas or however we choose to describe them? Ulster Scots is only at home; in the US, they are Scots-Irish. There are a number of opportunities, and we can talk all we like, but, at the end of the day, unless there is an airline —

Mr Speaker: I must encourage the Member to get to his question.

Dr McDonnell: Unless there is a flight, they will not be able to come.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: The Member is absolutely correct about that. First, I welcome his support for an increase in DETI's budget. I will be collecting Members' views on that in the near future.

We have been in contact with Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport about increasing the number of direct flights into Northern Ireland. The Member is absolutely right: it really adds a string to our bow that, when I go to New York, I can talk about the direct connectivity into Northern Ireland through the Newark flight. That has been a tremendous route and a great success for Continental Airlines.

When I was at the Tourism Ireland reception in San Francisco, we were again talking about connectivity, and we noted that there are no flights into the island of Ireland from the west coast of America. That is a real disappointment. People have to go to Chicago and link in to Dublin, or go to New York and then link in to Northern Ireland or link in through London Heathrow. However, we are at an advanced stage of speaking to a Canadian airline about trying to get a flight back into Belfast; it was really disappointing when those two airlines pulled out of Belfast International.

If flights to Canada were reinstated, we would reap the benefit from the increase in tourist numbers. That would, of course, enable people to travel from Northern Ireland to Canada, and we would benefit from tourists making the journey in the opposite direction.

12.30 pm

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her statement. I suspect that she has answered most of my question through her thorough responses to Members. The Minister is aware of the importance of tourism to the constituency of North Antrim. What has Tourism Ireland done specifically to promote Northern Ireland and all that North Antrim has to offer? What has it done to promote North Antrim's links to the west of Scotland?

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: In the North Antrim constituency, the Member is fortunate to have the Giant's Causeway, which is the principal tourist attraction in Northern Ireland. The Giant's Causeway remains a key selling point for Tourism Ireland when it promotes Northern Ireland.

As I said when talking about golf tourism, we now have a window of opportunity. I will not attempt to pronounce his surname; I will call him Graeme from now on, rather than offend him through mispronunciation. His success provides a small window of opportunity for selling golf tourism in Northern Ireland. Golf is an important part of what North Antrim has to offer.

Golf also features in my answer to the Member's final point on links with the west of Scotland. The Scottish tourism proposition focuses on golf. We could benefit by creating connectivity between the golf markets in North Antrim and Scotland.

Executive Committee Business

Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill: Final Stage

**The Minister for Regional Development
(Mr Murphy):** I beg to move

That the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [NIA 6/09] do now pass.

I do not intend to address the provisions in detail. Instead, I draw attention to the main purposes of the Bill, which are to introduce arrangements for a permit scheme to control certain works on roads and the authorisation by local councils of certain special events on roads.

The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 18 January 2010 and completed its Committee Stage on 26 May 2010. I am glad to say that I was able to accept and take forward two suggested amendments at Consideration Stage.

I take the opportunity to thank the Chairperson and members of the Committee for Regional Development for their scrutiny of the Bill and for helping to ensure its smooth passage. In addition, I thank Members for their positive contributions to debates on the Bill through its Assembly stages. I commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development (Miss McIlveen): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Final Stage of the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

I wish to express the Committee's thanks to the witnesses who provided evidence to the Committee and to the Minister and the Department's Bill team for their co-operation and assistance during the passage of the Bill, particularly at Committee Stage. The Committee also wishes to thank the team from the Assembly Bill Office and the Committee staff for their work in producing the Bill report of Committee Stage. I also thank other Committee members for the effort and commitment that they brought to the pre-legislative stage and to Committee Stage.

The issue before us is whether the Assembly is content to endorse the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. As Members are aware from previous debates, the main provisions are for

permit schemes to control certain works on roads and the prohibition or restriction of the use of roads in connection with special events. There are two minor elements to the Bill on the holding of inquiries under the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and on giving effect to the reform of the Lord Chancellor's Office.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to take forward the Committee Stage. During clause-by-clause scrutiny, the Committee considered the evidence received and agreed all the clauses. The Committee suggested, and the Minister agreed to, amendments to clause 3 and schedule 1. The amendment to clause 3 sought to ensure that a resolution of the Assembly would be needed to approve regulations that introduce new criminal offences or increase the penalty for an existing offence in relation to permit schemes for carrying out certain works on roads. I welcome the fact that that amendment was made to the Bill.

The second amendment to the Bill relates, as I said, to schedule 1. In the Bill as introduced, schedule 1 referred to the closure of roads for special events. The Committee was pleased that the making of a film was included in the arrangements for road closures for special events. However, having considered submissions on behalf of the film industry in Northern Ireland, the Committee sought clear confirmation that the term "filming" would include the making of television programmes and commercials. I welcome the fact that the amendment to the Bill does that.

During the Committee's deliberations on the Bill, a number of main areas of concern were raised. Those are detailed in the report, and include the cost of issuing permits for works on roads; the need for co-operation and co-ordination when planning works on roads; the need for a notice period before works on roads commence; compensation for promoters in the event of emergency works; the impact of works on peak-time traffic flows; the impact of permit schemes on the extension of the gas and other utility networks; the delegated powers of the Bill; the definition of the term "film"; and the definition of special events.

Amendments were sought and made to the Bill in relation to its delegated powers and to the definition of the term "film". In addition to those amendments, the Committee made recommendations about co-operation and co-

ordination of planned works on roads, and a review of the permit scheme after three years in order to ascertain whether the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 will require amendment to address the concerns of the Committee and those who gave evidence.

The first recommendation relating to planned works on roads arose from concerns raised by Committee members and a number of stakeholder organisations, as I mentioned. Those concerns centred around the need for those planning to carry out works on roads, particularly utility companies, to co-operate with one another in an attempt to co-ordinate works, thus reducing disruption to road users and the overall costs incurred, and avoiding the weakening of the roads structure that can arise as a result of multiple road openings.

The Committee accepts that a duty is included in the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 for those planning to carry out works on roads to co-ordinate, but members were of the view that more needs to be done to improve that situation. Concerns about road openings by utility companies have been rehearsed on numerous occasions. The Public Accounts Committee reported on the issue in February 2009, and that report made recommendations for improvement.

In its report, the Regional Development Committee recommended that progress to date on the implementation of the findings of the Public Accounts Committee report should inform the development of the Department for Regional Development's guidance on the permit scheme, and should form the basis of ongoing monitoring of the operation of the permit scheme.

The second recommendation of the report relates to the need to review the permit scheme. The Committee would not wish to see the scheme introduced without a clear undertaking to periodically review its effectiveness. For that reason, the Committee has recommended that the first review of the scheme take place three years after its coming into operation. The review, as recommended by the Committee, should aim to ascertain whether the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 requires amendment.

The Committee will periodically monitor the outworkings of the permit scheme and will work with the Department to ensure that any issues or concerns that may arise are addressed. I

am happy to advise that the Committee for Regional Development commends the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to the House, and recommends that it now pass.

Mr Leonard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As Members and many others will be aware, roadworks can cause a lot of public conversation and give rise to many phone calls. The thrust of the Bill is appropriate, and the permit scheme is a worthwhile addition to the system. Reviewing the scheme to see whether it improves the situation is important. We now have the enabling legislation, but the practicalities of that and how it will be rolled out will also be important.

As the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee pointed out, the review scheme has been recommended. The core concept of the Bill is acceptable. As I have previously stated, it represents common sense, and we will see how it rolls out. The provision for the Assembly to approve new criminal offences was the application of common sense, and I think it appropriate that that was included, as was the amendment on the definition of the term "film". That once again shows the advantage of the Committee structure in which stakeholders can bring forward their concerns and work can be done at that level.

The Bill is a common-sense bit of work. We will see how it is implemented and how the reviews take their course, and then see whether any of the provisions need to be revisited. We support the Bill.

Mr Kinahan: The Ulster Unionist Party supports the Bill and looks forward to seeing it rolled out.

The Minister for Regional Development: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee and the other Members who spoke in support of the Bill. The comments from the Deputy Chairperson will certainly be taken on board. I look forward to continued engagement with the Committee and Members as my officials and I consult on proposals for the implementation of the permit scheme provisions in the Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [NIA 6/09] do now pass.

Assembly Business

Appointment to the Assembly Commission

Mr Speaker: The next matter on the Order Paper is a motion to appoint a Member to fill the vacancy on the Assembly Commission. As with similar motions, this will be treated as a business motion. Therefore, there will be no debate.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That, in accordance with Standing Order 79(4), Mr Peter Weir be appointed to fill a vacancy on the Assembly Commission. — [Lord Browne.]

Committee Business

Statutory Committee Membership

Mr Speaker: The next motion is on Statutory Committee membership. As with similar motions, this, too, will be treated as a business motion. Therefore, there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That Mr Jonathan Bell replace Mr Trevor Clarke as a member of the Committee for Employment and Learning; that Mr Paul Frew replace Mr Stephen Moutray as a member of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; and that Mr Paul Givan be appointed as a member of the Justice Committee. — [Lord Browne.]

Private Members' Business

Armed Forces and Veterans Bill: First Stage

Mr McNarry: I beg to introduce the Armed Forces and Veterans Bill [NIA 33/09], which is a Bill to provide for the benefit of personnel and veterans of the naval, military or air forces of the Crown and their families.

Bill passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer 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 wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Craig: I beg to move

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to instigate a review into the performance of the Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group, including consideration of its appointment processes, independence, accountability, transparency, operating structures and competency.

The motion calls for the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to conduct a review of the performance and appointments procedure used to establish the regional group set up to promote the aims and needs of those suffering from autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), and to oversee the implementation of an action plan published in June 2009.

In 2007, the Minister announced a review of autistic services. He appointed Lord Maginnis of Drumglass to chair that review, which, at the time, was acknowledged as the best way forward to address the unmet rights and needs of those with ASD and their carers. In 2008, an all-party Assembly group on autism was formed, headed by the Member for Newry and Armagh Dominic Bradley, to attempt to inform Members about autism issues. Both groups got to work, but, unfortunately, their conclusions completely differed. Although both agreed on the need for an ASD strategy, they disagreed on the need for legislation, which was to become a running debate and sore in the House.

12.45 pm

The Health Committee held two lengthy and detailed debates. On 17 September 2009, the all-party group chairperson, Dominic Bradley and Arlene Cassidy from Autism NI were present as witnesses. The second discussion was held on 1 October 2009, with four witnesses present: Dr Maura Briscoe from the Health Department; Dr Michael McBride, the Chief Medical Officer; Mr Kieran McShane from the Health and Social Care Board; and Dr Stephen Bergin from the Public Health Agency.

I have read the minutes of the debate, and it would be polite to say that it was healthy and long. In reality, the debate was very heated. Much of it surrounded whether there was a need for legislation, which Lord Maginnis had ruled out, much to the frustration and anger of some. The area of particular focus that is relevant to this debate was to do with the appointment of the Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group, which was announced with the strategic plan in June 2009. The group was appointed in April 2009 and was made up of representatives of service users, carers, the general public, voluntary and community organisations and statutory organisations, including the education and library boards, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), health and social care trusts, health boards and the Public Health Agency. Dr Stephen Bergin from the Public Health Agency is the chairperson.

There is also a reference group, which is chaired by Lord Maginnis, who was responsible for the review of autism services and treatment. The reference group is responsible for representing stakeholders' views. Unfortunately, that is where the controversy lies. At the Committee meeting on 1 October 2009, the witnesses were questioned at length on appointments to the reference group and on how it carries out its work. Dr Maura Briscoe from the Department repeatedly referred questions to Lord Maginnis, stating that only he could answer questions about appointments to the group. She also stated that Lord Maginnis had been identified by the Department to assist Dr Stephen Bergin, the chairperson of the regional network group, as an advocate for parents, carers and service users.

Given the current debate about whether legislation should be introduced in respect of autism services, I question that appointment. The individual in question takes a very definite stance on the subject, and that alienates him from a large number of ASD sufferers. It seems that the Department was keen to take a view disagreeable to many carers and organisations that represent those who suffer from, or care for people with, autism. Therefore, one must ask whether there was an ulterior motive to the appointments to the reference group that represents parents, carers and service users. This issue is not about party politics. Some may want to use that ploy to deflect attention from the real issue. It is about how autism sufferers and the groups that represent them can be best

served and represented. Furthermore, it is not about raising up old debates about whether there should be legislation. We are talking about accountability, which is getting to the core of what democracy and transparency are. How best can we serve and represent the people at the heart of the issue?

Appointments to any public body are usually done through a rigorous and detailed process to ensure that the best people for the job are intact and that the board or group represents a diversity of views and opinions. Do the appointments to that board comply with those credentials that are associated with public appointments? That is why the motion calls on the Minister to initiate a review into the practice of the group and the appointments process that was used. How does the reference group interact with all its stakeholders? Is it representative? Is it doing its job? Those are all legitimate questions.

Autism NI claims that a number of freedom of information requests have been refused. Those requests refer to data that are held about the autism review. Autism NI also claims that the parent and carers representatives on the reference group were hand-picked by the chairperson to provide a positive response on behalf of the Department. Those are very serious accusations. In the interests of public transparency, I commend the motion to the House.

Speaking as an individual who has represented ASD groups in the past in a former capacity and who has contact with those who suffer from the condition, I know that people who have children with ASD are concerned that they are not being represented properly by those reviews. It is a genuinely held belief that their views will not be represented properly. That is why we are calling for a review of the process and how it represents the groups and carers who suffer the consequences of the problem.

I know that, medically, ASD is very difficult to quantify. It is not a mental disease, and it is not a physical disease; it lies somewhere in between. As a result, it is very hard to diagnose, and it is extremely difficult to provide treatment for it and to aid the parents. However, the parents are the ones who are left with the legacy and left to deal with the problem. Currently, they feel alienated from the process, so I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs O'Neill: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I apologise for being late and missing the proposer's comments. He may have already covered some of the issues that I will refer to.

Autism is a social and communication disability that is unique for many reasons. Quite often, it is confused with mental impairment, but it is obviously not. In previous debates in the House, we have raised the point that autism is a social and communication disability that is excluded from equality protection under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). Therefore, it falls short of recognition for benefit assessment unless there is a recognised co-morbid assessment or qualifying condition, such as a learning disability or mental illness.

It is widely recognised that autism has been historically underfunded and under-provided for across the Six Counties. However, it should be noted that Sinn Féin welcomes all positive developments in autism services over recent years. We have had the publication of the action plan by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the associated budgetary allocations to back that up. That is something that we welcome.

Members will have received a briefing paper from PAL, which is the Parents' Autism Lobby. From reading that document, it is clear that parents and carers do not have any faith in the newly established Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group. The group feels that the model may appear to be more suited to consultation than action. It says that it is difficult to see how the model can result in a cohesive plan. It raises other points about the size and nature of the newly established network. Many parents have described it as a moveable feast, with the goalposts constantly changing and many targets that were set out in the original document not being met. Parents participating with the network are already reporting consultation fatigue and feel that they are not seeing the outcomes that they wish.

Another issue of concern is the tie-in from other Departments in the network. If the Minister reads the transcript of this debate, perhaps he will give us more details on the level of cross-departmental work taking place. For example, what level of staff is involved from each Department, and what is their commitment in working hours?

Sinn Féin has always made it clear that it recognises the need for a cross-departmental holistic approach to autism. In order to plan for the future and for support, we need a strategic plan, which is an essential part of moving forward. It is recognised that that is inherently difficult, as ASD is a lifelong condition that needs appropriate responses at various life stages and settings.

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

There is a lot of disparity between the parents' and carers' groups and the Department on the issue. We want to get it right, and we want parents and carers to be at the heart of these decisions. It is widely recognised that, for many years, the Department let down people with autism, and those support groups were the backbone for each other in providing much-needed support. Sinn Féin will support the motion, as it believes that any review and improvements that can be taken forward should be welcomed.

Rev Dr Robert Coulter: I declare an interest in that my grandson is severely autistic, and I am the chairperson of the board of governors of a special school in which many autistic children are being taught and helped.

I am disappointed that the debate is taking place today. First, it has been brought to my attention that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety made it known to the Business Committee some time ago that he would not be available to respond to any debate today as he had prearranged business. However, the DUP insisted on bringing the motion to the Floor of the House regardless.

Secondly, this is an unnecessary and counter-productive motion. The facts are plain and simple: this Minister of Health has done and is doing more to develop services for people and families affected by autism than any Minister in this or the previous Assembly. The Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group plays a key role in the Minister's strategy to develop services for people affected by autism. It is delivering on the ground and, therefore, the motion has questionable intentions.

No one in the Chamber would suggest that there is not a need to improve services for people affected by autism in Northern Ireland. Therefore, on coming into office, the Minister of Health initiated an independent review of

ASD services chaired by Lord Maginnis. As an outcome of the review, the Minister launched an ASD action plan to drive improvements in the service for the benefit of all those affected. The Minister has invested £1.5 million in autism services to date, and I have been informed that further investment is on the way. That is delivering.

A major achievement in the action plan was the establishment of the regional ASD network group. The aim of that multidisciplinary, multi-agency regional group is to provide a regional perspective on the development of autism services and to oversee the action plan. The need to understand the different complexities across Northern Ireland is crucial to successful solutions, and I congratulate the group on its work to date.

The regional ASD network group is chaired by Dr Stephen Bergin, a psychiatrist with multiple medical degrees, who has vast experience in the field of autism. I find the motion extremely discourteous to Dr Bergin and his team. It illustrates an arrogance from the Benches that puts political point-scoring ahead of professional integrity, delivery and the people whom they claim to represent.

1.00 pm

The work of the network group has been open and transparent, and one of its aims has been to communicate with service users such as parents, carers and the voluntary sector; and I can verify that through my own family experience. To facilitate that aim, the group held a series of meetings across Northern Ireland, and the regional ASD network has been supported by the regional ASD reference group, chaired by Lord Maginnis, to provide valuable experience and advice from parents, carers and individuals affected by ASD, as well as voluntary and community sector representatives. The group is open and transparent and has the interest of people affected by autism at its heart.

I fear that the motion is more about personal attacks, rather than any desire to improve the services for people with autism. That is a great disappointment.

The group is doing a marvellous job to help parents, children and teachers. I see that when I look at my grandson and the children in the school of which I am chairman of the board of governors. I see the work that is being done

with those children and their families to ease their suffering. However, we must remember that it will take time for that work to reach right across Northern Ireland.

Cross-departmental working was mentioned during the debate today, and the Minister for Employment and Learning has ensured that young teachers are now compelled to complete a module in autism communication. From that point of view, I am disappointed that the motion has been brought to the Floor of the House today.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I want to address some of the issues raised during the debate today, rather than some of the personalities who raised those issues.

In 2007, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety appointed the chairperson of the independent review of autism services, who, in turn, appointed a review steering group. At that time, the chairperson recorded his determination for the review to be completed speedily so that money would be provided quickly to new services rather than being spent on administration, and many welcomed that approach.

The members of that steering group were mainly drawn from the public health sector in Northern Ireland, England and the South of Ireland, and the terms of reference of the review included the requirement to investigate the role of legislation in providing for autism services. However, the final report of the review group, which was issued in May 2008, unfortunately contained no analysis of the usefulness of legislation but simply stated that it was not required.

A number of other issues arose from the report. The first is whether the chairperson of the review should not have been appointed through the public appointment process, based on transparent and agreed criteria. As that was not the case, we must also ask whether the review can be defined as independent, given that all the review group members were vetted by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and that a senior departmental official was installed for support. Many people also want to know why the review group was not more inclusive of the voluntary and education sectors in the North of Ireland, and why no members were from the social care

sector. ASD is a lifelong condition and does involve diagnosis and diagnosis alone. I also want to know why the review group did not adhere to the terms of reference and why it did not produce an analysis regarding legislation. It came to the conclusion that legislation was not required. In fact, some members of the review group, including the chairperson, began from the premise that legislation was not required. One got the impression that nothing would convince him to the contrary.

Can the review group be considered independent? It appears not to be, since it is exempt from acceding to FOI requests. Many people wonder whether the process was the quickest way to effect change, given that it began in 2007 and that we are now in 2010 without major change having taken place.

In September 2008, the Department launched its consultation on the action plan for autism, and it ended in December 2008 with over 400 responses. In June 2009, the Minister launched the implementation action plan for autism and appointed a project manager. A budget of £2.2 million was promised over three years. There are many issues —

Mr P Ramsey: Will the Member give way?

Mr D Bradley: Yes, I will.

Mr P Ramsey: Given that the debate is on the important subject of vulnerable young people and adults, it is vital that all-party support on autism emerge from the Chamber.

Mr D Bradley: I thank the Member for his intervention, and I could not agree with him more.

My time is running out, so I cannot address all the issues, but suffice it to say that there clearly seems to be a breakdown in communication between the review group and the voluntary sector. The Minister must take heed of the points that are being raised on all sides of the House and address the issue. As my colleague said, it is imperative that we all speak with one voice. That clearly is not the current state of affairs.

In conclusion, I appeal to the Minister to listen to what has been said in the debate and to address the issues that have been raised. If he does that, we will be able to have a unified approach that will benefit the people who matter

most — the children and adults who live with the condition of autism throughout their lives.

Mr McCarthy: The Alliance Party is totally committed to providing only the best services to the people in the community who are affected by autistic spectrum disorder. I serve as a member on the all-party Assembly group on autism, which is based at Stormont under the chairmanship of Dominic Bradley. I am also committed to the introduction of an autism Bill for Northern Ireland. People who have been listening to the debate could be forgiven for being confused, because many groups, networks, and so on, appear to have been established. I have no doubt that all of them are trying to improve the lot for people who are affected by autism, but it seems that those groups are scattered. If something more central existed, we might reach an earlier and better conclusion.

The motion calls on the Health Minister to review the performance of the RASD network. It is unfortunate that the Minister is not present to give the Assembly an indication of the progress or otherwise of the work of that network.

As I understand, Minister McGimpsey set up the RASD network to improve services for people of all ages who are affected by autism. The network is multidisciplinary and multiagency, and it provides a regional perspective to the development of autism services and will oversee the implementation of the Minister's action plan for 2008-09 to 2010-11. Membership of the network comprises service users, carers, the Public Health Agency, education and library boards and health trusts. As has been said, the chairman of the network, Dr Bergin, stressed the need for partnership working in all areas, and, to that end, yet another reference group, which was chaired by Lord Maginnis, was set up to engage with stakeholders, to represent the views of the carers and service users and to advise the network.

We all support the network's aims, which include: redesign to improve autism care; performance improvement; training and awareness; communication and information; and effective engagement of partnership working. At this juncture, we must ask how successful or otherwise the RASD network has been to date. Again, had the Minister been in attendance today, that question might have been answered.

It is estimated that around 16,000 people in Northern Ireland are affected by autism, and, for whatever reason, we continue to have up to 200 new cases every year. We all know families in our constituencies who have to face the future with a loved one who is affected by autism. It is incumbent on us all as Assembly Members and legislators to play our part to, if possible, find the cause of autism and to provide good services for everyone to ensure that their lives are as fulfilling as possible and to give good support to families and carers.

I look forward to the day when Northern Ireland has an autism Act through which everyone enjoys their entitlement and does not have to shout and fight for this, that and the other. Through legislation, that can be granted. If supporting the motion brings forward better facilities in the near future for everyone living with autism, I can go along with that.

Mr Easton: I support the motion, which calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to instigate a review into the performance of the Regional Autism Spectrum Disorder Network Group, including consideration of its appointments process, independence, accountability, transparency, operating structures and competency.

Autism is a disorder of neural development that is characterised by impaired social interaction and communication and by restrictive and repetitive behaviour. Autism is a member of the autism spectrum along with Asperger's syndrome and pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified. The regional ASD network group was established as part of the ASD strategy action plans for 2008-2011. Membership of the group and subgroups is made up of representatives from service users, carers, general public volunteers, community organisations and statutory organisations, including the education and library boards, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, health and social care trusts, health and social care boards and the Public Health Agency.

There is also a reference group, which is chaired by Lord Maginnis, that is tasked with engaging with parents, carers and service users to ensure that their feedback on development services is captured. The Health Minister officially launched the reference group on 10 March 2010. It is unclear how the group was constructed, what

it is doing, what it has achieved and how it is run and for what purpose. Those groups were set up as a response to the needs of people who suffer from ASD and their carers after a review, which was chaired by Lord Maginnis, was conducted into autism services.

The ASD action plan is organised around several themes: service redesign to improve ASD care; performance improvement; training and raising awareness; communication and information; and effective engagement and partnership working. Groups that represent ASD sufferers and carers have lobbied for a long time for better care and treatment, because ASD is not necessarily a mental or physical condition, and it can be hard to diagnose. The action plan was to form part of the strategy to combat the problems that sufferers have been experiencing, especially discrimination. There has been much debate about the Minister of Health's response. It seems that proposals put forward by the all-party Assembly group on autism, which recommended legislation in conjunction with a cross-departmental strategy, have been largely ignored. We should not put the care and treatment of those suffering from ASD at risk. We should provide the best possible treatment and care.

1.15 pm

I am concerned about the make-up of the regional group, and that is why I support the motion. All government appointments should be accountable and the process transparent to ensure that fairness and equality are adhered to, as well as ensuring that we get the best people for the job. I commend the motion to the House and urge Members to support it.

Mrs McGill: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I want to make some brief comments on the following points: the bringing forward of the motion; the difficulties that are experienced by the autistic community; the reference group; the real issue, which was raised by Jonathan Craig; the £2 million of funding, which has been referred to; what is happening in the west; and the experience of the parent of an autistic child, to whom I spoke at the weekend.

With respect to Rev Coulter, I understand why he is disappointed that the motion has been brought forward. However, I do not see anything to fear from it, because it merely calls for the review of a body that has been set up under the auspices of the Department of Health. I do not

sit on the all-party Assembly group on autism, but I am a member of the Health Committee. However, having listened to the parent who spoke to me at the weekend and to others, it appears that difficulties remain. In my view, not only do difficulties remain, but tensions are obvious.

With reference to accountability, we received a briefing note from the Parents' Autism Lobby — I am not saying whether it is accurate or not — that outlines the situation that some groups find themselves in, and that is why it is important that we look at it. That is my view, and it has been expressed by the Deputy Chairperson and by others in their contributions. The note stated that the chairperson of RASDNG invited voluntary sector parent representative groups to submit proposals for the structure of RASDNG and recruitment of its membership, but that that was thrown out, without explanation, by Lord Maginnis. That may not be accurate, but if that is the feeling of some of the groups that lobby on this very serious and sensitive issue, it needs to be looked at.

With reference to what Rev Coulter said, a review or some way of looking at the issue would be valuable because, as Jonathan Craig said —

Mr McCallister: Does the Member agree that one of the best places for that group to talk about needs and to challenge it about its work would be the Health Committee?

Mrs McGill: I thank the Member for his intervention, and I hear two party colleagues to my right saying that there would be no difficulty with that. One of those colleagues is the Deputy Chairperson of the Health Committee, and we accept that point.

Ms S Ramsey: Will the Member give way?

Mrs McGill: No; I know that you are my party colleague, but I have a few points that I want to make. I will let you speak if there is time at the end.

Jonathan Craig commented on the real issue. I want to refer to a parent who spoke with me at the weekend. I have quoted her previously in the Chamber and in the Health Committee. She is exceptionally active and informed on a range of issues, and she is very keen that her child should develop and progress to their full potential.

Certainly, however, there were gaps in her awareness of what is in place as regards advice, support, meetings and legislation. I did my best to inform her. Therefore, I am thinking in particular about that parent and that family, who have experienced difficulties and barriers, and, indeed, the child who must also face such barriers. If gaps in awareness exist, we must seek to address them.

I want to make a couple of points about funding. Other Members mentioned the fact that there is funding and a range of resource provision to deal with autism. I believe that it is £2.02 million. The question has been asked whether that money has gone into the system and been spent and, indeed, where it currently sits. I believe that the new commissioning structures can address those issues.

I will conclude by saying that there were positive aspects to what that parent said, particularly on the situation in the west and the Western Education and Library Board. Again, that has been my experience. Positive steps have been taken to engage with carers, parents and the young people who have autism.

Mr Shannon: I could not have timed my arrival to the Chamber better, Mr Deputy Speaker. I support the motion. The reasons behind it must be made clear at the outset. Children with autism are not receiving the care that they need. I will not take the opportunity to browbeat the Minister. I will try to make constructive comments; that is the best way. People with autism need special attention, and it is important that we consider their needs. This morning, one newspaper stated that there will be some £400,000 of cutbacks in that area during the next financial year. The Assembly cannot let that go by without comment.

I am an elected representative, and I base my comments on what I have been told by the people, the mothers and the children, whom I represent. I am familiar with the care of one autistic boy. His parents do everything for him: they wash and dress him; they cook for and feed him; they bathe him and take him to the toilet; and they amuse, hug, kiss and love him. They do all those things. He depends on his parents for his every need. When he is at school, they wash, iron, clean and shop. They try to find time to work to pay the bills as well as looking after their child. They love their son with all that they have. Sadly, however, love is not enough to get

their family through the sheer exhaustion and the emotional and mental strain.

It is up to the community and to Members, as elected representatives, to step up to the plate and to help that boy and his parents. We can do so by supporting them and offering them the best help that society can provide to ensure that they do not reach the point of no return. Many parents have reached that point, which concerns me.

Earlier, I mentioned the budget. In the past, it was £660,000 a year, but it will be cut to some £250,000 a year. For 300 children in Northern Ireland, those figures simply do not add up. There are now too many ways to demonstrate how families that have a child with autism are being let down. One glaring example is that of respite care for families because, under the current system, there are simply not enough places available. It is estimated that one in every 100 children has some degree of autism.

The meanin' o' thon bes at mair nor yin ootae ivry 100 parents hes the added hannlin o' leukin efter a wean at bes needfu' o' mair care an' attention. Adae wi' hoo bad the disablement bes, thon care can bae oniething fae hefts wi' a wheen o' extra hours o' hamewaark tae haein' tae dae ivrything fer the wean fer the hale o' his ir hir lif', at bes apt tae bae es lang an' es healthtfu' es onie ither boadie's term o' lif'.

That means that more than one in every 100 parents has the additional stress of caring for a child who needs extra care and attention. Depending on the severity of a child's disability, that care can range from having to help with a few extra hours of homework to having to do everything for the child for his or her entire lifespan, which is likely to be as long and as healthy as that of anyone else.

I know one family that has an autistic son and two young daughters. The mother gave up her job to care for her son as best she could. She applied for respite care to enable her to take a break and spend time with her other children. She was put on an emergency waiting list, yet, goodness me, it is now two years later, and she has still not had a weekend off. That is probably replicated for hundred and hundreds of people across the Province. For three hours a week, a trained professional provides care for the woman's son to allow her to spend time with her daughters. However, that is the sum total of the

relief that she gets, and she must pay for that herself.

Mr McCallister: Does the Member agree that part of what the reference group is doing is looking at the postcode lottery? Mrs McGill spoke about problems in the Western Trust. The focus must be on how to best level out those resources to make sure that we use them and that everyone gets their fair shout.

Mr Shannon: I thank the Member for that intervention. I wholeheartedly agree with his constructive comments. We must look at the situation that we are now in and try to budget to ensure that people get the help that they need.

The lady sought help from Home-Start and other groups, but, at the end of the day, some of those volunteers are not trained to deal with her troubled son. All those problems have an impact, too. Autism is a severely misunderstood condition. Only trained professionals with patience and understanding know how to deal with autistic children. That is the crux of the matter. Because of the unpredictable nature of the disability, even those who are trained can find the work a strain.

The Minister has made provision for a long-term plan in the form of the Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group, and John McCallister referred to that. But what has changed? There has been a cut in funding. I see other Departments trying to play their part. For example, DRD allowed for the cut in the price of a SmartPass for children with learning difficulties. That is one example of what can be done. DFP offers a rates reduction for those with disabilities. At the same time, through the group, we need to make the changes that are necessary and that can make a difference.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The number of children with autism is rising. We sense the effect that that is having on society and on individuals. The families are not asking for much; they are asking for no more than they are entitled to. That is the key. We are being asked to give those families only what they need and what we can provide, which is support.

I support the motion, and I congratulate the Members who brought it to the Chamber. I ask the Minister to give us the opportunity to support those who need help.

Mr McCallister: I declare an interest as a member of the Assembly's all-party group on autism. I pay tribute to Lord Maginnis for the work that he has done. As other Members have said, this is a complex area. We in Northern Ireland are fortunate to have had someone like Lord Maginnis, who has a personal interest in the matter as well, and the assistance of the team that my colleague Rev Coulter mentioned, to address the complicated issues that we all want to see being addressed.

Mr D Bradley: The Member said that Lord Maginnis has a very personal interest in autism, and I do not disagree with him on that. However, does the Member consider that having a very personal interest is enough of a qualification to lead such a high-powered review as Lord Maginnis was charged with leading?

Mr McCallister: I mentioned that Lord Maginnis had a personal interest in autism, but that was not the only qualification that led to his getting appointed to head the review. He has long been an advocate for better services, and he has deeply held and passionate views about the issue. The Member accompanied Lord Maginnis and me on a trip to the USA to look at the issues around autism and autism legislation there. Lord Maginnis has a background of many years of interest far beyond the personal interest. He has a huge interest in the issue, and a huge passion for it.

We must also take into account the fact that, when someone chairs a review, they bring together a group of superbly qualified people. We are fortunate to have an internationally recognised group of this calibre to lead on autism for us. The group is tightly focused, which is all to the good.

1.30 pm

Mr McCarthy said that the group was a multidisciplinary and multi-agency team and that that was what was needed. I agree with him. That is what is needed, and that is what we have. We should be working towards that and ensuring that the strategy is delivered. We do not want to have a postcode lottery and a system in which something works well in one trust area but not as well in the Western Trust, for instance. That is what the group is and should be about.

Mr Craig: I do not dispute what has been said about the expertise of the group. The chairman

has had a long interest in the subject. Does the Member agree that core to all that are the people who suffer from ASD, their parents and carers? Given some of the strong views held by the chairman and some of those in the group, a lack of trust has, unfortunately, developed between them. That raises the question about whether they were the right people to carry this matter forward, because the whole thing will fail if there is no interface between the carers and the sufferers.

Mr McCallister: The chairman of the group, Lord Maginnis, has robust views. He is not afraid to talk to anyone and will not shy away from talking to Mr Craig or any other Member of the House in sharing those views and his passion on this issue that we want to move forward. The difference lies in getting a tightly focused group to lead on the issue. Members of the Assembly and members of the Health Committee can bring the group to Parliament Buildings at any time to review its work and to hear what progress it has made. That is how this should be conducted. It should not be a review of a review.

In his intervention, Mr Craig talked about the experts. Does he accept that they are experts? Is he making a personal attack on Lord Maginnis? Does he believe, as I do, that Lord Maginnis is eminently qualified to chair the group? If the Member wants to get up to say that he supports Lord Maginnis and his work, I will be happy to give way.

Would anyone have thought three years ago that we would have made as much progress as we have in getting a strategy in place and in getting funding, for instance? I take issue with Mr Shannon's comments. If he asks an Assembly question, he will find out that autism funding has not been cut — even in the very tight financial constraints under which we find ourselves. I recognise the expertise of the group.

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

Mr McCallister: We should not throw away this excellent opportunity to support the group in what it does. We should keep it under scrutiny at the Health Committee and make sure that it is delivering, but we should take advantage of having an internationally recognised group.

Mrs M Bradley: The motion is important, but it should not be used as a vehicle for further examination of the need for legislation, and it

should not be used for political point scoring. Parents of autistic children lead a stressful life. A physical disability is obvious to all, but the autistic child brings many more challenges, because his or her symptoms are not as outwardly obvious. The child carries a silent inability to make measured decisions and often finds it hard to communicate with others at the most basic levels. That can often lead to misunderstanding. It is bound to create a worry for parents that will span their entire lives. Those parents need representation, legislation and support from all bodies, including the Assembly.

Autism is not classified in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Therefore, bringing pressure to bear where we can to secure the appropriate legislation that will offer some protection and rights to parents, children and young adults should be a major priority for the House. Whatever happens in the House today, I sincerely hope that there can be formal agreement that this issue needs to be got right, and that the concerns of the Parents' Autism Lobby are listened to and given due consideration.

I want to make my opinion clear: the words used here today need to be measured and considered in securing a review of the Regional Autism Spectrum Disorder Network Group, especially those aspects that are causing concern. I am keen not to withdraw any benefit that that group has achieved to date, and I commend it for that work. However, there must be co-operation, clear and concise pathways to achievement and due consideration between all Departments whose remit it is to provide for autism. It is important to remember that there is a cross-departmental responsibility for the delivery of autism services. That responsibility does not lie solely at the door of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Clearly, there has been a breakdown in communication between the RASDN group and major elements in the voluntary sector. Personalities seem to have got in the way of progress, to the disadvantage of those with autism. That cannot be said to be helpful by any means. I regret that the Health Minister is not here to listen to the points that have been made and to respond to them by beginning a review of the work of the RASDN group. Again, however, we need to remember that one Minister is not solely responsible.

Mr I McCrea: First, I thank everyone who spoke in the debate. It is obvious that, no matter about the differing viewpoints, there is unanimity of concern about autism issues.

I intend to raise a few issues, after which I will mention some of the points that were raised by Members. As my colleague the Member for Lagan Valley Jonathan Craig said when proposing the motion, the issue is not about party politics, but about transparency, accountability and, most importantly, the people at the heart of the debate: those who suffer from autism.

There are approximately 20,000 people with autism in Northern Ireland. The disorder is not represented in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995's definition of a disability. It has been said that further legislation could affect and change that situation. Many autism sufferers do not receive the support that they need, which means that many children and adults with autism are unable to reach their full potential. By support I mean the parents, carers and service users who are central to the issues of care and treatment and who experience the services that they require to have their needs met.

If there is nothing to hide, what should be done is exactly what the motion demands: to initiate a review of the set-up and performance of the Regional Autism Spectrum Disorder Network Group. As my colleague said when proposing the motion, all public appointments are made through a rigorous and transparent process. Were the appointments to the group made using the same rigorous process required for any other public appointment? Is the group representative of carers, service users, parents and charities that represent ASD sufferers, as many believe it is supposed to be? Those are key questions that need to be answered in order to build confidence in how the group fulfils its aims and objectives.

The parents' autism lobby participated in the early development of the Regional Autism Spectrum Disorder Network Group and co-operated with the Health Department in the preparation of a proposal to facilitate the selection of parent and user members for the RASDN group by an independent body, NICVA. PAL presented all political parties with comprehensive documentation to support its allegation that the proposal was accepted by the project manager, Dr Stephen Bergin, but that

that decision and all the work that was done over the summer of 2009 was not accepted.

The RASDN group was set up in accordance with the action plan that was published by the Department in June 2009. It focuses on lifting the barriers that ASD sufferers and their carers encounter. Other Members also referred to those barriers. Concerns about that group and its performance are, therefore, central to helping sufferers and their carers. The Assembly is responsible for holding the Government and Ministers to account to ensure that they take correct decisions that make a difference, rather than brushing issues under the carpet.

The motion is not intended to give rise to old debates about legislation for autism, although that issue raised its head once or twice. The motion aims to ensure that the decision taken to set up those groups and the implementation of the action plan are producing results. The Assembly, as reflected through the all-party group that was set up to look into the issues facing people with ASD, is committed to delivering for sufferers and their carers.

Once again, I raise the issue of transparency and the difficulties that PAL faces in securing information through freedom of information requests. Why is that information being withheld when it is of interest to the public and stakeholders? Is there something to hide? I do not suggest for one second that there is, but if there is nothing to hide, any such requests should be granted. I urge the Minister and the group to speak to PAL and to involve it in paving the way forward for a better system and service for ASD sufferers and their families.

As there were no contentious issues or expressions of opposition to the motion, I will not deal in too much detail with the contributions of other Members. Michelle O'Neill suggested that parents have no faith in the group and do not see the outcomes of its consultations. She stressed the importance of carers being at the heart of decisions.

Dr Coulter expressed his disappointment at what he felt was an unnecessary and counterproductive motion. I do not necessarily agree with him. It has been a good debate, and those who participated had the opportunity to express their concerns. Those concerns may not always reflect what the Member wants to hear, but the debate provides a good opportunity for other Members to raise issues. The aim was not

to attack the Minister or any individual Member, but to encourage co-operation with the group. That is important, and if that is the message that emerges from the debate, it is something on which we can all agree.

Dominic Bradley was one of a few Members to refer to the transparency of the public appointment. He took the opportunity to refer to legislation, on which the debate is ongoing. He reiterated the need for everyone to speak with one voice today.

Kieran McCarthy asked how successful the RASDN group was, and he spoke about the need for that information to be made available. He looked forward to an autism Act being introduced in Northern Ireland to deal with all the issues.

Claire McGill suggested that Members from the Minister's party should not have anything to fear. That is an important point, because the motion requests only transparency and a review, and there should be nothing to fear from that. The Hansard report will reflect the comments that she made about a particular constituent.

Jim Shannon referred to the financial cutbacks. He emphasised the importance of keeping the focus on autism and ensuring that no funding is removed from that area. He also spoke about a family in his constituency and said that the Assembly must step up to the plate.

1.45 pm

John McCallister referred to Lord Maginnis's passion for and background in helping those with autism, which has been a personal interest of his for many years. I do not think that anyone could question that, and the motion is certainly not a personal attack on him. Mr McCallister also said that the Regional Autism Spectrum Disorder Network Group should be left to carry out its work.

Mary Bradley pointed out that the debate should not be about political point scoring and that personalities should not get in the way of the issue. It is certainly not helpful when that happens.

I thank all the Members who spoke in the debate, which has been good. Members expressed their support for those with autism, and now I urge them to support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to instigate a review into the performance of the Regional Autistic Spectrum Disorder Network Group, including consideration of its appointment processes, independence, accountability, transparency, operating structures and competency.

Executive Committee Business

Programme for Government: Delivery Reports

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 15 minutes to propose and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have seven minutes.

The First Minister (Mr P Robinson): I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the Programme for Government delivery reports up to 31 March 2009 and 30 September 2009.

I want to make some brief remarks on the main findings arising from the first Programme for Government delivery report to 31 March 2009 and the second delivery report to 30 September 2009. Both reports provide monitoring data on the progress of Programme for Government implementation, and they are valuable sources of information on the prospects for delivery of individual Programme for Government targets and commitments. As the documents are substantial sources of monitoring information in their own right, I will endeavour to summarise their contents and main findings, including the overall progress of Programme for Government implementation and significant areas of concern. I will conclude with a few reflections on the implications of those findings for the implementation of the current Programme for Government.

I do not wish to oversimplify the information that the reports contain when I say that their aim is to provide information on the overall progress of the Programme for Government over the respective reporting periods. In so doing, they provide useful analysis on programme implementation, in particular on the progress, likely or otherwise, towards the achievement of targets across each of the five priorities that make up the Programme for Government. They also help to identify areas of concern where the rate of progress of implementation is unlikely to lead to the achievement of the outcome or where there are significant doubts that it will do so. The parameters of these business models can differ. Therefore, Members will wish to note the definitions of this particular model.

The colour-coded rating system used ranges from red to green. The target is coloured red in cases where there is a risk to delivery. The target is coloured amber where there is a lack of robust information or where progress has been slow. Targets that have been achieved or are broadly on course to be achieved within the planned time frame are coloured green or amber-green.

I will first examine the progress that has been made to date against the key goals and commitments. There are five priorities, and 38 out of 66 indicators, which represent some 58%, have been met or are broadly on track with significant confidence about the prospects of getting close to the targeted outcome. In priority 1, which deals with growing a dynamic, innovative economy, we have achieved what I believe to be encouraging outcomes, with nine out of the 17 key goals and commitments — some 53% — on track for achievement. That covers areas such as decisions on large-scale investment planning proposals within six months, increasing the number of PhD research students at local universities by 2010, delivering widespread broadband access for businesses by 2011, and supporting and increasing by 90,000 the number of adult learners achieving a qualification in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by 2015.

Priority 2, which is promoting tolerance, inclusion, health and well-being, reports that 12 of the 17 key goals and commitments, or 71%, are broadly on track for achievement. That includes areas such as extending the concessionary fares scheme during 2008 to provide free public transport to everyone aged 60 and over, the introduction of the employment and support allowance in 2008, a carers advisory service to meet the needs of people with disabilities, and, by 2013, helping people with chronic illnesses to live more active lives and reducing unplanned hospital admissions for such patients by 50%.

Priority 3 is to protect and enhance our environment. Progress has remained steady since June 2009, with five of the 11 key goals and commitments, or 45%, assessed either as being completed or on track for completion. Areas of progress include ensuring that 12% of our electricity is generated from indigenous renewable sources by 2010, enabling up to 4,700 farmers to comply with the nitrates

directive by 2009, and delivering a new sewerage project for central Belfast by 2010.

In priority 4, which is to invest to build our infrastructure, there are no red flags, and eight of the 11 key goals and commitments, or 73%, are reported as either green or amber-green. Those include establishing an international telecommunications link from the north-west directly to North America and Europe by 2009, progress on plans to extend dual carriageways on the east-west and north-west corridors, and the planning, development and commencement of work on the first rapid-transit line in greater Belfast by 2011.

Finally, priority 5 is to deliver modern high-quality public services. Progress in that area has been slower than anticipated, with four out of 10 indicators reported as either green or amber-green. Those include providing a network of one-stop shops to improve access to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's services by 2011, the introduction of a single telephone number contact point for public services in Northern Ireland on a phased basis from December 2008, delivering 5% efficiency savings on administration costs each year for the next three years for all Departments, delivering 3% efficiency savings on Departments' resource budgets, and using the performance and efficiency delivery unit (PEDU) to drive higher levels of savings.

Of the 23 individual public service agreements (PSAs) in the September 2009 document, approximately 64% of the 331 PSA indicators are either on course to be met or have already been achieved. Given the economic climate, that is very positive and broadly what we would expect halfway through the comprehensive spending review (CSR) period.

The Programme for Government is being implemented against a significantly more challenging economic context than anyone could have anticipated when it was first drawn up and endorsed by the Assembly. The economic downturn means that we may have to wait much longer than anticipated to make the gains and progress for which we had planned three years ago.

Looking more closely at programme performance, we see that there are areas of concern. Of the 331 PSA targets to be achieved by September 2009, it is possible to identify 40 targets, or

12%, rated as red; 78 targets, or 24%, rated as amber; and 37 targets rated as either completed or closed. Compared with the March 2009 delivery report, those figures represent a deterioration against performance, most clearly with regard to an increase in those delivery targets classified as being in the red category. Given the exceptional economic changes, those trends are not unexpected.

One strength of the Programme for Government monitoring system is its ability to identify strategic areas of concern through those policy areas and actions with multiple red or amber ratings. Where those occur, the target areas are recommended for review meetings at ministerial and official level. On the basis of the March 2009 delivery report, five review meetings were held, which covered promoting the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the STEM subjects; greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable development; tourism; regeneration; and productivity growth. The review process has usefully allowed Ministers and the head of the Civil Service to discuss the underlying issues behind progress to date in the nominated areas. It has also enabled us to examine the actions already being taken to remedy slippage in targets, and to identify additional action that could be taken to improve the rate of progress.

2.00 pm

The September 2009 delivery report highlighted three areas for additional review: supporting rural businesses, promoting health and addressing health inequalities, and child poverty and victims. Meetings to discuss those will take place as soon as possible. The monitoring system has helped to identify and highlight issues such as the failure by September 2009 to show any reduction in the incidence of TB in cattle, the risk that the target set for the reduction in the suicide rate will not be met, and the limited progress on targeting relating to smoking, drug use, physical environment and obesity, including the persistent problem of the differential in health outcomes in disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland.

I assure Members that, in considering the findings of those detailed reports, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) will be following up with relevant Departments to see what remedial actions can

be taken to address those matters. The delivery reports should be of considerable interest to Assembly Members, particularly Assembly Committees, and to external stakeholder groups, as well as, of course, the general public.

I believe that we have a robust monitoring system for the Programme for Government that provides us with a working mechanism to track progress, identify problem areas and consider appropriate measures to address issues of concern. Where there is a lack of suitable data on progress towards targets, we will make every effort, in tandem with the relevant Departments, to see how such deficiencies can be addressed. Where there is slippage or unnecessary delay in programme implementation, we will work together across government to find appropriate solutions.

In reflecting on the implementation of the Programme for Government and how far we have come, it must be recognised that there is no room for complacency, especially in light of the current economic context. It is reassuring to find that Programme for Government priorities remain valid. That makes it all the more important that we continue to display leadership and purpose in delivering on its commitments. The Programme for Government has always been recognised as ambitious. What is at stake is the future of our economy and society. The successful implementation of the Programme for Government can be transformational. It is a means towards delivering the Executive's aim of a peaceful, fair and prosperous society.

The details that I have set out are neither a result nor an outcome; they are a progress report. The purpose of such a report is to help us to focus on what needs to be achieved, and to show where extra effort or resources are needed. It represents a challenge to all of us to raise our game and to better our performance.

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr Kennedy): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate, and I thank the First Minister for his contribution.

The OFMDFM Committee received copies of the Programme for Government delivery reports last Monday. We were briefed by departmental officials at our meeting last Wednesday. The reports are key documents in assessing the performance of Departments and the Executive against agreed priorities and targets. The

reports up to September 2009 serve as a mid-term report on the Executive's performance in relation to those priorities and indicators. They show that, between March and September 2009 there was further deterioration in the delivery of the Programme for Government and the five priorities listed by the First Minister. Broadly speaking, 38 of the 66 indicators — nearly 58% — have been met or are on track.

The First Minister brought us through those priorities and gave a very honest assessment of progress or the lack of it. In relation to the 23 public service agreements, 213 out of 331 indicators — 64% — are either on course to be met or have been achieved already.

The Committee was advised by officials that the March delivery report identified five areas that gave cause for concern, which were identified by the First Minister as: regeneration; STEM subjects; greenhouse gasses; sustainable development; and tourism and productivity. Following the September report, a further three areas were added, namely: child poverty and victims; the development of rural businesses; and addressing health inequalities.

My Committee's prime concern relates to the number of concerns about the Department's performance against child poverty indicators and, specifically, the indicator for the elimination of severe child poverty. In the Committee's well-received report on child poverty, we strongly commended the Executive for adopting its target of working towards the elimination of severe child poverty and we recommended that the Executive should establish a baseline and a system of measurement for that severe child poverty target. We are now two years down the line, and the Committee is concerned that there is still no agreed definition of what constitutes severe child poverty. Some Committee members are worried that a system of measurement will be put in place that would make it easier to achieve the target without meaningful actions being taken. We are aware that a balance must be struck.

Members raised concern at delays in the regeneration of the Department's strategic development sites. For example, the regeneration of Ebrington Barracks has moved from being on target in March 2009 to an amber rating in September 2009. Members are also concerned at the delays in the victims' and survivors' service.

Members are concerned at the cost of producing the delivery reports, and the Committee awaits additional information from the Department on the costs associated with that. We also await further information on how best to measure, and so minimise, slippage in the number of Executive Bills introduced to the Assembly. That indicator has also changed from green to amber.

The Committee understands that the period from March 2009 has been particularly difficult and challenging due to the economic downturn and worldwide recession. Nevertheless, the Executive and Departments need to use this mid-term report to consider their priorities and targets for the rest of the Programme for Government period.

Ms Anderson: Go raibh míle maith agat. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the latest Programme for Government delivery report. The aim of the report, as stated, is to provide a full summary of progress against targets and commitments made in the Programme for Government as of 30 December 2009, halfway through the cycle. Constant monitoring and tracking of our commitments and actions are essential if we are to change the patterns of the past. The Executive's decision to implement such a delivery report is a positive one; however, I am sure Members will share my concern that many targets and commitments in the Programme for Government remain unfulfilled.

I am a member of the Committee for OFMDFM, and, as the Chairperson stated, we were briefed on Wednesday that 58% of the key goals and commitments are rated either green or amber/green; meaning that they have been completed or are almost complete. That was welcome news; however, it is slightly down on the previous report. It means that 42% — almost half — of our targets are unlikely to be met or may not be met.

Of course, the Programme for Government was written before the economic collapse, and there is no doubt that the prevailing economic conditions have greatly hindered our ability to achieve what we all signed up to. However, I firmly believe that we can and should be doing much more. When reading the delivery report, I think it is important to remember that we are not just talking about statistics or words on a page; we are talking about people's lives.

Some targets that have been flagged up as red demonstrate the glaring deprivation and inequalities that still exist in our society. For example, we are failing to work towards the elimination of severe child poverty by 2012, and we are failing to facilitate a 50% reduction in the life expectancy differential between the most disadvantaged areas and the North's average. We are also failing to reduce the suicide rate by the 15% target. I do not think that any of us will depart from the view that that simply is not good enough.

It is unacceptable simply to blame the recession. The fact is that if all parties in the Chamber were prepared to display the necessary political will to embrace new and innovative measures, as stated in the Programme for Government, then we could achieve much more. Take the commitment to establish a library authority and an education and skills authority; that is another goal flagged as red in the report. That was an opportunity to streamline services, reduce bureaucracy and generate additional resources for front line services, but because of political foot-dragging, that opportunity will possibly be lost.

Mr Storey: Will the Member add the provision of equality of treatment for the educational sectors to that list, particularly to the transferors who are responsible for the education of 95% of Protestant children in controlled schools?

Ms Anderson: I am my party's equality and human rights spokesperson, and I think that the Member knows that I have fought and argued for money to be allocated on the basis of objective need for everyone here in the North. Perhaps he does not listen to the contributions that I make in the Chamber.

Similarly, the RPA offered savings of £400 million. I know that the Member is probably getting a bit touchy —

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Ms Anderson: No; I will give way in a minute.

The Member is getting touchy because the examples that I am going to give are examples that his party has prevented progress on. For instance, as I was saying, the RPA offered savings of £400 million: that is the amount of money that will be taken off the Budget, through what has been taken off recently and what we have previously lost over time. However, for political reasons, the DUP sought to protect the

26-local-council system, their councillors and their expenses. That is untenable. We know what is being said about the Minister, Eddie Poots: we have had gerrymandering and now we have "Eddie-mandering". He is protecting his council seat.

Despite that, I welcome the fact that child poverty and health inequality have been included in the new areas identified for review along with the public service agreement 4 indicators relating to supporting rural businesses, as the First Minister mentioned. The review should be conducted urgently and appropriate actions identified to redress these failings.

I also welcome the fact that review meetings have taken place to examine the underlying reasons behind the slippage identified in the previous Programme for Government report.

I am particularly interested to see to the joint Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) strategy to promote the uptake of science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. That is an area which, we are told time and time again, is vital to economic recovery and future prosperity here and yet we still lag way behind our own targets. Therefore, I look forward greatly to the DEL and the Department of Education action plan. People will not be surprised to hear me say that I will also be interested to see how the Magee development plan — given its emphasis on science, technology, engineering and maths — will fit into that action plan.

As I said, constant monitoring of our own performance is absolutely essential, but, where failings have been disclosed, swift corrective action must also be identified and implemented. I confirm that we support the motion and I welcome being given the opportunity to address the Chamber.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education (Mr Storey):

As we look through both delivery reports that are being discussed, we see that PSAs 10 and 19 in particular contain the targets for the Department of Education. I note that, with one exception, all the education targets had the status on 30th September 2009 of amber/green or green, which denote that they are on course to be achieved within the target time frame or they have been achieved.

However, when I examined the individual targets and the actions in PSAs 10 and 19, I severely doubt whether many of the targets will

be achieved or implemented by April 2011. I will give Members some examples: the draft early years strategy was launched for public consultation on Friday past, and the Committee had written to the Minister of Education to say that key issues were not addressed and that the strategy, as presented, lacked clear proposals on the way forward. Furthermore, PSA 10 included the implementation of a special educational needs review. The Committee for Education and many organisations that represent children who are disabled have set out in detail their serious concerns about the draft SEN strategy. We await the outcome of the consultation. I also note that, under PSA 10, the revised literacy and numeracy strategy is to be implemented; however, the draft strategy has yet to be published. Those targets should be reclassified as red, since there is at least a risk that they will not be delivered within the timescale as set out in this Programme for Government.

However, those are not the only education targets in the delivery reports that are at risk of not being delivered. PSA 19 includes the implementation of a revised policy on alternative education provision. The Committee awaits the draft policy, which the Department originally planned to launch for consultation in March 2009. Likewise, a new community relations strategy is awaited. Under PSA 2, an important target is to increase the uptake of STEM subjects, and the Committee continues to seek Department of Education progress on the implementation of the STEM review. Indeed, at its meeting this Wednesday, the Committee hopes to hear more on that matter from departmental officials.

When I look at education targets in these reports, I see many which will not be delivered. The final one that I will highlight concerns:

“Building projects to be advanced at over 100 schools over the period to 2011”.

The House will hear more on that from the Minister of Education tomorrow. However, last week, the Committee got sight of the Minister’s intended statement, and it now knows that those targets will not be met. I must emphasise that the failure to advance much of this, such as the policy reviews, has nothing to do with the economic downturn or the cuts in the education budget that impacted from 1 April this year. I assure the House that the Committee will continue to press the Minister and her

Department on their lack of progress on all those targets.

2.15 pm

In the moments that are left to me, I shall return to the comments that the Member for Foyle made. She referred to ESA and to the failure to meet that particular Executive objective. It is abundantly clear to us all that Members on the opposite side of the House interpret and spell the term “equality” differently from Members on this side. If we are to move to a shared future, it can be only on the basis of respect for the elements of our community that make up Northern Ireland. That is particularly the case in education. The Member lectured the rest of us for not listening, but if she pays attention, she will understand the arguments on the delivery of equality. With respect to swift action —

Ms Anderson: Does the Member accept that, under section 75(1), the equality of opportunity that we will be working towards by ensuring that the policies and programmes that we put in place to promote that opportunity is absolutely necessary in law? The aims of section 75(2), which deal with a shared future, are desirable, but they do not carry the same weight as those of section 75(1), which are necessary.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: Will the Member explain why a certain section of the education world is exempt from the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 when it comes to equality? If the Member believes that there should be equality of opportunity, when it comes to having access to a job in any particular sector of the education world, surely no impediment should be placed on any individual seeking employment. Perhaps the Member should take that issue up with the sector that holds tenaciously to an exemption from the 1998 Order.

The Member referred to swift action. Will she ask the Minister of Education to take action, let alone swift action? We have waited years for the early years strategy, which is not fit for purpose, to go out to public consultation. We have waited for a numeracy and literacy strategy and for a special educational needs strategy. We have waited for all those policies, but all that we have seen is what happened in the House last week, which was the non-appearance of the Education Minister who is unprepared or unwilling to deliver on any of those things.

Mr O'Loan: This is an important debate for the Assembly, and even though the Chamber is fairly thinly populated, it is more important than one might think. There is nothing more important for us than the Programme for Government, the content of that programme and the evaluation of performance against that content.

I am disappointed that we have received only a halfway report on performance against Programme for Government targets. We are now fully three quarters of the way through this mandate. The report is dated March 2010, but we are debating it at the end of June. Moreover, the report covers progress only up to September 2009. Therefore, the report is very out of date, and the Assembly deserves better.

Before turning to the subject of the report, I offer a health warning about such reports. In the Finance Committee, we have considerable experience of similar reports. At least there, each target had considerable commentary or explanation that often reflected considerably on how we read the report. In fact, the Committee frequently disputed the red/amber/green (RAG) status adjudications. Indeed, there were discrepancies between reports that the Department of Finance and Personnel provided and those that OFMDFM provided. I hope that those differences have been resolved.

We were concerned that many targets were worded so vaguely and so easily that it would be hard not to deliver on them. Therefore, there is a question mark over how we present the Programme for Government and how we then evaluate it. Nonetheless, the delivery report concludes overall that, since the previous report was produced, there has been:

"further deterioration in the PfG delivery position."

I see that, in five of the 23 core PSAs, half or more of the targets are rated as either red or amber. That should give us concern. Of course, all of the PSAs are important, but we should be particularly concerned when we read the titles of those in which there is particular failure: PSA 4 is supporting rural businesses; PSA 5 is tourism; PSA 6 is children and family; PSA 8 is promoting health and addressing health inequalities; and PSA 12 is housing, urban regeneration and community development.

Three PSAs are selected for particular review. I note that, oddly, just two of those five PSAs and a further one, PSA 7, which is child poverty and victims, are selected. There may be some

explanation as to why that choice of those three for review was made. Paragraph 4.7 of the report, which is the section on equality and good relations, states that:

"The full range of programmes set out by departments should not be seen in isolation. They are very much part of a wider programme across government".

In that case, the programme addresses the specifics of equality and good relations. However, the issue could probably be written larger. We certainly cannot see any individual target or PSA in isolation.

The whole report, looked at more broadly, raises the question of the extent to which our Assembly is really achieving. Workplace 2010, which is a major programme to sell and lease back the Civil Service estate and refurbish it to modern standards of working, is described as "closed". It most certainly should not be a closed issue. We have not seen a revised target and delivery against that.

On a broader front, there are several issues on which the Assembly is explicitly not delivering. I do not highlight them simply to point-score or debunk, but merely to say that we need to do better. In relation to growing the economy, we are only now, three years into our mandate, working towards creating our own strategy for doing that. The reform and modernisation of local government has ground to a halt. We have a stasis over the transfer process in schools and on the formation of the education and skills authority. The Maze stadium died a death. The whole issue of the decentralisation of public sector jobs has not been delivered on. That chimes with the public view that the Assembly is not delivering fully for the people who elected us. I call for a political consensus around the task that we have to deliver in what will be an even more difficult environment, as the First Minister indicated, than the one in which this programme is being delivered. The future is going to be even more difficult, and all the greater need, therefore, for real political action.

Mr Deputy Speaker: As Question Time commences at 2.30 pm, I suggest that the House take its ease until that time. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member called to speak will be Dr Stephen Farry.

The debate stood suspended.

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

2.30 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Justice

DOJ: Budget

1. **Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Justice what action he has taken to date to ensure proper scrutiny of his budget. (AQO 1481/10)

The Minister of Justice (Mr Ford): On a monthly basis, I meet with my director of justice delivery to review the Department's finances. Departmental officials also undertake detailed monitoring and scrutiny of budgets. In line with other Northern Ireland Departments, my Department has recently completed the June in-year monitoring process, the findings of which have been presented to the Committee for Justice. The Department is also progressing the planning for its 2010 budget. Although all public finances will be under review, it will be important for me to work with Executive colleagues to ensure that the Department of Justice is not adversely affected. It will also be important for the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Treasury to ensure that the financial settlement agreement made with the previous Prime Minister is fully implemented.

Mr McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for his answer. The original budget for his Department was ring-fenced when negotiated. The Minister has also engaged early on the issue of legal aid, and I welcome and support that. What other early justice finance priorities does the Minister want to see addressed?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McLaughlin for his question. Subsequent questions will be asked later today on legal aid. Therefore, I do not want to develop that issue too much at this point, as I risk offending other Members by answering their questions in advance. I do want to take up the point Mr McLaughlin made on the concept of ring-fencing, because there is a widespread assumption that that represents a form of protection for the Department of Justice budget. However, if cuts are made to the relevant budgets in England, those cuts will

apply to Northern Ireland through the Barnett formula, and ring-fencing could be detrimental to the Department's budget. That will raise particular difficulties for the Assembly in the light of the financial package agreed with the then Prime Minister and the difficulties the Department and its agencies currently face.

Mr Shannon: I thank the Minister for his response. Will he assure the House that his budget can be adapted to meet different priorities throughout any given year? Priorities can change and the focus may move from burglaries to traffic accidents or antisocial behaviour.

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Shannon for his question. However, the issues that he highlighted are operational issues. It is the sole responsibility of the Chief Constable to decide on how he and his managers manage their resources to deal with problems identified through consultation with district policing partnerships (DPPs) and in accordance with their overall plan. As far as the overall departmental budget is concerned, it would be relatively difficult to transfer budgets from one agency to another during the course of a year unless there were particular pressing problems.

Mr McNarry: Will the Minister tell the House what protocols are in place to assist him in accessing the national Reserve, so that exceptional security pressures could be met?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McNarry for his question. The protocol was the agreement between the then Prime Minister, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister in the letter that set out the availability of resources as a prelude to the devolution of policing and justice powers to the Assembly. If there were any requests for additional funding from the national Reserve, a case would have to be made by the Chief Constable to the Department of Justice and the Department of Finance and Personnel for onward transmission to the Treasury. An additional £37 million was granted this year at the request of the Chief Constable, and I am determined that any further requests with robust business cases will be supported for transmission by the Department. Indeed, discussion is currently ongoing in relation to some additional funding.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his replies. Will he confirm whether a business case has been completed for the rebuilding of Magilligan prison, which is in urgent need of

replacement? Will he assure the House that the funds needed to rebuild that prison are available?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Maginness for that question. The simple answer is that the business case has not been finally completed for the replacement of Magilligan prison. It is clear that there is a pressing need to deal with the substandard accommodation at Magilligan and to provide a fit-for-purpose prison to replace it. The full details of that will have to be seen in accordance with the business case, and, in the light of the Chancellor's Budget last week, it would be a foolish Minister who predicted exactly when resources would become available.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I should have said that question 5 has been withdrawn.

Maghaberry Prison: Governor

2. **Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Justice to outline plans for filling the vacant governor's post at Maghaberry prison. (AQO 1482/10)

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McKay for his question. The governor's post at Maghaberry is an important role in the Northern Ireland Prison Service. Maghaberry is a complex and challenging environment, and one that requires clear leadership and resilience. As Members will know, the post is being filled on a temporary basis for some months. The Prison Service will shortly launch an open competition for high-calibre candidates with experience of working in prisons at senior level. I want to ensure that we have the best candidates to fill the post substantively. That process should be completed by the autumn and, in the meantime, I have taken steps to refresh the management team. A new interim governor and deputy from the Northern Ireland Prison Service have taken up post at Maghaberry today. I pay tribute to the hard work of the existing governor and his deputy, who have been managing the prison in the interim.

Mr McKay: I thank the Minister for his answer. I agree that the new governor at Maghaberry will have a number of challenges ahead. Does the Minister agree that the new governor, when he takes his post, should prioritise the many long-term difficulties and problems at Maghaberry, including those at Roe House? Will he ensure that a proper management structure is in place

that does not simply act at the behest of the POA?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McKay for that question. Clearly, a range of serious issues are to be addressed at Maghaberry, not just the issues at Roe House, which he identified. When I announced the review of the Prison Service to the House last week, I said that it would focus initially on Maghaberry, because, as our biggest and most complex prison, it has a number of issues that need to be addressed.

The Member referred to the role of the Prison Officers' Association (POA). Reports, including the Pearson report, highlight issues that need to be addressed to do with employment issues. It is also right that staff should have access to a trade union to represent their position on employment issues, and it is important that trade unions, particularly in areas as sensitive as trade unions, take a mature and responsible approach. I will certainly encourage management and the POA to work together to deliver the outcomes that the public expect to achieve a modern, efficient Prison Service that operates within budget and which provides for the needs of society.

Mr Givan: Will the Minister ensure that at the top of the priority list for the new governor, once appointed permanently, will be the welfare of staff who work in the prison and who face horrendous challenges, particularly at Roe House? Will he ensure that the staff will be the priority in attempting to ensure a stable environment in the prison?

The Minister of Justice: I thank the Member for that point. It is not possible to identify a single priority for the new governor at Maghaberry; it is clear that a range of issues must be addressed, and a significant issue is the threat that prison officers face from some of the prisoners who are accommodated in Roe House and from some of the people with whom they are associated outside. It is utterly reprehensible that members of prison staff have had their names featured on certain websites where allegations and threats are made against them. That should not be tolerated anywhere in society.

Mr McDevitt: Does the Minister agree that the new governor will have to have the necessary resources to be able to effect fundamental reform in Maghaberry? Does the Minister believe that the Prison Officers' Association will

approach the need for reform with an open and constructive attitude?

The Minister of Justice: I am sure that the Member does not wish me to indulge in speculation about the future actions of a group of employees.

However, it is absolutely clear that there has been positive change in sections of the Prison Service; that change has been managed by individuals who are members of the POA. Therefore, I do not accept that the POA is, in every respect, a block to progress. It is also clear that major changes are needed in the Prison Service as we seek to provide a much more rehabilitative regime than exists in any of our prisons to ensure better protection for society. I have no doubt that prison officers and others who are associated with the Prison Service will all be required to play their part in carrying out that aim.

Mr K Robinson: I have listened very carefully to the Minister's comprehensive answers. However, does he not realise that any slippage in dealing with issues in Maghaberry prison will have a serious knock-on effect for the rest of society?

The Minister of Justice: The Member makes an entirely valid point. No one could be unaware of the urgent need to address a range of issues in the Prison Service. That is why, when I took up this post, I made that one of my key priorities; moreover, it is why I am seeking an early and speedy report from the review group that looks initially at Maghaberry. We cannot allow the current situation to persist; we must ensure that the prison is fit for purpose and provides for the needs of society in every respect. There is no doubt that difficulties in the prison can affect the wider community, particularly at this time of year.

Legal Representation

3. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to ensure that effective legal representation remains available to people who cannot afford their own legal services.
(AQO 1483/10)

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Boylan for his question. I am committed to the principle of providing access to justice for people who cannot afford their own legal services. That commitment includes, of course, ensuring that

people have effective legal representation when they need it.

The legal aid system has served the people of Northern Ireland well and provides more than 100, 000 acts of assistance with legal problems every year. The devolution funding settlement that was announced by Gordon Brown on 21 October 2009 provides an annual budget of almost £80 million for publicly funded legal services in Northern Ireland. That budget will allow Northern Ireland to spend more per head of population on legal services than any other part of the United Kingdom or Ireland.

My officials in the Courts and Tribunals Service are taking forward a comprehensive programme of legal aid reform. I am satisfied that that reform can be implemented in a manner that will ensure that access to justice is maintained, including access to effective representation for those in need of help who cannot afford to pay for legal aid themselves. Devolution now provides the opportunity to decide how best to help people secure access to justice in Northern Ireland. That is why I intend to undertake a fundamental review of public legal services. This is a real opportunity to reinvent the way in which legal services are provided to the public and to put it on a sustainable basis for the future. I am confident that Members will wish to work with me to achieve that.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I think the Minister for his answer. Although, like many Members, I will agree that all public moneys need to be properly managed and should ensure value for money, does the Minister recognise that it is important that those who require legal representation are not penalised for the possible excesses of others?

The Minister of Justice: I agree. That is why I am determined to continue to provide adequate resources for legal aid. However, we also need to ensure that adequate levels of resources do not apply excessive levels in the face of the financial restrictions that we all now work under.

Lord Morrow: Perhaps I picked the Minister up wrong, but I want him to clarify something. Did he say that legal aid serves the people well or serves the legal profession well? Does the Minister not accept that we do not need a long inquiry into the reform of legal aid? Will he apply his resources to ensure that reform happens swiftly and that we do not run into another expensive inquiry that we can ill afford?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Lord Morrow for that question. I said that the public legal aid services have served the people of Northern Ireland well, because I believe that that is the case. However, there is no doubt that, in recent years, its costs have been significant. The issue was addressed in the agreement between the Prime Minister, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister late last year.

I am prepared to proceed extremely speedily to deal with the basic reforms to legal aid, which the House has heard about on a number of occasions. However, we need to consider the fundamental purpose behind legal aid to ensure that we have a system of public legal services to help people to solve their problems and not necessarily simply to provide advocacy in courts. I want a system that puts greater emphasis on solving problems outside court and provides a wider choice in the type of legal help that is available to those in need. That will be a more fundamental reform than the basic changes that we are making at present. It will take more time to work through, but I do not believe that it will be an expensive process.

2.45 pm

Mr Gallagher: When the Minister introduces reforms, will he work with the legal profession to devise a new civil legal aid system to deal with money damages cases, so that the system will ensure adequate access for legal aid and will also, effectively, be capable of paying for itself?

The Minister of Justice: I welcome Mr Gallagher's suggestion that such matters could pay for themselves. That would be a major step forward. I accept his fundamental point, and my officials are working with representatives of both branches of the legal profession in seeking to make the necessary reforms. We need to consider the issue of civil legal aid, as well as criminal legal aid, where the bulk of the concentration has been up to now. We will continue to do that with a view to ensuring that the entire legal system is fit for purpose.

Saville Report

4. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the findings of the Saville report. (AQO 1484/10)

8. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Saville report. (AQO 1488/10)

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McCartney and Mr McCrea for their questions. With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 4 and 10 together. Although Lord Saville's report on Bloody Sunday contains no direct implications for the Department of Justice, I believe that it is comprehensive, provides the opportunity to put the truth on the record and, at the same time, help to heal the wounds suffered by the families over the past 38 years.

The report undoubtedly raises questions about how Northern Ireland deals with its past and how we can move forward as a society. Although those issues are primarily for the Northern Ireland Office and OFMDFM to consider, I will ensure that the Department of Justice plays its part in contributing to the promotion of reconciliation and of a shared future. I hope and expect that the crucial roles played by the Historical Enquiries Team and the Police Ombudsman are recognised and supported by the NIO, which retains the strategic lead on issues arising from the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Minister, can I clarify whether you meant to say question 8 or question 10? I was told that it was question 8.

The Minister of Justice: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker. It was supposed to be question 8.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he seek a report from the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) on its assessment of the Saville report? Does he intend to make a statement to the Assembly on the findings of the Saville report at some time in the future?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr McCartney for those two points. I will not seek a report from the Public Prosecution Service, because the responsibility for dealing with the outcome of the Saville report lies squarely with the Public Prosecution Service and not with the Department of Justice. It is not my role as Minister to seek a report from the PPS in any respect. Therefore, I will leave that point to be followed through by the relevant authorities. There may also be involvement from the PSNI in respect of how that is dealt with.

Mr B McCrea: Does the Minister agree that the dignified response to the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons, coupled

with the measured tones of many commentators and sections of the community, might form the basis of some way to deal with the past? Will he seek to build on that opportunity so that we can move the Province forward?

The Minister of Justice: That is a valid point. The dignity that we saw in response to the publication of the Saville report from the families, the people of Derry, the Prime Minister and the entire House of Commons is a measure of how much we have moved forward in this society in recent years and how much people were able to do.

Clearly, wider lessons need to be learned. We cannot have a Saville-type inquiry for all the tragedies of the past. The fundamental matter of dealing with the past must be done collectively by the Executive. Although the First Minister and the deputy First Minister have lead policy responsibility for the victims and survivors of the Troubles, I believe that it is incumbent on all Ministers to co-operate to deal with the past and to seek to create a shared future. We will all have to address the legacy of the past in our own areas of responsibility. Certainly, the Department of Justice will play its part.

Mr G Robinson: When will the final costings for the Saville report be made available to the public?

The Minister of Justice: I am afraid that that is entirely a question for the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State.

Mr P Ramsey: I welcome the Minister's comments about healing wounds. There has been a wound at the heart of Derry city, which has been hurt. However, that hurt can now ease.

Does the Minister welcome the British Prime Minister's statement that the 14 murders in Derry were "unjustified and unjustifiable"? I am aware that the Minister met the families when he was in the role of shadow Minister, but will he meet again the families of those who lost their lives and those who were injured on Bloody Sunday once, as Raymond McCartney rightly said, he has made his own assessment of Saville's findings?

The Minister of Justice: I agree entirely with the Prime Minister's assessment of Saville. I do not need to add any words to his assessment. As Mr Ramsey stated correctly, in February 2010, I, as an individual and as a party leader, met

the majority of the families of those who died. At that time and, indeed, when the report was published, I indicated that if the families wished to meet me again, I would be happy to meet them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 5 has been withdrawn.

Prisoners: Healthcare

6. **Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he, or his officials, have had with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding the provision of health care to prisoners. (AQO 1486/10)

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Clarke for his question. I will meet with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in early July 2010 to discuss a range of health issues that affect prisoners. Healthcare provision is discussed regularly at meetings of the joint prison partnership board. That is a multiagency and multidisciplinary board that meets bimonthly to agree strategic operational priorities and to review primary and secondary healthcare services to prisoners throughout the prison estate.

Mr W Clarke: I thank the Minister for his response. Does he agree that prisoners with mental health needs are being failed by the current system? Furthermore, does he agree that there is a duty on the Prison Service and the Health Service to meet those prisoners' medical needs?

The Minister of Justice: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. There is no doubt that healthcare facilities in the Prison Service have improved since responsibility for them was handed over to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. There is also no doubt that work still needs to be done, particularly in connection to mental health, which the Member highlighted.

It is generally accepted that significant work needs to be done in that area, given the number of prisoners who have mental health problems or personality disorders. All prisoners who are assessed as having a mental illness are referred to the mental health team for assessment and treatment. The new reach and outreach facilities that are proposed for Maghaberry will go some way towards helping prisoners with mental health needs and vulnerabilities. However, the problem exists at

all three prison establishments. I am grateful to the South Eastern Trust for its continuing efforts to reform and modernise services for all prisoners with mental health problems.

Mr Bell: Does the Minister agree that there is also a need to look at the health and safety of our prison officers, particularly in the light of some of the conditions that they face? Will he ensure that his Department gives the same respect to prison officers' health and safety as is given to that of people in every other service in the public sector?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Bell for his question. Certainly, as their employer, the Prison Service owes a duty of care to prison officers. However, I am not sure that it is entirely equivalent to that which is owed to prisoners, who have no opportunity to access healthcare facilities in the community. At the same time, there is no doubt that much needs to be done to ensure that a duty of care is provided to prison officers, given the difficulties that some of them face.

Mr Dallat: Recently, the Minister promised to review the Prison Service completely. Given that probably 70% of prisoners experience mental health problems and other personality disorders, does he not believe that it is time for a comprehensive review of how stakeholders and other interested parties view the entire issue? Will he promise the House that those 70% of prisoners will have the rights that they deserve?

The Minister of Justice: The simple answer is that the review of the Prison Service will include all aspects of the management of prisons, including healthcare. Given my background, I am entirely conscious of the difficulties in the mental health field; the number of prisoners who have, as Mr Dallat said, psychiatric problems and personality disorders; and the real need to ensure that services are improved.

Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group

7. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the 'Wrong Kind of Victim?' report by the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group.
(AQO 1487/10)

The Minister of Justice: I welcome the positive and helpful report. Human trafficking is nothing less than modern-day slavery, and it is vital that we continue to raise public awareness of the suffering caused by those who seek to

profit from the exploitation of the vulnerable. My officials participated in the background research leading to the report's publication on 16 June, and I will consider carefully the recommendations that fall within my remit.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his answer. The report contains pointed criticisms of how the agency treated victims and how the perpetrators remain free. I believe that no charges were levied. What steps are being taken to increase the number of prosecutions while providing more support for the victims?

The Minister of Justice: Mr Hilditch has highlighted a serious issue. I understand that just two people have been charged with the offence of trafficking for sexual exploitation and that the cases are currently proceeding through the courts. Although the Chief Constable has assured me that the police are doing all that they can in that area, as we all know, in order to bring charges and obtain convictions, the police need evidence and witnesses who are willing to testify in court. Unfortunately, many of the women who are recovered choose not to testify. Once rescued, many simply decide to go home to their families while, in other cases, witnesses have disappeared. There is certainly no disinclination on the part of the relevant agencies to take prosecutions forward, but there is a real difficulty in getting the necessary witness evidence.

Ms Lo: One of the report's criticisms is that victims of human trafficking are prosecuted while the real criminals continue to profit. Can the Minister tell me whether those arrested in recent cannabis raids in Northern Ireland are being prosecuted as criminals or treated as potential victims of crime?

The Minister of Justice: I am afraid that my colleague has caught me out on that one, but I will ensure that I write to her about the matter.

Mr Kinahan: Can the Minister provide the House with an evaluation of the support package that is provided to victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland? Can he also give us an indication as to whether his Department will continue to finance that package, which I believe runs out in September?

The Minister of Justice: I thank Mr Kinahan for those rather easier questions. As he correctly says, the pilot scheme runs out in September. It was recently evaluated, and,

although the evaluation identified areas in which improvements could be made, the overall conclusion was that we had met the standards set out in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. For example, a victim who has been through the pilot scheme supported that assertion. Not only was she satisfied with the care that she received, but she has been successfully reintegrated into society and is living in independent accommodation and serving the community as a volunteer. I hope to put in place a more permanent scheme after the pilot runs out on 30 September.

Youth Justice

9. **Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Justice to outline his policy on youth justice.
(AQO 1489/10)

The Minister of Justice: The reality in this society is that most children do not offend. For the small number who do offend, we have proportionate, progressive and restorative arrangements that aim to reduce the risk of further offending and help to reconnect children with their families and communities. The Department subscribes to the policy of custody as a last resort but recognises that it is sometimes required to protect the public. In that regard, we are, in conjunction with key partners, making significant progress in reviewing custodial arrangements for young offenders under the age of 18.

With the Youth Justice Agency in the lead, the review aims to use the skills and expertise that exist in the agency and the Prison Service to deliver better-focused outcomes for young people in custody, to support reintegration and to reduce reoffending. Some of the outcomes of that valuable work have already been implemented, and it has the potential to deliver further significant improvements to our juvenile custody services. I hope to be able to announce the outcome of the review in the near future.

3.00 pm

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before we begin questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development, I inform the House that question 10 has been withdrawn.

European Commission Fine/DARD Mapping Systems

1. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to investigate and address the factors that led to the £60 million European Commission fine. (AQO 1495/10)

5. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to ensure that there is no recurrence of the maladministration that resulted in the recent European Commission fine. (AQO 1499/10)

7. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the improvements in her Department's mapping systems will be implemented. (AQO 1501/10)

12. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on discussions with the European Commission in relation to the £60 million disallowance imposed after the audit of subsidy payments. (AQO 1506/10)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms Gildernew): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 1, 5, 7 and 12 together. I recognise that my Assembly colleagues are aware of the background to the issue, and I thank them for their ongoing support. I can now advise the House that, in line with Commission protocols, the Agricultural Funds Committee was consulted on 18 June on the disallowance relating to the first audit in 2006, and a formal decision by the Commission is expected in July. I stress that my Department has been proactive on a number of fronts in taking steps to address the issues and ensuring that there is no recurrence of the factors that led to the disallowance.

We have constantly challenged the Commission's view on the level and proportionality of the disallowance. We provided the Commission with evidence that the actual risk to the fund is much less than the 5% proposed. We have taken the 2006 and 2008 audits to the conciliation body, and we are taking legal advice as to whether to challenge the 2006 audit through the European Court of Justice. I also

discussed that with the Attorney General. I have spoken to Mariann Fischer Boel, and my colleagues in the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development have raised our position with Commission representatives. I raised the issue at my meeting with the new EU Agriculture Commissioner, Dacian Ciolos on 23 June.

From 2006, we have actively encouraged farmers to tell us of changes to their maps, and we have reviewed our inspection procedures. In 2007, we introduced orthophotography, and from 2008, we have used GPS equipment to measure fields. We have also taken action to recover moneys in all cases where we have found that land has been incorrectly claimed.

Although we still firmly believe that the level of disallowance proposed is much higher than any risk to the fund, and we continue to challenge that, we accept that, if we do not resolve the situation to the Commission's satisfaction, we will continue to face some level of ongoing disallowance. As the potential for single farm payments on ineligible areas is one of the auditors' main concerns, we have commissioned a project to systematically review and, where necessary, amend every field in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) system. That will ensure that all ineligible areas are identified and removed. We will also have to consider the impact of the removal of those areas on entitlements and previous payments.

The pilot project is under way. That is necessary to allow us to set and to test the criteria to be used in the main project. We aim to begin the main project in the autumn and to complete it by the end of next year. New maps will be issued to farmers early in 2012. We believe that that will satisfy the Commission's concern and should significantly reduce the risk of further disallowance.

The second phase will deal with some other mapping issues, which are of less concern to the Commission and, therefore, much less likely to attract a disallowance. That process will be completed by the end of next year.

While we continue to challenge the Commission's proposal regarding disallowance, we are working to satisfy its concerns and to ensure that our approach meets its requirements. My Department and I are committed to resolving the issue and to reducing the amount of disallowance being paid.

Mr McCarthy: The Minister has taken almost four minutes to answer my question. She will know that I have challenged her on this question on a number of occasions. Considering the volume of questions coming behind me, does the Minister not think that it is past the time when she should have brought a statement to the House explaining the situation fully? That would give all Members the opportunity to challenge the reasons given as to why this has happened. Sixty million pounds is a huge amount of money to go out of Northern Ireland.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must come to his question.

Mr McCarthy: Does she think that it is worthwhile to come to the House with a full statement and give us the opportunity to challenge it?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

I did not think that I needed to come to the House with a statement. My main concern is about working towards resolving the issues. There has been very good support from Assembly colleagues, especially those in the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development. I believed that there was a significant level of understanding in the House, which did not suggest that there was a need for a statement.

Mr Moutray: Can the Minister apprise the House whether the £60 million disallowance is the end of the matter and whether, following a review of the 2009 scheme year, no further disallowances can or will be forthcoming? Has she had any discussions with the EU Commission to ensure that, if there are to be further disallowances, they will not be of the same level?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

I will be keen to ensure that the work that we are doing now will mitigate further disallowances, but there have been a number of audits, and we must look at the challenges that have been exposed by those audits and ensure that we have systems in place. That means working with farmers, and I am pleased to report that 16% of farmers came in this springtime to get their maps checked after years of us asking them to do so. We want to work with farmers to ensure that their information is up to date.

We are also working closely with Land and Property Services (LPS), an agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel, because we need to have the maps and the correct mapping facilities in order to mitigate future disallowances. I raised that matter with Dacian Ciolos last week, and I have asked him for a further meeting to discuss it. We will bring the matter to every level necessary, but given that the European Court of Auditors sets the level of disallowance, we want it to be reviewed downwards.

We have also looked at what has happened in other member states, and I can assure the House that we are not the only offenders, nor are we the worst, cold comfort though that is. We are working with everyone that we can, and that includes taking the proper legal advice to determine how we can challenge the disallowance through the courts. Everything that can be done is being done, but there may still be some level of disallowance if the European Commission continues on its current route, and I am doing my absolute utmost to mitigate that.

Mr B McCrea: The Minister is always most disarming in the way that she presents a case. Although we support her and her Department, there is an issue behind her soothing words. We are struggling to find £60,000 to keep the I CAN centre in Ballynahinch open, yet we seem to have mislaid £60 million. The numbers are huge. I wonder whether the Minister can explain where that £60 million is going to come from. Has she discussed the matter with the Minister of Finance and Personnel and can she give us some comfort that that money will be available?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

I will try not to be too disarming, Basil; you would not like to see me when I am grumpy.

Of course, I have raised the issue and have had discussions about it with the Finance Minister, and I have been working for some time to resolve it. In my initial discussions with my Department, there was no indication that the disallowance level would be as high as it was, and that came as something of a shock to us. However, because of the difficulties in rolling out the scheme, we recognised that there could be some potential for disallowance down the line. As a precautionary measure, my Department had been putting money aside and rolling it up with a fund in the Department for Environment,

Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to enable us to meet the disallowance with money that was available for that purpose.

We did not expect to get hit with a disallowance figure of 5%. We are still working on conciliation, through the legal route, to try to have the disallowance amount reduced. However, I assure the House categorically that £60 million did not go astray; someone decided that the level of risk to the EU fund was of that magnitude. No one claimed that money. It is not money that was fraudulently claimed. I assure the House that there has been no wrongdoing on anyone's part.

The EU believes that the level should be set at 5%, but we believe that that figure should be much smaller. Because of the single farm payment, all our schemes are rolled up, and that 5% hits the whole amount. As I said, some of our neighbours have been hit far worse, but other European member states are also affected. I had a good conversation about the issue last week with Jim Nicholson, and we talked about where that money goes. It is like having an overdraft at the bank: the European Commission does not send us that money. That is how it is able to deduct the disallowance off the overall amount. I assure the House categorically that £60 million has not gone astray.

Lord Morrow: The Minister has given a startling reply today, because four of the 15 questions that are down for oral answer relate to this issue. Yet, it was not important enough for her to feel that she should come to the House with a statement about a £60 million fine.

We recognise the fact that there has been no error in her Department in relation to the £60 million. However, it must be a severe embarrassment to her and to her Department that she should be landed with a £60 million fine. Will she now reconsider her position in light of what has been said today, come to the House with a statement and bring her departmental officials with her?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

I will absolutely, categorically not be reviewing my position. I do not believe that anybody would have —

Lord Morrow: You should be embarrassed.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

I am not embarrassed. I absolutely refute the Member's allegations. I

have been working very hard on the issue, along with my officials, to mitigate it. I said today that the issue has hit other member states much harder than it has hit us; it is affecting every member state. We are putting a system in place to ensure that future mitigation does not happen. We are working on our maps and orthophotography and making sure that there is a system in place that is robust enough to mitigate any future disallowance. The difficulty is that Europe can pick a figure and impose it on us. We are seeking legal advice on the issue and taking it to the very highest level.

Mr P J Bradley: Does the Minister agree that many of the so-called false claims that led, in part, to the fine came about as a result of inaccuracies on the original maps provided by DARD, or is it the opinion of the Minister that the original maps were 100% accurate?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The original maps were not 100% accurate. We are working with LPS to ensure that that accuracy is built into the system. The orthophotographs that LPS is using are created from high-quality aerial images, and distortions caused by the earth's surface and aircraft movement are removed from them. The result is a scale-accurate image, offering a detailed bird's-eye view of the landscape. That was not available to us when the problem started, which is partly why we are playing catch-up.

We have over 742,000 fields, and we do not have the resources to cover the cost of ground-survey mapping on every single field in the North of Ireland. We had to find a system that worked and that gave an accurate assessment of what was on the ground so that that could be used. Six, seven or eight years ago, we did not have the technology to produce those maps, but we are putting that system in place now.

Regional Food Programme

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the range of projects funded through the regional food programme in the last financial year and for her assessment of the importance of this programme. (AQO 1496/10)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I thank the Member for his question. DARD administers the regional food programme, which aims to promote quality

regional food. Under the programme, assistance is available to develop and expand profitable and sustainable markets by encouraging better co-operation and communication between all sectors of the food industry. The Member may be aware of the slow food movement and the fuchsia brand emanating from west Cork. Those are perfect examples of where that approach has succeeded, and our programme aspires to mirror those ventures.

There were three tranches of funding through the regional food programme in the past financial year, with letters of offer totalling £424,800. Some 28 separate programmes received letters of offer, including projects from each of the five categories available in the programme. Those categories are regional fairs; information programmes; award ceremonies; seminars or workshops; and market intelligence. Each project had to meet the aim of the programme to promote quality regional food and to increase its consumption domestically and further afield.

The programme has supported a wide range of initiatives, which have not only promoted local quality produce but have led to greater collaboration across the entire local agrifood sector. Examples of some of the successful projects that were delivered include the Armagh Bramley apple blossom fair at Loughgall; the Magherafelt Christmas speciality food market; Derry City Council's participation at national food exhibitions; the national sausage week awards; the 'Taste of Ulster' — some of Ulster — 'Guide'; the food pavilion at the Balmoral Show; and the inaugural great Belfast food week. I attended several of those events and saw for myself the value and importance of connecting our producers with consumers and allowing our local produce to be clearly exhibited to local people and tourists alike.

The regional food programme was initially established as part of the implementation of the 'Fit for Market' report, which was published by the food strategy group in November 2004. With a remit to promote local produce, it is the primary vehicle used by my Department to assist our agrifood industry in its endeavours to showcase the quality food that is available here.

I am fully committed to supporting local producers in that way. Feedback and evaluations from the funded project promoters show the need for and value gained by the programme,

and many of them highlighted the economic and social benefits for the agrifood industry. A full list of the funded projects can be found through the regional food programme link on the DARD website.

3.15 pm

Mr McElduff: Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis an Aire as ucht a freagra.

I thank the Minister for her answer. She will know that I have a preference for a nine-county fry, as distinct from a Six County fry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McElduff: Will the Minister provide some commentary on the renaissance of Atlantic food authenticity and economic links (RAFAEL) project? I know from the feedback that I have received in County Tyrone that that project has gone down particularly well there. I would, therefore, like to think that that it is being rolled out further. What strengths does the Minister attribute to that project?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The RAFAEL project in the west specifically relates to public sector procurement of local food. My Department and project partners contributed to the success of that INTERREG-funded project, which aimed to encourage local authentic food producers to develop new markets, such as the public sector. Under EU legislation, the procurement of locally produced food by public sector bodies cannot be restricted to specific locations or suppliers. The challenge, therefore, was and is to work with suppliers to help them to compete more successfully.

The main focus of the local RAFAEL project, which was centred in the north-west, was to encourage and support local food producers and processors to develop and to compete successfully for business in the public sector, specifically in hospitals and schools, which need high-quality food for the most vulnerable. Many of the producers who became involved in that project now supply the health and education authorities.

Since the end of the RAFAEL project, my Department has continued to run awareness workshops in conjunction with our partners from that project to highlight when food procurement projects are being released and how the tender

process is conducted. That work is ongoing. I fully support the promotion and purchase of local food, and my Department supports a number of actions to underpin that.

Mr Kennedy: Turn over the page.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: No, I will finish there, Danny. However, any time that you have a supplementary question, feel free to jump in, son.

Mr Elliott: I am pleased that Mr McElduff prefers a nine-county fry, as opposed to a 26- or 32-county fry. At least we are making progress with him.

The regional food programme encourages the consumption of locally produced food. However, what action has the Minister taken to protect Northern Ireland milk and dairy products in the Republic of Ireland, where there is a campaign against them?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: That is a fairly tenuous link, but I will answer the Member's question. I met my Southern counterpart, Brendan Smith, to discuss the issue, and I raised it with the Food Standards Agency and others, such as Bord Bia. Work is continuing to ensure that those markets are available to our producers.

Mr Burns: The regional food programme is now closed to applications. Therefore, would the Minister consider it beneficial to the local food industry to introduce a promotional programme that would continue to deliver the aims of the regional programme?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The budgetary pressures that all Departments face dictate that all work areas must be scrutinised to assess their importance and relevance to the industry. Evaluations and feedback from the stakeholders who utilise the programme will be taken into consideration when taking funding decisions about the future of the programme. However, I am pleased to inform the Member that the regional food programme will continue in 2010-11. From the first tranche of applications, several projects have received letters of offer to assist them in the delivery of their food promotion projects.

Mr Bell: I wish to ask the Minister about the impact on programmes in this and subsequent financial years should another European

Commission fine be imposed. The Chairperson of the Agriculture Committee made a very —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, Mr Bell. We have moved on to a different question about the regional food programme.

Mr Bell: My supplementary question is on the same subject, because it relates to programmes in this financial year. If we are fined again —

Mr Deputy Speaker: We have moved on from the question on fines to one about the regional food programme.

Question No 3 has been withdrawn.

Forestry

4. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the possibility that Northern Ireland could become self-sufficient in supplying the timber required for housing, and other purposes, and whether she has any plans to expand the forestry sector. (AQO 1498/10)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: With the substantial increase in forest cover, as identified in the forest strategy, there is the potential for us to become self-sufficient in a range of timber and timber products. Around 400,000 cubic metres of timber and timber products are consumed each year in the North, with sawmills producing around 320,000 cubic metres of timber and timber products annually. However, as the Member will know, timber is an internationally traded product and those marketing it will seek best value. As a result, over half the timber processed in the North is sold to Southern markets or to Britain. What remains for home production means that we are approximately 16% self-sufficient in construction timber, 34% self-sufficient in pallet and packaging timber and fully self-sufficient in fencing products.

Our forestry strategy confirmed that the Forest Service will continue to maintain the supply of timber from forests and that annual timber production from the Department's forests has expanded from 300,000 cubic metres of round wood in 2000 to the current level of 400,000 cubic metres. The forest strategy also identified a long-term aim of doubling the area of woodland in the North so that people can benefit from economic development through timber production and enjoy the recreational

and environmental benefits. Our Programme for Government (PFG) target seeks to create 1,650 hectares of new woodland by March 2011. A doubling of woodland cover will provide us, in time, with more timber for processing and added value, and has the potential to make us self-sufficient in a range of timber and timber products. However, the extent to which that happens will depend on how much of our processed timber reaches export markets.

Dr McDonnell: I thank the Minister for her very extensive answer. She talked about bulk. However, has any real assessment been made of how much money could be saved? My second point partly pertains to that. Will the Minister investigate whether, by some mechanism, land could be put into forestry without the single farm payment being lost? My understanding is that one of the biggest obstacles to planting trees is the loss of the single farm payment. Therefore, could an alternative subsidy be found, even if that were only for two or three years, as a bridge to carry people through and wean them off the single farm payment?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I am very aware of stakeholders' frustration and the challenges surrounding the important issue of the definition of the word "farmer". The present definition, for the purposes of the farm woodland premium scheme, which is almost the equivalent of what the Member is talking about, has eluded us. The current definition in the rural development programme is that a farmer is someone who derives at least 25% of their income from farming, taking account of all the land that they farm. However, for forestry, the rate is 15%, and that creates difficulties. I raised that issue with the new commissioner last week, and I hope to discuss it with him at a future meeting. I understand where the Member is coming from and we are trying to resolve the issue.

Rev Dr Robert Coulter: Before the Minister sets her Department a high target such as self-sufficiency in timber, will she review the much less extensive targets that she made in the Programme for Government? Given that DARD is unlikely to meet many PFG targets on the development of forestry, does she accept that any decision to extend the forestry sector must be taken in conjunction with an analysis of how the sector has functioned to date?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Between April 2008 and March 2010, the first two years of the PFG period, 502 hectares of new woodland have been created by farmers and landowners under the woodland grants scheme, which, I accept, is much less than the 1,100 hectares planned for this stage of the PFG target period. In November 2009, to encourage more farmers and landowners to create woodland, I announced an increase in grant rates of up to 30%. Since then, there has been a significant increase in applications, although it is too early to predict whether that interest will translate into new woodland. Therefore, applications are coming through, but, at this stage, I am not sure how many of those will be successful given the 15% figure that was raised by the Member who spoke previously.

However, it is good that there is renewed interest in woodland creation, and continued promotion of forestry schemes, together with the work of the Forest Service, will, I hope, put us back on course to meet the Programme for Government woodland target. However, achieving that will be very challenging.

Mr W Clarke: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister outline how the Forestry Bill will help to increase forest cover?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I hope that the Bill will continue to allow us to provide grant assistance to those creating woodland. In addition, the Bill explicitly includes environmental, biodiversity and climate change mitigation measures in the definition of forestry. That, with the recognition in the Bill of the social benefits of woodlands, such as recreation, health and well-being, provides clear indication for all those in government and in local government, as well as private landowners, of the benefits of creating woodland. The new Bill will also help us to protect woodland through a requirement for those planning to fell trees to apply for felling licences.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 5 has been grouped.

Supermarkets: Food Prices

6. **Mrs M Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she can provide an assurance that the appointment

of a supermarket ombudsman will not lead to an increase in the retail price of food products in our local supermarkets. (AQO 1500/10)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The appointment of a supermarket ombudsman and retail pricing are reserved matters and, therefore, not in my remit. However, I agree with the concept of fair pricing and welcome the new British Government's acceptance in principle of the need for an ombudsman.

The aim of the ombudsman would be to strike the right balance between farmers getting a fair deal and the aspirations of consumers. That is a good aim, with mutual benefits for all in the supply chain, and would not necessarily lead to an increase in retail prices. Although there may be additional costs associated with the establishment and operation of an ombudsman, it does not follow necessarily that that will result in an increase in the retail price of food products.

It is envisaged that the main costs will be driven largely by the number of complaints brought against a retailer. There is a tangible incentive now for supermarkets to focus on minimising the number of complaints that they receive. My hope is that the benefits to the agriculture industry of the future appointment of an ombudsman will not lead to any increase in retail prices.

Mrs M Bradley: Supermarkets are always keen to retain their profits. What steps does the Minister have in place to prevent that?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: As I said, retail pricing is a reserved matter, and not in my remit. However, I accept the concept of fair pricing and consider that I have a role to encourage and facilitate a mutual understanding of the challenges facing each part of the food chain. I have had very interesting conversations to that end over recent years. As part of that process, I visited retailers, producers and food processors to encourage discussion of the challenges facing each part of the food chain, particularly the economic pressures on producers. All partners in the supply chain have an important role, and all need to share in the profits.

Mr McHugh: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I agree with the Minister about her fair deal proposal for farmers and retailers on

prices. In fairness, much is to do with profit at retailer level rather than across the board. Will there be fairness across the board in future if the loss of 87 jobs at a place such as Foyle Meats is caused by the fact that retailers will not pay proper prices to farmers who are at the start of the food chain? If that continues, we will not have a local industry.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Fair pricing is very important. Everyone in the supply chain needs to get a share of the profits, and I will continue to work to that end.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister for her reply. She spoke about sharing profit. Does she agree that it is vital that some form of regulation is involved to protect farmers? For too long they have suffered, and the profit share has not been equal throughout the sector. Will the Minister agree that that needs to be addressed, and, owing to the fact that farm size and structure are different in Northern Ireland compared with other parts of the country, what discussions has she had with the new coalition Government to make sure that representations are made?

3.30 pm

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I met Caroline Spelman and Jim Paice last week and they are very clear about the differences between farming in Ireland and farming in Britain. The Ulster Farmers' Union in particular has been very much in support of the call for a supermarket ombudsman. The union clearly articulated the need for farmers to receive a fair return for their produce and the damaging impact that the relentless downward pressure on supplier prices has on the industry. In February, the UFU issued a news release that stated that although the new code of practice should help to achieve a fair supply chain, it will be useless unless an independent body enforces it. It urged government to make the establishment of a supermarket ombudsman a priority. It is something that we will bring up again with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ministers as an issue that needs to be seen as a matter of urgency.

Lord Morrow: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think that, in my supplementary question, the Minister may have picked me up wrongly. I did not ask her to reconsider her position. I asked her to reconsider her position

in relation to not coming to the House with a statement.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, but rather one of clarification. The Minister has heard it and she can respond to it on another occasion.

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

SELB: Summer Schemes

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Speaker has received notice of an urgent oral question under Standing Order 20A to the Minister of Education.

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Education to account for the removal of funding for summer schemes for children with learning disabilities in the Southern Education and Library Board Area; to outline the contact that her Department has had with the Southern Education and Library Board in relation to this matter; and to detail what the Department of Education is doing as a matter of urgency to locate funding to allow these summer schemes to operate fully.

The Minister of Education (Ms Ruane): Ní fiú do Chomhaltaí teacht chun an Tionóil le cinneadh boird a cháineadh nó le iarracht a dhéanamh mise a cháineadh mar Aire mar gheall ar chinneadh boird.

There is no point in MLAs coming to the Chamber to criticise the decisions of boards or attempting to deflect their criticism of a board's decision onto me as Minister, especially when they are members of the political parties that are keeping the boards in place.

The boards are not an efficient mechanism for the management or administration of our education services. The DUP and UUP continue to block the establishment of the education and skills authority (ESA), which has been designed to ensure that the maximum amount of money is directed to front line services rather than the duplication of bureaucracy. The education and skills authority has the potential to save up to £20 million per annum with strategic rather than piecemeal savings.

These schemes are a classic example of why we do not need five boards. Each board is doing a different thing in relation to time, the length of schemes and transport. That is why this society needs the education and skills authority.

It is all very well for the Chairperson of the Education Committee to snigger and laugh, but if people are really concerned — *[Interruption]*.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has the Floor. Members know the procedure on

this type of question. Other Members, and the Chairperson of the Committee, will have opportunity to ask questions. Until that point comes, the Minister has the Floor.

The Minister of Education: If people are genuinely concerned about our special educational needs children, as I am, they will join with me and parties across the board in support of the establishment of the education and skills authority. I do not want to fund 11 human resource managers and administrative costs in many different organisations. My Department and I have brought forward very progressive proposals to ensure that we get money into the front line to help our special educational needs children. I support the ESA, and my officials have worked tirelessly to bring it forward.

I expect all education and library boards to give the highest priority to the funding of special educational needs children and their parents. Those children are the most vulnerable in our school system. They deserve their summer schemes. They should have their entire summer schemes. Their families also deserve that support.

Three boards have made that decision, and I am not going to attempt to justify poor decision-making. My Department has given significant amounts of funding to the boards. Their budgets have been reduced by a small amount and I fail to understand how they could not have found those savings from their administrative budgets rather than cutting front line services. That is an issue for the five education and library boards, particularly the three boards that have cut the schemes. I hope that they will reconsider their decision.

Mr Savage: I thank the Minister for coming here today. Does she agree with me that the decision to cut the expenditure on children with special needs in the Southern Board area is deplorable? Does she accept that there are major equality issues involved?

I am not playing politics with this issue: this is very serious. Bearing that in mind, and given that she received an urgent meeting request from me 10 days ago, will the Minister meet me and certain people involved with the issue so that we can try to get it sorted out? There is an opportunity to do something. Special needs must be treated in a special way. These are special people. The parents of those children must also be treated in a humble way. There is

an opportunity to do something to relieve the problems and situation that we have presently. These are big issues, and they must be addressed.

The Minister of Education: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist sin. I have already answered the question about my opinion on the decision-making. There are equality issues here in relation to our special needs children and their family members, because their family members badly need a break.

In the first instance, it is an issue for the boards. The boards have taken those decisions, and I respectfully suggest that there should be a cross-party, all-party — not just certain people — delegation to meet the boards that have cut summer schemes. Members would rightly criticise me if I intervened where it is not my locus to intervene. Following that meeting, we will see where we can take it.

I have made it absolutely clear that those children should have their summer schemes. I have also made it clear that I expect the support of the Member's party. I accept that he is not playing politics with the issue, but the best way of dealing with such issues is to have the education and skills authority in place, where there will be cohesiveness and consistency in making decisions, and where we will not squander and waste money on the administration of boards, as we currently do, rather than spending it on front line services.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education (Mr Storey): First, before I speak as Chairperson of the Education Committee, I am extremely disappointed, as a Member, in the way that the Minister has answered the questions today. We are glad that she has actually decided to attend, but to make a political point in relation to the children who are the most vulnerable in our society is disgraceful.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Mr Storey that he is asking a question as the Chairperson of the Education Committee, not in a personal capacity.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will also clarify that I said that I would make my opening remarks as a Member. I now ask the question —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I made it very clear that you are asking a question as the

Chairperson of the Education Committee. Mr George Savage has spoken as a private Member; you are speaking as the Chairperson of the Education Committee, and not in a personal capacity.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: As Chairperson of the Education Committee, I ask the Minister whether, in light of the issues around the summer schemes that are now in a number of areas across Northern Ireland, she is proactively examining the consequences of the cut. The Minister has a responsibility for the boards' resource allocation plans. Will the Minister and her Department accept the boards' plans that indicate those cuts? There are clearly questions around what arrangements were made to assess the equality impact of the decision; how much consultation took place with the parents and children; and how much notice was given to them of the decisions.

The Minister of Education: Go raibh maith agat as na ceisteanna sin. Thank you for those questions. I make no apology for making the point that we should use our resources wisely. I make no apology for saying that instead of having 11 organisations, we should have one. I make no apology for saying that in these tight financial times, we have to make sure that the money gets to the front line and that we do not squander it on administration, as has been happening.

It causes me concern that the Chairperson of the Education Committee does not see the link between squandering money on administration and various organisations, and the pressure on front line services. We all have responsibilities, and I am taking mine very seriously. I want to get money to front line services. I want consistency of practice right across the North of Ireland, not different practices in each board area.

My Department will, of course, liaise with boards on many different issues. On every occasion, I have made it absolutely clear to the boards that I do not want to make savings on front line services or in respect of our special needs children; I want to make them in administration. I look forward to the support of the Chairperson of the Education Committee and its members, because I assume that they share my view.

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

I CAN Centre

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Speaker has received notice of a second urgent oral question under Standing Order 20A to the Minister of Education.

Mr Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I will not take a point of order until after the urgent oral question.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Education what action she will take to keep the I CAN centre in Ballynahinch open, ensuring it continues to provide intensive speech and language therapy for children with severe communication difficulties as an integrated education and health facility, following the decision on Thursday 24 June 2010 by commissioners at the South Eastern Education and Library Board not to fund the educational element; and whether the Minister will agree to an urgent meeting with an all-party delegation on the issue.

The Minister of Education (Ms Ruane): Tá acmhainní de £78.7 milliún tugtha ag an Roinn Oideachais do Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlaine an Oirdheiscirt mar chuid de leithdháileadh blocdheontais óna maoiníonn an bord réimse seirbhísí.

The Department of Education has provided resources of £78.7 million to the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) as part of a block grant allocation from which the board funds a range of services. The South Eastern Education and Library Board determines its own budget priorities. Accordingly, it decided that it was not in a position to prioritise funding for the continuation of the I CAN centre in Ballynahinch.

Education and library boards have responsibility under legislation to identify and make provision for children with special educational needs in their area. It is to ensure that local needs are identified and met that such roles and responsibilities are delegated to education and library boards; they are best placed to direct funds to local provision that most effectively meets the special educational needs of children in their areas. It is a matter for the South Eastern Education and Library Board to ensure

that the special educational needs of children, including those who attend the I CAN centre, are met, in line with the board's responsibilities.

As with other education and library boards, the SEELB is required to submit a plan detailing the services that it will provide within its available resources. I share the Member's disappointment that the South Eastern Education and Library Board commissioners, following their meeting with the cross-party delegation on 24 June, claimed that they were unable to alter their earlier decision to discontinue funding for the I CAN centre.

I understand from the chief executive of the SEELB that the board has considered the funding options that were presented by the cross-party delegation, but it claims that it cannot fund those options. The commission said that it was unable to change its earlier decision. It is up to the board to allocate its block grant funding following a robust assessment of need in its area. Again, much like my answer to the previous question, I would prefer that money be taken from the administration budget than from front line services. That is my clear direction to boards.

I attended a meeting with an all-party delegation on 17 May at which I welcomed and encouraged a proposal from that delegation to convene a meeting between the South Eastern Education and Library Board, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and the Department for Social Development. Senior officials in my Department have also discussed funding of the I CAN centre with the chairperson and the chief executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board. I have made my role in the issue clear and reiterate that I absolutely believe that front line services should not be cut. In fact, I ring-fenced funding for speech and language services in the South Eastern Education and Library Board. I do not believe that we should be cutting front line services. Administrative services should be cut.

Mr Givan: The Minister will be aware of the devastation felt by parents at the commissioners' decision and the anguish that those parents are going through because their young children will not get the assistance that they so desperately want.

I appeal to the Minister to take decisive action against the commissioners, who were put in place under direct rule and are accountable to nobody, so that those with special needs, who

do not have the ability to speak in English or, for that matter, Irish, are given the same equality of opportunity as everyone else and get a fair chance at life.

3.45 pm

The Minister, by changing the regulation, can take direct action. Will she change the current arrangement whereby a child is allocated a preschool place, money goes to that nursery school, but the child does not attend because he or she goes to the I CAN facility? The money does not follow the child. At the meeting, the commissioner said that the Minister could save the facility if she were to change the rules so that the money followed the child. I appeal to the Minister to change the rules so that those children can get their opportunity.

The Minister of Education: The most decisive action to protect front line children's services would be to establish the Education and Skills Authority.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education (Mr Storey): In a letter dated 11 May, a departmental official said that:

"The Minister will also encourage the SEELB to play its role in this and will assist them as far as she can in doing so."

What encouragement and material assistance has the Minister provided to date to SEELB in order to preserve the invaluable service that the I CAN centre affords to parents, families and, in particular, children?

The Minister of Education: I have provided £78.7 million to the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

Mr Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Will you review the Minister of Education's answer to the question posed by my colleague Mr Savage? The major part of the Minister's response was unsatisfactory in that it was not relevant to the direct question. Will you make a ruling in order to prevent Ministers from making ideological party broadcasts in the Chamber?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member knows fine well that the Speaker, or the Deputy Speaker, has no role to play in a Minister's response to questions asked by Members.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: On a point of order, Mr Deputy

Speaker. Do you have the power to ascertain whether the Minister was speaking from a script prepared by the Department or whether she was speaking as a member of a party rather than as the Minister of Education, because it was quite clear that she was speaking as a member —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member should resume his seat. The Member knows that that is not a point of order.

Executive Committee Business

Programme for Government: Delivery Reports

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly notes the Programme for Government delivery reports up to 31 March 2009 and 30 September 2009. — [The First Minister (Mr P Robinson).]

Dr Farry: I welcome the opportunity to debate and scrutinise the delivery of the Programme for Government. I was going to say that it affords us an opportunity to investigate accountability, but, given some of the comments so far, there is a major question mark over Ministers' practice of accountability. We are looking at a historical snapshot of where we have been, which, although useful, is limited. I fear, and most people share my trepidation, that the delivery situation in real time is worse than the historical position that we are reviewing.

That said, we have to be realistic. No Government in the world, even in the best circumstances, will have met all the targets that they set out in their equivalent of a Programme for Government. I certainly accept that we have had some changes to our economic and financial circumstances that have further limited our ability to meet Programme for Government targets.

I am somewhat concerned by the tone of the debate so far, which has included a certain amount of finger-pointing. It is worth stressing that the Programme for Government was the collective product of what were then four parties in the Executive. Obviously, that situation has changed. Indeed, implementation is also a collective duty.

The Alliance Party was not part of the process of drawing up the Programme for Government, except as being part of the wider consultation process undertaken. However, today we share the responsibility with everyone else for the implementation and delivery of the objectives. Having said that, the Alliance Party is coming from a slightly different perspective, given that it was not part of the original process. When looking at delivery, it is useful to look at the wider context; and from our perspective, the Programme for Government was limited because only some issues were covered. It was not a

comprehensive review of all of the opportunities and challenges that faced Northern Ireland nor was it a recognition of the priorities that needed to be addressed at that time. It seemed to be the case that matters were considered for inclusion in the Programme for Government where agreement was found between political parties, while others, where agreement could not be found, were, essentially, parked and sidelined.

As a consequence, there are areas in which the Programme for Government is light, and there are major areas in which the Programme for Government has nothing to say. For example, post-primary education was one of the major issues highlighted as part of the St Andrews Agreement. It has bedevilled devolution over the past three years but is not mentioned in the document, and I think that a lot of people find that bizarre.

Similarly, although some consideration is given to the economy — it is rightly given top billing in the Programme for Government — there are concerns about the detail of the associated measures. There are questions as to whether there was proper acknowledgement of all of the structural problems that faced the economy, many of which have entered into our narrative over the past number of years but were perhaps not drawn out as much as they could have been back in 2007-08.

As regards delivery, it is clear that there are two reasons why things have gone off course. There have been changes in the external environment that have made it difficult or impossible to meet the very good objectives set out originally. Also, to be frank, there are areas in which delivery has not been possible because political parties have not been able to agree. We must be self-critical and point out that devolution is seen by the public as being a mixed bag. There is an impression that the Executive and the Assembly, to be fair and balanced, are not effective at taking timely and effective decisions. We all need to reflect on that without pointing fingers in any direction.

There is also some scepticism over the public service agreement (PSA) targets, though I am not saying that we oppose the use of PSA targets per se. I understand that the new coalition Government seem to be intent on doing away with PSAs and going back to internal business plans. It is important that our

Executive make an independent decision on what is best for Northern Ireland in that regard rather than simply and slavishly following what happens at the wider UK level. The PSA target system has its uses, even though a number of concerns have been expressed over the specifics of some targets, about whether the baselines have been very clearly articulated and whether the targets are sufficiently output-focused as opposed to process-focused. We had a useful report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office setting out some of those issues.

I will make a couple of final points in relation to what I see as the key challenges that face Northern Ireland. They are reflected in the Programme for Government in respect of the productivity convergence. I welcome the progress that we have seen in that regard, albeit that it is limited by some of our external environment. I have two concerns. The first is the continued comparing of Northern Ireland to the UK average minus the greater south-east of England. Essentially, there is a danger that we are not sufficiently challenging the overall balance or lack of balance of the UK economy as a whole but are comparing ourselves to the other dependant regions. Only three of the 12 regions are net contributors to the UK Treasury. It is almost the case that we are comparing ourselves to others in respect of how well we fight for the scraps from the table. There is also the danger, in the current economic climate, of a false positive; that we close the gap in relative terms but that our situation does not improve.

Finally, in appealing to the Executive for further targets, we should try to benchmark ourselves as a region and as part of the wider European Union. The methodology exists through the NUTS (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics) targets, and we should be benchmarking ourselves in the wider context, not just a UK-wide system.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

(Mr Moutray): I rise for the first time as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development. First, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Ian Paisley Jnr, for his very positive contribution to the Committee and the agriculture industry, and I wish him well in his new role. I thank the Minister for her remarks on my appointment.

It is regrettable, in my first engagement as Chairperson of the Committee, that I have to confirm the criticisms of the Department that are contained in the two reports. Today, we heard that the Department is failing in completing its public service agreements, that it is failing in delivering on key services to the agriculture industry and that it is failing to support rural businesses. That is not a one-off, easily explained failure; it is a consistent failure and one that is steadily worsening.

In the March 2009 Programme for Government report, we saw that 50% of the targets were either red or amber: that is to say that there has been no progress against those targets. One would have thought that, at this stage, the Department would have been alert to those failings and would have taken some steps to rectify the situation. The situation is the contrary: the September 2009 report paints a bleaker picture, with 70% of the targets not progressing sufficiently. Of those, 30% are rated as critical.

On deeper investigation, we see that two of the areas that are rated as critical are reducing the bureaucratic burden on the industry, and reducing diseases such as TB and brucellosis. I will spend a little time on those issues. The September report recommends that the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) intends calling the Minister and the Department to account for their failures through a review process. It is almost as if a naughty child has been called to the headmaster's office. I say "almost" because it is too serious an issue about which to be frivolous. The Committee has received a copy of the report containing recommendations on how to reduce the administrative burden on the industry. It contains almost 90 recommendations, and the Department has accepted two thirds. However, that is where it ends. There is no indication on how or when those recommendations will be implemented; no indication of the impact of their implementation; what impact their implementation will have on the industry; and no indication of the net reduction on the administrative burden on the industry. Nothing else.

The Department will, quite rightly, claim that resources are required to implement many of the recommendations and that, understandably, those resources are not available, what with the cuts imposed on us by the new Westminster

Government, disallowances from the EU and self-imposed cuts, such as the overvaluation of Crossnacreevy. However, the Department cannot use those as an excuse to do nothing. A recent survey conducted during the Balmoral Show identified too much paperwork and bureaucracy as the main problem faced by farm businesses. It is imperative, therefore, that that burden is lifted from the industry, and that it be allowed to do what it does best, namely producing food of the highest quality without unnecessary and costly hindrances. That should be the Department's priority. I assure Members that it will be my priority to ensure that the Department does not sit back, and that it brings the recommendations contained in the report into effect promptly.

The second area that I want to mention is disease control. I put on record my abhorrence at the recent deliberate infection of cattle with brucellosis in south Armagh. I support the Minister and her officials in calling on those with information about that sickening practice to contact the Department and the police immediately. It is a threat to our industry and to our economy, and those criminals cannot be allowed to profit from such disgusting practices.

In June 2009, the Public Accounts Committee published a report on the control of bovine tuberculosis in Northern Ireland.

4.00 pm

In its report, the Committee stated:

"Spending hundreds of millions of pounds on a programme that is not explicitly aimed at the eradication of bovine TB seems an extremely poor use of taxpayers' money."

The Committee recommended that the focus be on eradication, not containment, and that the Department review its TB targets. Unfortunately, the Department did neither. It persists with a programme that has cost Northern Ireland almost £200 million over the past 10 years. The programme continues to cost £20 million each year and will cost a further £100 million before the Department is able to state whether it is even in a position to commence an eradication programme. As for the review of TB targets, the Department's response was to separate the two diseases from the target, because the failure to contain bovine TB also drags down the target for brucellosis. Therefore, the Department's response was to massage the figures.

I echo the words of my predecessor, the Committee and, most importantly, the farming industry when I say that we must stop messing around with studies and surveys. We must stop massaging figures and making poor use of taxpayers' money. We must eradicate the disease now.

I welcome the opportunity to speak today, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I assure you and the farming industry that I will continue to press the Department for improvements in the areas that I outlined.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr McElduff): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Bhí cruinniú againn mar Choiste ar an ábhar seo ar 24 Meitheamh.

At its meeting of 24 June 2010, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure considered the Programme for Government delivery report, which tracks progress up to 30 September 2009. Two departmental targets for the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) fall into the red category, which means that little or no progress has been made and that their delivery will be achieved only with a significant delay, if at all.

One of those targets is the Department's goal, subject to the normal approval processes, of having an operationally viable and commercially sustainable multi-sports stadium for the North by 2011. Members will be aware that that stadium is not now proceeding. Indeed, the Minister's predecessor made that announcement some 16 months ago in February 2009. The Committee asked Minister McCausland to brief it on his assessment of the business cases for providing stadia development for Gaelic games, rugby and soccer in June 2010, but the Minister deferred that briefing until the autumn. The Committee is concerned that progress is slow and that there are still no adequate stadia facilities to meet the strategic requirements of the three sporting codes: the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) Ulster Branch and the Irish Football Association (IFA).

The other target in the red category is the Department's goal of halting the decline in adult participation in sport and physical recreation by 2011. When the first Programme for Government delivery report was produced in June 2009, the Committee quickly picked up on

the fact that that goal was not on track and, in December 2009, agreed to undertake an inquiry into adult participation in sport and physical activity. The evidence sessions began in January 2010, and the Committee is currently finalising its report. At this stage, all the evidence points to the importance of adults undertaking five bouts of exercise lasting at least 30 minutes each week, as the Chief Medical Officer suggested to the Committee. Sport and physical activity are crucial to physical and mental health. They can also have a range of knock-on benefits for educational achievement and community cohesion and contribute to the shared and better future agenda.

The Committee welcomes the fact that 'Sport Matters: The Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009 – 2019' was launched, albeit quietly, in June 2010. However, when we take into account the fact that the draft strategy was produced in 2007, there was a considerable delay in its being approved by the Executive. Valuable time has been lost in implementing the strategy, particularly in relation to the targets for halting the decline in adult participation in sport and physical activity.

Four departmental targets fall into the category of amber, that is, where there is significant doubt about the achievement of the target outcomes in the targeted time frame. One of the targets with an amber rating is the goal of investing £110 million in our sports facilities by 2011, thereby ensuring a lasting legacy from the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The Committee is concerned about the serious delay in taking forward stage two of the elite facilities programme.

Another of the targets in the amber category is the goal to increase to 125,000 by 2011 the number of children and young people who participate in sport and physical recreation and to have at least a third of people with disabilities so participating by 2013. As I said, the Committee is finalising its inquiry report into the low levels of adult participation in sport and physical activity. Although our focus has been on adults, the inquiry recognises that having an active adult population relies heavily on people participating in sport and physical activity from a young age and on their continuing to do so into adulthood. The Committee was concerned to learn about the findings of a recent Sport NI survey. It found that only 17% of primary schools provide children with two hours of physical

education a week, which is the Department of Education's recommended standard.

The Committee argues that participation in sport and physical activity can be a lifeline both for people with a disability and for their families. Last Thursday, the Committee received a briefing from the Department and Sport NI on the business case that is being considered to provide core funding for Special Olympics Ulster. On a number of occasions, the Committee has met with representatives from Special Olympics Ireland and from Special Olympics Ulster. It has been greatly impressed with the work that those organisations do with athletes and their families, as well as with the knock-on benefits that such work brings for education and health. I commend Aoife Kerr, Orla McCartan, Sammy Jo Sweeney and Francie Meenagh and their coach Paul Sweeney from the Starbreakers Special Olympics Club in Carrickmore, County Tyrone for their brilliant achievements at the Special Olympics Ireland, which were held in Limerick recently.

Another target with an amber rating falls under PSA 5, which relates to tourism. The goal is to deliver £229 million of capital investment by 31 March 2011 in the culture, arts and leisure infrastructure through a programme of arts, sports, museums, libraries and PRONI capital projects. The Committee is concerned that the Department is not progressing quickly enough in those areas.

Finally, the House will know that the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure is asking the Arts Council to increase the amount of funding that it directs towards community arts and traditional arts, not least amateur drama and traditional arts, so that participation levels in artistic activity can be increased.

In conclusion, the Committee is concerned that two of the Department's targets are rated as red and four are rated as amber. It urges the Department to do all that it can during the remainder of the current Programme for Government period to ensure that those targets are met.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development (Mr Hamilton): The Committee recently considered the latest Programme for Government delivery report and reviewed in detail the Department's end-of-year position report and revised corporate plan. Along with most Committees, the Committee for Social

Development makes the best use that it can of all those documents when reviewing departmental progress against public service agreement targets.

The March delivery report indicated that certain urban regeneration projects, which are part of PSA 12, were behind schedule and were to be the subject of a review meeting. The Department for Social Development (DSD) advised the Committee of its opposition to what departmental officials termed an additional layer of bureaucracy. Perhaps, therefore, it is not surprising that the September delivery report gave limited information on the reasons for project delays other than a reference to the “prevailing economic climate”. No information was given on corrective action. Perhaps it is also not surprising that some of the projects are still running late. I hope that, in the First Minister's response to the debate, he may be able to tell the House about the effectiveness of the review meetings in securing project recovery.

I will now turn to the key PSAs and related projects that fall to the Department for Social Development. The Committee welcomed departmental progress in delivering elements of PSA 7, particularly in respect of measures to improve the recovery of child maintenance from absent parents. Members were, however, concerned about the jobs and benefits service. As the House is aware, the Social Security Agency is to reduce its staffing levels — hopefully, without redundancy — to offset the ongoing cost of the equal pay settlement. The agency must also shoulder the administrative burden of Westminster welfare reforms, including the large-scale transfer over a number of years of benefit claimants to employment and support allowance. The House can be assured that the Committee will continue to use the delivery reports and other scrutiny mechanisms to review that important aspect of the Programme for Government.

PSA 11 includes the regeneration of former military sites. The reds and ambers include the Crumlin Road/Girdwood Barracks development and the Fort George and Ebrington Barracks projects in the north-west. The delays to those projects are well publicised. The Committee for Social Development and the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, which have a joint oversight role, will continue to take an active interest in those projects in respect of the understandable

sensitivities that exist and in recognition of the fact that, if developed appropriately, both sites can be great economic generators for the respective cities in which they are placed.

The delivery reports also refer to PSA 12, which includes housing and urban regeneration. The housing statistics appear to be good, and targets are, largely, on track for achievement. The Committee still wants procurement frameworks in place for social housing development so as to minimise costs and ensure value for money at every level. Given the frequent references to the neighbourhood renewal strategy in annexe 4 of the September delivery report, the Committee is eager to learn about the Department's mid-term review and improved delivery model for that strategy. I am sure that the Committee will continue its close scrutiny of the neighbourhood renewal strategy in respect of all those matters.

The reds, ambers and amber/greens for PSA 12 are associated with urban regeneration projects. As the Social Development Minister indicated in the House last week, those projects bring direct and obvious benefits to the construction industry, but they also hugely assist the economy indirectly. I hope that the Department will do all that it can to bring those important projects in on time and to cost. In the current economic difficulties, those regeneration projects may well prove to be of considerable and sustained assistance.

Mr Elliott: This is an important issue. My first point is to call into question the effectiveness of the monitoring process. Members of the OFMDFM Committee and the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will not be surprised to hear me say that some of the areas are failing. For example, the child poverty target, which has an amber rating at the moment, aims to reduce child poverty in Northern Ireland by 50% by 2010 and to eliminate it by 2020. Although it is clearly failing in those aspects, it still receives an amber rating. The same can be said for the development of the Maze/Long Kesh site, for which the master plan was scrapped and we entered a whole new process. I am not debating the rights and wrongs of that decision, but the fact that it still receives an amber rating must call into question the mechanism by which it is evaluated.

Other areas are in the same category, and I will touch briefly on a few areas. The First Minister

and Mr Moutray mentioned bovine TB. The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee got information in the June monitoring round that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development had to bid for money — about 40% of the entire budget — for bovine tuberculosis incidents. There is clearly something wrong with targets when, in the first monitoring round of the year, a Department has to bid for an additional 40% of an overall budget. We need more specific and much better organisation of those budgets and, indeed, of the Programme for Government.

4.15 pm

I am concerned as to why there has not been a review of the Programme for Government, particularly given the current fiscal climate. We have huge pressures on our finances. That issue has come before the House on many occasions over recent months, and I am concerned as to why we have not had a more substantive review of the entire Programme for Government, given the times that we are in.

Looking at the target of generating £300 million of capital realisations by 2011 and approximately £1 billion by 2018, we have to ask whether those targets are actually limiting the Executive's movement in that area. That is why the Executive and Departments would benefit from a review. We have heard from a number of Committee Chairpersons, and it would give them the opportunity to look at those areas afresh. My colleague Mr Kennedy has referred to the child poverty issue, and I know from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister that a review mechanism is clearly needed. I do not know whether it is right to change the targets. I am reluctant to ask for targets to be changed, but we need a review of how we realise them. Without a review, the Departments will suffer, because they will not be able to achieve their targets, some of which may be unrealistic. My big query is why we cannot have a fundamental review of the Programme for Government and bring it to the House as soon as is reasonably possible.

Mr McDevitt: The Programme for Government was hailed as a document that would put the economy at the heart of everything that we would do in this region during its tenure, yet when one looks at the performance and all the key economic indicators within it, it is poor. In

PSA 1, which relates to productivity growth, 17 out of the 27 objectives are not on target. In PSA 3, which relates to employment growth, seven out of the 12 objectives are not on target. PSA 5 relates to tourism, which is a key foundation stone of economic growth in this region, yet five out of six objectives are not on target.

I suppose that that is not a surprise given that Professor Richard Barnett from the panel for the independent review of economic policy already found that there was no connection between what we have said on paper and what we have done in reality. However, it is very sad to see that as early as September 2009, before the very people who brought the report to the Assembly acknowledged that we are in the heart of a deep and significant recession, the performance was already so off target that most of its self-declared indicators would be missed.

Looking across other portfolio areas, such as my own area of responsibility in regional development, it is interesting to note that the Department for Regional Development (DRD) has met most of its targets according to the Programme for Government, yet the reality on the ground is very different. For example, a pledge was made some years ago that 35% of all money invested in transport in this region would go into public transport, yet today we are struggling to achieve 12% or 13%. We have bought a lot of buses and ticked the box in the Programme for Government, we have bought some new trains and that has ticked another box in the Programme for Government, but traffic and journey times on all our key arterial routes have not reduced. In fact, there are 17% more cars on all our arterial routes today than there were at the beginning of the Programme for Government.

The same is true of car ownership. The objective was meant to be to get people out of their cars and to reduce our car dependency. Yet, car ownership is at an all-time high and continues to grow. Furthermore, average bus speeds were meant to be increased by 15%. However, they are slower today than they were at the turn of the noughties. Buses travel more slowly in this city than they did 10 years ago. Therefore, we have a problem. How can you meet your targets and fail your objectives? It is an important issue. How can you meet your targets and not improve the quality of life of the people whom those targets are meant to serve? That can happen in two ways: either Departments fiddle

their targets, or they do not understand what they are meant to be doing. I am not sure whether that is due to unwillingness, inability or a combination of both.

The truth is that the Programme for Government is presiding over growing inequalities. Transport inequalities, for example, mean that someone who does not own a car will be worse off today than someone who does own a car. Members mentioned health inequalities, so I will not rehearse them. There are also inequalities in income differentials. All the PSA targets to address inequalities in earnings between men and women, for example, are being missed.

What can be taken from that? Only that, although much money is being spent, and people have been busy writing many policies, those policies are not having their intended effect or were written simply to pay lip service to someone else's agenda.

In the real world, there is no confidence in the Executive's work. As other Members said, there is also little confidence in the Assembly's work. When I read the delivery reports, I wonder whether the public are, in fact, talking sense when we meet them in the street and they criticise the Assembly.

It is worth noting a couple of other matters. As I said at the start of my contribution, the Programme for Government is about putting the economy at the heart of everything that the Assembly wants to do. However, despite having spent more than £100 million on capital projects, DRD created only eight jobs under social clauses for the long-term unemployed. Again, the objective was noble, but the Assembly failed to meet it.

Ms Anderson: Will the Member give way?

Mr McDevitt: I will, of course, give way. I will get an extra minute added to my time.

Ms Anderson: I accept what the Member said about DRD and social clauses. However, does he also acknowledge the fact that, with regard to the social requirements that must be built into procurement contracts at the stage at which they go to the European Union to be awarded a tender, DRD is the only Department that currently places those social requirements into procurement contracts? Much social housing work is being done throughout the North, but social requirements have not been built into any

contracts that have so far gone to Europe from the Minister for Social Development.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McDevitt: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I wonder how much of the extra minute I will be allowed to use.

I do not accept the Member's intervention. I believe that she will find that social clauses have worked in the development of the Titanic Quarter. It is a question of showing genuine leadership, intent and determination to match the commitment that is on paper in the Programme for Government with actions on the ground.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel (Ms J McCann): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On the Committee's behalf, I welcome the opportunity to participate in today's debate on the Executive's Programme for Government delivery reports for 2008-09 and for April 2009 to September 2009. Some Members already pointed out, and expressed their disappointment, that we are debating a report for 2008-09 one full year after it was presented to the Assembly and that the full-year report for 2009-2010 is not yet available for our consideration.

The Committee's interest in delivery reports is threefold. First, the performance and efficiency delivery unit (PEDU) is a business area in DFP that monitors departmental returns on expenditure and delivery of Programme for Government goals and PSA targets alongside counterparts in OFMDFM. Members continue to monitor PEDU's work with interest.

Secondly, the Committee takes seriously its responsibility to scrutinise the performance of DFP against its PSA targets and related business plan objectives. In June 2009, while scrutinising DFP's performance against PSA targets and departmental business objectives for 2008-09, the Committee was alarmed to note significant discrepancies between the Department's own assessment of its achievements and those reported in the end-of-year delivery report.

I want to give the House two examples. A DFP target to roll out a single-telephone-number point of contact to all remaining Civil Service Departments and agencies on a phased basis

from October 2009 onwards was awarded green status by the Department and reported as being on track for achievement. However, the end-year delivery report recorded the status as amber, which indicates that there is significant doubt about whether that outcome can be achieved within the target time frame.

Similarly, the target of full implementation of the delivery of human resources services through HR Connect by November 2008 was reported by the Department as being substantially achieved, although the end-year delivery report recorded it as having red status, signalling that the delivery of the targeted outcome is likely to be achieved but with significant delay. Although those discrepancies have largely been addressed in the latest six-monthly report, the Committee wants to place on record its ongoing concern that PSA targets continue to be awarded a green status when target dates for completion have clearly been missed, often by a significant period.

Finally, in the wider context, the Committee has a remit to consider strategic and cross-cutting public finance issues. It is now time for the Executive to urgently review their Programme for Government so that they can clearly set out the services and policies that must receive the highest priority in the upcoming period of further budgetary savings and efficiencies.

What I am saying today is not new. In June 2007, on behalf of DFP, the consultants PKF published a review of forecasting and monitoring of financial information in the Civil Service. The report recommended a more transparent link between inputs and outputs to enable the setting of Budgets that are better linked to performance targets. In recent weeks, the Audit Office published a good practice efficiency checklist that recommends a priority-based approach to budgeting and spending. In its 2007 report on the Executive's draft Budget 2008-2011, the Committee recommended closer alignment between the revised Budget and the revised Programme for Government. Specifically, it called for more visible linkages between Programme for Government priorities and goals, PSA objectives and the allocations, departmental objectives and spending areas in the Budget.

It is clear that that aspiration has not been met in the 2008-2011 Budget and Programme for Government period. Indeed, the lack of timely

information by way of delivery reports further hinders effective scrutiny. For example, the Assembly recently approved the Main Estimates for 2010-11. However, as Members, we were unable to judge the Estimates in the context of prior departmental performance as we did not have the proper information.

The Committee's recent report on its inquiry into public sector efficiencies and its forthcoming report on the Budget scrutiny process are also relevant to today's debate. In its report on public sector efficiencies, the Committee noted that the current Programme for Government and PSA framework is cumbersome and overly complex at a time when priorities must be reconsidered because of exceptional budgetary constraints.

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

Perhaps the delay in the publication of the delivery reports is a further indication that the whole process requires simplification. The need to simplify the monitoring of performance is also expressed in the guidance issued by the British Treasury in advance of the spending review, which is due to be completed in the autumn. It has ended what it calls a:

"complex system of Public Service Agreements".

The guidance states that the new approach will include:

"the publication of departmental business plans showing the resources, structural reforms and efficiency measures that they will need to be put in place to protect and improve the quality of key frontline services while spending less."

We are now entering a new Budget process that will establish spending priorities for the next four years. The autumn spending review will provide further clarity on where the greatest pressures will fall. Greater linkages between the Budget allocations and government priorities, along with the provision of more timely and consistent information, will not only enable us to assess performance more accurately but will provide better outcomes for our constituencies and the communities that we represent.

Mr Spratt: I apologise to the First Minister for not being in the Chamber when he spoke earlier. I was at a meeting in Belfast city centre and was unable to be here.

4.30 pm

Since I came into the Chamber, a couple of issues have been raised on which I, as a member of the OFMDFM Committee, would like to comment. The Committee did considerable work on child poverty. I listened to what Mr Elliott had to say about the targets that have been set to reduce child poverty by 50% in 2010 and to eradicate it by 2020. Given the economic situation, those targets will be difficult to achieve. It would be good for the Executive to re-examine the agreed targets, because their achievement is now, probably, impossible.

Mr Elliott also raised the issue of the amber light against the target for the Maze/Long Kesh site. There has been criticism in the press about the amount of money that has been spent on Maze/Long Kesh. On the past two or three occasions on which officials have addressed the Committee about that site, it was clear that a substantial amount of money had been spent on demolition and that a considerable amount of work had been done on decontaminating the site. Perhaps the First Minister could expand on that. The criticism of OFMDFM is unjustified. My clear understanding of what the officials said is that all that work was necessary to make the site more valuable for any future sale. It is easy for other parties to sit and criticise. In fact, some parties, which are represented in the Executive, want to do so regularly.

The issues, such as those that I mentioned in connection with the Maze/Long Kesh site, must be clarified. I understand that the site is now much more valuable, because of the amount of work that has been done. Perhaps that is why there is an amber light against that target.

I listened to Mr McDevitt's fairly substantial rant a few minutes ago. Perhaps the Executive should set a new PSA target to stop people buying cars, because, according to what Mr McDevitt said in the Chamber a short time ago, that is a problem that creates another problem.

It is easy to criticise, but the current economic situation creates additional problems for the Executive. I am keen to hear what the First Minister has to say in his response about the Maze/Long Kesh site and child poverty.

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment (Mr Boylan): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to outline the Environment

Committee's views on the delivery to date of the Programme for Government. Over the past year, the Environment Committee has been closely monitoring the Department of the Environment's delivery of the public service agreements for which it has responsibility. The Department has lead responsibility for two of the 23 PSAs in the Programme for Government: PSA 14, which deals with promoting safer roads; and PSA 22, which deals with protecting our environment and reducing our carbon footprint. The Department also provides input into PSA 20, which deals with improving public services, and for which DFP has lead responsibility.

Today, I will concentrate on the two PSAs for which the DOE has lead responsibility, but I remind the House that the Department of the Environment is responsible for three goals that are contained in the body of the Programme for Government. The first of those is to make decisions on all large-scale investment planning proposals within six months, provided that there has been pre-application consultation — we are all aware of the economic situation and the downturn that we face. The second goal is to strengthen the protection of key habitats and species by declaring 200 new areas of special scientific interest by 2016, and the third is to reduce landfill significantly by creating a network of new waste treatment facilities at council level by 2011.

When the Environment Committee first asked the Department for an update in June 2009, it was advised that five of the six indicators for promoting safer roads were in the green category, and one was in the red category. Apparently, the lack of progress on the indicator in the red category arose as a result of difficulties in introducing compulsory basic training for motorcyclists. The Committee noted lack of progress with that indicator at quarterly intervals throughout the year and was advised in April that it would be December 2010 before compulsory basic training for motorcyclists is in place. The Committee is disappointed that that PSA indicator remains in the red category.

The Department also has responsibility for PSA 22, which deals with protecting the environment and reducing carbon footprints. The Committee saw a much more worrying picture of this PSA target when it first examined the indicators in June 2009. Of the 15 indicators, only seven were categorised as green, with three described as green/amber, a category that the Committee

had considerable concerns about, as it was introduced after the system was established and appeared to allow Departments to describe progress on their indicators much more optimistically than previously. Four indicators were deemed amber, and one was red. The Department told the Committee that the red indicator was due, in part, to delays in ongoing legal proceedings in relation to a judicial challenge to the environmental report for the draft northern area plan, which was preventing the production of a fit-for-purpose suite of development plans by March 2011. Another reason given was the delays to the wider programme of planning reform.

In June 2009, the Department advised the Committee that the overarching commitment to reduce landfill significantly by creating new waste treatment facilities at council level was also considered to be in the red category. Apparently, that was due largely to the indication from the waste management groups that they may not meet their April 2012 target of having the required infrastructure in operation.

The four amber ratings for indicators of PSA 22 were related to greenhouse gas emissions, the sustainable development action plan, key air pollutants under the air quality strategy and the legislative programme for the reform of planning. That was a year ago, in June 2009. Where are we now? Unfortunately, the situation appears to have deteriorated. Now, instead of seven indicators identified as green, there are only six. Where there was one red indicator, there are now two.

In addition to the ongoing lack of development plans, there is the failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the set targets. That cannot be described as progress. The Department explained that the delivery of the greenhouse gas emissions indicator depends on many Departments, including the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), OFMDFM and DFP, and suggests that the many variables and contributory policies make it difficult to identify a line of accountability for the overall target.

Similarly, the target to deliver strategic climate change and energy objectives through the sustainable development implementation plan has been given an amber rating. Presumably, that is because an implementation plan has still to be finalised that is outside the DOE's

area of responsibility. That highlights one of the Environment Committee's key concerns and is why I am pleased to participate in this debate. The Committee accepts that there is a limit to what the Department of the Environment can do in an isolated position on issues such as cost-cutting and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There is collective responsibility for those issues. If I have one message from the Environment Committee, it is the need for collective responsibility to be taken on cross-cutting issues.

Finally, I wish to note another concern that was raised by the Committee for the Environment in relation to the monitoring of PSAs. As I said earlier, the Committee asked for regular updates on the status of the Department of the Environment's PSA indicators. Based on the submission received, it would appear that that is largely a self-monitoring system. Each Department assesses where it is in relation to its targets and reports those findings to OFMDFM. Although I understand that there may be some quibbling about the final shade of target, there is no independent assessment of actual delivery of outcome.

I will finish by suggesting that perhaps we should spend more time after today's debate considering what mechanism might be adopted to address the delivery of cross-cutting issues, and how a more objective approach to monitoring PSAs might be introduced. Perhaps Assembly Committees could play a role in that.

The First Minister (Mr P Robinson): I thank all colleagues who made a contribution to the debate. I will attempt to respond to as many as possible of the issues that were raised before the time runs out. It might be worthwhile to remind Members of the purpose of the reporting system. It alerts Ministers to each of the targets that have been set and where they stand in relation to those. Of course, because we are dealing with reports that have been worked up over some time, they are never completely up to date, nor should that be expected, but they allow the Committees and Ministers to make an assessment.

After a report is issued, there may well have been changes in circumstances that would cause an amber indicator during the course of the review to have moved one way or the other, so people should not express surprise

because their assessment of where things are is different from that of the report.

I agree with the Member for North Down who said that there has been a bit of finger pointing during the course of the debate. Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the finger pointing is always at the Ministers from other parties. It appears that there are understandable reasons why the Ministers from Members' parties have not been able to attain targets, but the reasons why other Ministers have not been able to achieve them are not just as understandable. We need some balance when we look at those issues. Remember that the Programme for Government means that it is not just the responsibility of an individual Minister to achieve the targets that he or she has been set; those targets are the collective responsibility of the Executive, and they have been endorsed by the Assembly.

There was a form of hand-washing and wringing of hands by the Member for South Belfast as if those policies were imposed by some alien from outer space. Those policies were endorsed by his party and its representative on the Executive.

Mr McDevitt: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: Do I get an extra minute if I do? If not, the Member has no chance. There are a lot of Members to respond to, and I will certainly respond to his comments, because I regarded them as among the most unnecessarily negative.

The Member for Newry and Armagh and the Member for Foyle raised issues on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. I share their concern on the need to take forward actions to address severe child poverty and to resolve the issue of its definition. Work is being progressed to produce a child poverty strategy by March 2011.

I noted the comment on victims and survivors. I remind Members that the strategy for victims and survivors was published in December 2009. The aim is to secure an improvement in the well-being of victims and survivors, and a new victims' and survivors' service will be established shortly. The issue of the cost of that report has been raised. I can confirm that those reports have been produced by officials, and that consultants have not been involved. I am sure that the House will welcome that.

The point that was raised by the Member for Foyle in respect of the need to do more to reduce suicide rates is being discussed by officials, and we will give it the utmost priority. She will not expect me to accept her interpretation of the Executive's decision not to proceed with the review of public administration in relation to local government at this time. I think that there was unanimity in the Executive that savings need to be made. However, I do not agree with the Member's assessment that £400 million could have been saved and that, therefore, if we wanted to make savings to deal with the cuts, that would have been a natural route to take.

4.45 pm

The position is that the assessment had been made that £430 million could be saved over a 20-year period, but that could be done only if certain steps, such as setting up the single waste authority and the business organisation, were taken. However, various parties in the House, but not mine, were not prepared to take those steps. Therefore, the savings that were identified could not necessarily have been made in the way that had been identified in the report.

On top of that, a cost was attached to the issue. Approximately £140 million would have been required upfront. Therefore, over the three-year CSR period, which is when we will be hit most by cuts, there would have been expenditure on the change in local government, rather than on the benefits that would have come after that period. It was for that reason and for that reason alone that those changes were not made. Although there has been disagreement elsewhere, all our parties at least agreed on the model that we would use to move forward. There is no political disagreement about the need for such changes to be made. However, financial issues were at stake where that matter was concerned.

My colleague Mervyn Storey, the Chairperson of the Education Committee, suggested that the indicators that were used to measure PSA 10 and PSA 19 were largely on track for achievement, but he expressed concern about whether that would be the case in reality. The monitoring process and reports are designed to address those issues through evidenced-based reporting and independent central challenge functions. The benefits of those kinds of reports are such that Mr Storey can raise those issues in Committee and question the Minister on

the progress that has been made on each. This is an Executive document that is for the benefit not only of Ministers but very much of Committees. If Mr Storey has any doubts about whether the Education Minister can meet her targets, he will see that, based on what is in the report, the evidence is there for him to make the inquiries and for the Department to be able to give the necessary responses. That is part of the value of the documentation that is available.

I am not sure whether the Member for North Antrim Declan O'Loan was speaking on behalf of the SDLP or the new Sinn Féin/SDLP body that he is setting up. However, he expressed concern about time lags on reports. There is a time lag between gathering, analysing and challenging data and then reporting on the outcome. We are continually seeking to see how we can improve that service. The example of discrepancies demonstrates the value of the delivery reports, because the central team, consisting of OFMDFM and DFP officials, challenges Departments on whether targets have been achieved. We have lively debates at the Executive, where Ministers can challenge whether the assessments are accurate. The delivery reports contain the assessments that the central team and Departments agreed. That is also an example of the value of those delivery reports in helping Committees to assess Departments' work.

Mr McDevitt, a Member for South Belfast, who reported negatively on the PSA targets, almost seems to have forgotten that a recession occurred after the Programme for Government was set. I suspect that any Government anywhere in the free world that set and then assessed their Programme for Government would have recognised that they had not been able to achieve their targets because of the impact of the recession. Instead of the negative comments that he made — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

The First Minister: I wonder why the Member did not tell us that the Executive had delivered some 5,853 new jobs from inward investment against a three-year target of 6,500. In two years, 5,853 jobs were delivered, as opposed to the three-year target of 6,500. Why did he not tell us that the Executive have secured new foreign direct investment projects, 87% of which have been located close to areas of economic disadvantage? Why did he not tell

the Assembly that, in the same period, support had been provided for 30 start-ups exporting outside the United Kingdom? Why did he not tell the Assembly that there had been increased broadband coverage, with further work planned to increase the availability of broadband speeds to 85% of businesses by 2011? Why did he not tell us that the Executive have secured some 9.2% of electricity consumption from renewable energy resources? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

The First Minister: Why he did not tell the Assembly that the Executive have increased knowledge transfer activity from local universities? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister, will you take your seat please.

The First Minister: Why he did not tell the Assembly that the Executive have enabled over 28,000 adult learners to complete a recognised qualification in essential skills and why he did not tell the Assembly that the Executive have successfully delivered accredited education and training programmes to over 3,000 people in the agrifood sector.

Of course, a Member can go around picking out the negative aspects of the report and close their eyes completely to all the positive elements. The Member did that despite the fact that he is a member of a party — I think he still is — that was party to the Programme for Government that was agreed by the Assembly. Therefore, he should be articulating the positive, rather than being the —

Mr McDevitt: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I do not have the time to give way or I would do so gladly, because there is much more that I would like to say about the Member's remarks, particularly his accusation that his ministerial colleagues in his party are fiddling targets and do not know what they are at. Any accusation that the Member makes about the issues in general, he makes about his own Minister. His party leader was Minister for most of the period, and I wonder how she will take that accusation of fiddling targets.

I congratulate my colleague the Member for Upper Bann on his post as Chairman of the Agriculture Committee. On his first outing on the Committee's behalf, he, along with the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, raised

the issue of TB control. The Department has indicated that it will continue to implement TB control programmes. To maximise the effectiveness of those programmes and to improve their delivery, the Department's Veterinary Service is actively engaging with service providers. Additional resources have been made available for writing instructions for staff and for private veterinary practitioner (PVP) supervision. Work continues on improving programme delivery, and the work on staff instructions and PVP supervision started in September 2009. The Veterinary Service is working closely with PVP representatives and will shortly commence rewriting the PVP contract. Those actions are in line with Public Accounts Committee and Northern Ireland Audit Office recommendations.

I hope that the Member will take account of all that I have said, but not ask me any questions on it. As a Member for East Belfast, I have already exceeded my knowledge of agricultural issues.

On behalf of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, its Chairman made reference to the issue of stadia. We are in the final stages of considering proposals from the three governing bodies in relation to their strategic needs. The Executive will look at the outcome of the Budget and at the envelope that, it has been indicated, will be available for the next three years of the CSR. Against that backcloth, we will look at the timing of our proposals.

A number of Members suggested that it might be proper that we look again at the Programme for Government and whether we should consider bringing out a new one. I understand that it would be an easy way forward for us to change our Programme for Government and to reduce our targets. If we changed the Programme for Government, we could have green and amber all over our documentation. However, our outlook, values and ambitions have not changed. Therefore, there is very little in the Programme for Government that we would want to dump. Obviously, when we look at the Budget, it will have to be changed in line with the new restrictions that will be applied, and that will have consequences for what we can achieve in our Programme for Government.

The Chairman of the Committee for Social Development referred to the impact of the review meetings. In each of the five areas that have been included in the review, steps have

been made to take action that gets us further along the line of meeting the necessary targets. The emergency Budget announced by the Chancellor will have a significant impact on what remains of the comprehensive spending review and its associated targets.

Although good, steady progress has been made, we are assured of a demanding period ahead. Many of the targets that are on track to be achieved depend on continuing investment, and we will have to weigh up the benefits of delivering our Programme for Government targets against the investment needed to do so. We must determine whether progress to date is sufficient, or whether we should continue to push forward at a pace, and in the direction, that we originally planned.

I regret that I am unable to respond to all the points that were made. I promise that I will provide a written response to Members to whom that applies. It is important that every Member of every party and all Ministers do everything possible to deliver on the targets that we set.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the Programme for Government delivery reports up to 31 March 2009 and 30 September 2009.

Private Members' Business

Schools: Attendance

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer 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 Beggs: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes with concern the high number of children whose attendance rate at school is less than 85 and that, in some areas, up to four tenths of children have an attendance rate below 85 ; further notes that absence from school will reduce the likelihood of children reaching their full educational potential, will limit their future job opportunities and could contribute to cycles of deprivation; and calls on the Minister of Education to detail the specific action she has taken or plans to take to address this pressing issue.

My interest in children's issues dates back over a decade to when I identified educational underachievement and high levels of suspension and absenteeism in small pockets of my East Antrim constituency. I helped to establish the Carrickfergus children's locality group, and, subsequently, Horizon Sure Start, which supports parents with children in the 0-4 age group in parts of Carrickfergus and Larne. I declare an interest as a member of those groups, which try to enable more children and young people to reach their full potential.

A pupil is referred to the educational welfare service when his or her attendance drops below 85%. It is difficult for children who miss one day in seven — the figure of 85% represents regularly missing one day in seven — to stay with the rest of their classmates.

After the Northern Ireland Audit Office report in 2004, information on those absent from school started to be collected through the Department of Education's Classroom 2000 (C2k) project. It enables statistics by council and ward area throughout Northern Ireland to be presented as per the answers to my Assembly questions for written answer AQW 970/10, AQW 971/10 and AQW 972/10. I urge every Member to examine how that impacts on their local area.

Of all council areas, Belfast has the poorest level of attendance in the 15- to 17-year-old

age group. All Members will be concerned at the levels of educational outcome in parts of Belfast. In Belfast, an average of 167 young people per 1,000 has an attendance rate of lower than 85%. The figures in Cookstown and Moyle are 160 and 149, respectively.

However, at individual ward level, there are some alarming figures behind the details. In Belfast's The Mount ward, for example, the attendance rate of 461 per 1,000 — almost half the children — is lower than 85%. In the Woodstock ward, the figure is 437 per 1,000, and in the Island ward, it is 423 per 1,000. In Northland ward, Carrickfergus, which is in my constituency, the figure is 454 children per 1,000, and in Craigavon's Tavanagh ward, the figure is 423 children per 1,000.

Four out of 10 young children in those wards attend school less than 85% of the time. Children who do not attend school will not progress and do not have a rosy future.

5.00 pm

If we reduce that ratio to three children out of 10 with less than 85% attendance, I could highlight wards in Ards, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Limavady, Moyle and Newtownabbey, and a threshold of two children out of 10 with less than 85% attendance identifies wards from every council area in Northern Ireland.

The Employment and Learning Committee is rightly taking an interest in children who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), and it is clear that that problem starts at school. If regular attendance is not achieved at school, how can we expect young people suddenly to begin regularly attending employment or training courses? Such young people will have difficulty in holding down a place.

The problem can be traced to post-primary school pupils. There is a particular problem in Belfast: wards such as Shaftsbury and The Mount have 423 young people in the post-primary age category per thousand with attendance records of less than 85%. If we adopt the ratio of three children out of 10, I could identify wards from Ards, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Lisburn, Moyle and Newtownabbey.

Absenteeism is an issue even at primary school. The primary school figures in the response to

Assembly question for written answer 970/10 show a pattern of poor attendance in Belfast. In The Mount and Woodvale wards one in seven primary school pupils has poor attendance. The problem of absenteeism starts at primary school and worsens as pupils grow older.

Poor school attendance may be explained by genuine illness, but it may also highlight problems — bullying, problems at home or in the family, or mental health problems — which is why parenting support is so important. The sooner problems are identified, the sooner they can be addressed. There is a close relationship between high levels of absenteeism and areas of need. That is easily apparent from the NISRA indices.

The website of the Department of Children, Schools and Families shows that there are strong links between persistent truancy and poor life chances. Only 8% of truants achieve five or more GCSEs above grade C, and about one third have no qualifications whatever. Consequently, truants are more likely to be unemployed after leaving school. There are also important links with crime, with research by the Youth Justice Board showing that two thirds of truants admit to having committed a crime within the previous 12 months, many while actually truanting.

Other ideas suggested for improving attendance include behaviour improvement programmes and fast-track prosecutions for parents who actively condone their children's truancy. I hope that this debate will make parents more aware of the importance of attendance at school. I favour the supportive approach; it is the best. However, in hardened cases where parents condone absenteeism, penalties are appropriate. A headmaster told me that, where parents are content with their children's absence from school, there is a need for a speedier process and greater powers of enforcement for the authorities.

One of the goals of the Programme for Government was to end child poverty by 2010; we heard it discussed in the previous debate. That target has been moved back to 2020. Members should remember that the teenagers of today will be the parents of tomorrow. Of the 40,000 16-to-21-year-olds who are neither in employment, education or training, it is expected that half will be parents by 2020. How will we achieve our objectives? Absenteeism is

a critical issue, and education is the greatest tool that we have to allow people to progress, gain employment and avoid child poverty. If we want to increase chances of employment and minimise child poverty, we must address absenteeism at all levels.

How has the Minister addressed the issue? She seems fixated with the Irish language and with the ideological obsession that all the world's ills are created by selection at 11. If the Minister is to achieve her objective of allowing every child to reach their educational potential, she appears to have overlooked absenteeism. It should be a clear priority for her. It is a key issue that will have to be addressed if our children are to reach their potential.

I will advise Members why I am so passionate about the issue; it is because of my family history. My grandfather, on my dad's side, started work in Kilpatrick's bleach green on Green Road, Ballyclare at the age of 15. He worked there for some 55 years. He was one of 12 children, and the family lived in a two-up two-down house. By any measure, they were on the poverty line, but because of a supportive family who valued education and had a good work ethos, they all prospered and contributed to society. I want the same opportunity for children today. That is why educational opportunities and parental support through programmes such as Sure Start are so important to me. It is why I value education, and why we must encourage our young people and address the reasons for their not being at school.

The educational welfare service is a Cinderella service. It really needs the co-operation of a whole range of services: social services, health services, the Youth Justice Agency and local communities. I am aware that there is an integrated service working for children and young people in the Shankill and west Belfast area. We spend £3,000 on each child, but many children are not at school. That is not good enough.

Children who are not at school are at risk of offending, which is something that we want to avoid. There are key lessons to be learned from around the world, particularly from Chicago, where Tim Shanahan addressed the problem of failing schools. He improved literacy rates by more than 30% in one year and identified two key issues: the amount of time a child spends

in school, and the need for two hours of literacy lessons in primary schools every day.

When will the Minister address the critical issue of absenteeism? When will it be given the attention that it deserves? We look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say. I ask for Members' support in this critical issue.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education (Mr Storey): Frequent non-attendance means that children miss important schoolwork and disrupt their lessons. I agree with the legal duty and responsibility on parents and education and library boards to ensure regular attendance at school. I commend the Members for tabling the motion, as even the Education Committee has not addressed the subject directly.

I want to use the Committee's recent visit to nurture groups in three primary schools to set some context for this very important matter. As Chairperson of the Education Committee, I give the commitment that we will consider the issue following on from this debate. I will bring it to the Committee this week.

As I said, the Education Committee visited three nurture groups in primary schools across Northern Ireland in Londonderry, Warrenpoint and Coleraine. Approximately 16 schools offer nurture education in Northern Ireland, including at least one post-primary school. They provide a safe and secure environment and literally create a nurturing environment for pupils whose wider experience may be chaotic and disturbing so that they can begin to see that school is a place where they can experience success.

The Nurture Group Network provided the Committee with information on 20 pupils who were at risk of suspension prior to placement in a nurture unit. Only one of those pupils, all of whom were at stage 2 or 3 of the special educational needs (SEN) statementing process at the start of their nurture placement, was eventually suspended. That is progress. In a post-primary school, evidence was provided to the Committee by the Nurture Group Network that, across a sample of 38 pupils, there was an average 5% improvement in attendance following placement in a nurture group. That intervention, programme, set of criteria and initiative have had an effect. The Committee has repeatedly heard widespread support for the view that early intervention with primary or

pre-primary-age children is much more effective than intervention at post-primary level.

It might be expected that it would be more possible to achieve a 5% improvement in average attendance for post-primary pupils the earlier that a nurture group intervention occurs. Good attendance habits would be created, which would stay with a pupil throughout their school career. Therefore, the Committee was impressed with the work of the group that it visited on 16 June. The Committee has also repeatedly pressed the Minister to find resources in the existing SEN allocation to invest in sustaining nurture group expertise, pending possible funding on foot of the Department's SEN proposals.

I will conclude by speaking as a private Member. The proposer of the motion is right to identify the issue of poor attendance at school, particularly in areas facing socio-economic problems. The correlation between those socio-economic circumstances and poor school attendance is no coincidence. The Minister is aware that we have repeatedly asked her — via questions, letters and debates in the House — what she is doing about underachievement, particularly in light of her Department's study on underachievement in cities across the United Kingdom, which clearly identified that there was an issue of underachievement among working-class Protestant boys.

Before she contributes to the debate, I appeal to the Minister: please do not give us the usual mantra of, "It is all the fault of not having ESA". Perhaps she will use an ash cloud from another part of the world as an excuse, or blame Drumcree, but please, Minister, do not blame the problem on anyone other than the Department that has responsibility for —

Mr McCallister: Does the Member not think that he is being overly optimistic?

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: Well, in this job one must have a degree of optimism; otherwise one would despair. The comments in Saturday morning's 'Belfast Telegraph' indicate that it is not only Members of this House who have an issue with the Minister opposite, her lack of leadership and her inability to deliver on these issues. Clearly, the greater community have an issue with that.

Minister, is it within your ability and remit to give some direction to the Assembly today on the

issue of non-attendance of children at school? It could be an example of a matter over which you have some control, to prove to the House that you can do something constructive.

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

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: The Minister's normal approach in the Assembly is to blame everybody else and not to deliver in her role as Minister of Education. I support the motion.

Mrs O'Neill: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I will speak in favour of the motion.

It is rich for the Chairperson of the Education Committee to call on the Minister for clarity and direction on this issue. I do not remember the Chairperson ever mentioning absenteeism in the Committee. Perhaps he will do so on Wednesday.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: Will the Member give way?

Mrs O'Neill: No; the Member has had his opportunity to speak.

If children are not attending school, it is obvious that we must get to the bottom of why that is the case. We need to establish whether there are underlying causes or problems that lead to their non-attendance. It may be that school is not interesting enough for those children and they do not feel stimulated, or it may be related to social problems. We must look at all those issues.

Parents are a key component in ensuring strong links with a child's education. When a child starts school, three key players are involved: the child, the school and the parents or guardians. Schools need to perform their role by being proactive on attendance policies from when a child starts at school, because that is when patterns start to form and it is the best time to reach out to children. Parents need to get more involved in their child's education by encouraging them to learn and to do their homework. Parents must fully understand why it is important for their child to be at school every day.

We can take it for granted that optimal attendance at school is necessary for a child to reach his or her full potential. Continual absences would lead to a child missing out on key aspects of the curriculum, which would

hold a child back, as Roy Beggs said when he proposed the motion. When it comes to personal development, it holds a child back if they are constantly behind and catching up on the parts of the curriculum that they have missed.

5.15 pm

The motion notes that a child's continual absence from school:

"will limit their future job opportunities and could contribute to cycles of deprivation".

Perhaps the Minister will clarify the issues that her Department has encountered in trying to break cycles of deprivation and habits of continual absence. Perhaps she will also advise Members about any studies that her Department has carried out in that area.

Tackling underachievement is at the core of the Minister's vision for education, and I look forward to her taking forward her policies to tackle absenteeism.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I am pleased to contribute to the debate, and I thank the Members who brought the issue before the House. Poor school attendance is an important matter that we should all take extremely seriously. The end of the school year is an appropriate time to review the situation, and I see that the rain has started on cue.

Good school attendance is essential to pupils' making good progress with their studies, and it is especially important to pupils in the early part of their school lives or to those preparing for examinations. It is important to all pupils at all stages of their development at school. In the House, we have frequently extolled the virtues of early identification and intervention in education and health matters, and school attendance can also benefit greatly from that approach. The earlier poor attendance patterns are identified, the earlier a suitable intervention can be formulated to ensure that pupils return quickly to a positive pattern.

Issues giving rise to poor attendance can emanate from the home, school or individual child. That means that early intervention and identification is most effective when a partnership exists between home, school and the education or, indeed, health authority. When those bodies work to support a family and

child to ensure that the issues that prevent regular attendance are addressed as early as possible in a child's school life, the greater the success that they meet. Although sanctions are available, before resorting to court action it is better to make use of every positive approach. However, at the end of the day, in the interests of a child, if court action is deemed necessary, it should not be shied away from.

We need to promote good attendance at school in every possible way. Schools do that by offering incentives and prizes to pupils at the end of each term, school year and key stage. Although all those incentives are praiseworthy, it is necessary to analyse the reasons for poor attendance and to respond with strategies and targets that are aimed at reducing poor attendance.

Often, poor school attendance coincides with a negative attitude to school among a pupil's family group. If family authority figures express a negative attitude to education, poor school attendance may well be a feature of the school life of pupils who come from such households. It is important, too, that children's experience of school be positive and, in itself, does not become a barrier to attendance. If a pupil's school experience is rewarding and positive and takes place in an environment in which they feel valued and affirmed, the chances that their attendance will be good throughout their school life are greatly increased.

We cannot underestimate the effects of poor school attendance on vulnerable children. As well as the devastating effect that it has on a child's future and his or her life chances, non-attendance at school can help to ensure that negative attitudes to education are transmitted to another generation, thus prolonging the vicious circle of underachievement in what is often the most socially disadvantaged group in our society.

Unfortunately, the effects of poor attendance at school are not confined to educational underachievement. They may also be associated with early and ongoing involvement in crime. Families that take children out of school to go on holidays devalue the importance of school attendance. That practice should be discouraged actively by the Department and by all authorities in the educational world.

In conclusion, we have the tools at our disposal, in the form of computer modules available

through C2k, to collect the necessary data to help to address the problem. Generalised descriptors such as "authorised" or "unauthorised" may be too vague.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close, please.

Mr D Bradley: Often, the former term may mask reasons for poor attendance that should cause alarm bells to ring. There is a need for more refined data to inform —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — the professionals involved to set targets for improvement at school, board and regional level —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — and to review them regularly.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Dr Stephen Farry.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat.

Dr Farry: That was a nice little overlap. I welcome the debate on an important subject that overlaps on so many aspects of social and economic policy in Northern Ireland. It is not simply an educational matter.

As a liberal, I believe that it is important that every individual be given the opportunity to develop their full potential; every person has intrinsic value and has a contribution to make. It is important that society bring everyone's talents to the fore, not just for those concerned but for society as a whole. We need a fully trained workforce, particularly in a very competitive global market. We need to ensure that we have a critical mass of people who can play a role. We also need to make sure that Northern Ireland plays its full role and takes every opportunity.

There is debate about post-primary education, the transfer procedure and whether selection should be used. Leaving that aside, however, we should acknowledge that, essentially, condemning some children as surplus to requirement or as failures will affect their motivation to continue in education. We should not deny that the current system has that side effect, which causes problems.

I want to focus on a couple of aspects that have not featured too much in the debate, although some Members touched on them.

Poor attendance is an indication of a higher propensity towards engagement in criminal activities or antisocial behaviour or, indeed, it could be a warning sign of family breakdown. That is not to say that every child who has a poor attendance record is from a broken home or is about to engage in crime, nor is it to say that children with very high attendance records are not involved in crime or antisocial behaviour or come from broken homes. However, there are patterns and indications of risk.

Not addressing the problems of broken homes and crime has a cost implication for society. There are cost pressures that other Departments have to pick up, whether it is the criminal justice system or health and social services in respect of interventions. Our response not just to this problem but to others is to focus on prevention, and, if that does not work, early intervention. We should focus on the importance of collaboration among Departments and agencies. The Department of Education has an important role in identifying the causes of poor attendance. However, education is only one player in what needs to be a co-ordinated response across agencies. The Department, schools and boards should draw attention to problems when they occur at the very early stages because poor attendance will be the trigger for someone to give attention to what is a looming and growing problem.

It is important that the Department and its different bodies encourage a culture of information sharing. We are trying to move towards collaboration, and I stress the importance of that. At times, however, education seems to be one of the laggards in its willingness to engage in information sharing and cross-collaboration with other Departments. It is important that this is one of those areas where that can be taken forward.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: A prime example is the nurture groups that I referred to earlier, which are an initiative supported by the Department for Social Development (DSD). The Department of Education said that it was a great idea and asked DSD to pilot the scheme. DSD paid the money, but now that the money is running done, the Department is not prepared to fund the initiative.

Dr Farry: I am grateful for the Chairperson's comments. We have the problem of a silo

mentality right across government in Northern Ireland, with Departments focusing on their core areas. There are opportunities for us all to save on the cost pressures and to produce more rounded results if Departments collaborate. It is important to battle through the bureaucracy or the culture of people giving priority to their direct statutory responsibilities and foregoing what, at times, seems to be the luxury of working with others, which, in some respects, should be seen as a core function of how Departments try to find that rounded solution.

On the back of this debate, I encourage the Minister to show even greater leadership in trying to urge her Department and the boards to work more closely with other Departments in passing on information about potential warning signs that could lead to wider problems elsewhere. In addition, the Department should look at the particular factors in schools that may contribute to individual students not having an adequate attendance.

Mr Deputy Speaker: As this is the first occasion on which the Assembly will hear from Mr Paul Frew, I remind the House that it is convention that a maiden speech is made without interruption.

Mr Frew: At the outset of my maiden speech to the House, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Ian Paisley Jnr MP, who has moved on to the Mother of all Parliaments. On behalf of my party and the North Antrim constituency, I thank the former Member for his many years of hard work to date, and I look forward to working with him as my new MP.

Ian Paisley Jnr had a charisma that cannot be matched by any Member of this House. I jest when I say that he had an affliction. It is commonly known as a brass neck; a neck that served him and his constituents well. Ian never missed a trick in order to represent unionism in the House, and the House should see that as a loss, no matter who has replaced him. Ian also had a work record that will be hard to match, but I will surely endeavour to do so and to surpass it.

It is an enormous privilege to represent any constituency in this great House, with all its history and drama over the years, but to represent the constituency of North Antrim is, I am sure the House will agree, an extra privilege. I have lived in North Antrim all my short life. I live in the beautiful village of Broughshane outside the very busy shopping

town of Ballymena in the lovely rural setting of Country Antrim, and I will strive to represent all my constituents from Ballymena to Ballymoney, from Bushmills to Ballycastle, and every village and hamlet, street and road in between.

I am a hard worker, and I pay tribute to my parents for that work ethic. I also pay tribute to my wife and children for their support throughout my career. I have great pride in telling the House that I have come straight from the construction industry where I was a foreman electrician for many years. I have worked in the trade for 20 years, and I have seen at first hand the pain that has overcome the construction industry over the past number of years. I have suffered, as have the people whom I worked alongside. With the Lord's help, I am here to do a job of work for them and for all those in the private sector who have suffered so much over the past number of years. Members can be assured of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for that indulgence, and I turn now to the matter in hand. It is absolutely vital for the future of our children and our economy that all our children value and recognise the importance of education. The key to lifting people, families and communities out of deprivation is education. There can be no other way.

The Government can throw as much money as they like into area plans and funding opportunities, and they will do great work and make people's lives better. However, unless people go out and grab an education, things in those areas will stay very much the same and people's lives will be filled with shut doors and dead ends.

5.30 pm

Do not get me wrong: we have an excellent education system, or at least we should have and did have. Not everyone will avail themselves of that system and not everyone has the ability to get to the highest level, but they do not need to. Children need to know that they have pushed themselves as hard and as far as possible and, if they have done that, they will feel good about themselves and have confidence that will take them even further than the education that they have attained.

What are the factors that we should be looking at? First, parents have prime responsibility for their child's attendance at school. There seems

to be a larger problem among Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils, but perhaps that can be understood. The Department and the education and library boards must better educate parents on the importance of their child's education. If children get into the habit of missing school for whatever minor reason, how will they cope when they enter the workplace? The Department should consider an effective programme to inform parents of their responsibilities, and impress on them that the days when their young could walk to the nearest building site or factory floor and expect to gain employment without exam certificates are long gone.

Another factor is confidence in the classroom. Not every child is academically minded, so a tailored system of schooling is necessary to offer an education that is appropriate for each young person. Each pupil has different abilities and skills, and for those who do not wish to pursue an academic path, more attractive vocational opportunities must be made available.

Truancy must be targeted more robustly, and parents and teachers must be assisted with that problem. More can be also done about bullying both inside and outside schools. I will end with a message that is coming from outside the House. How can the public expect the Department and the Minister to deal with the problem when they cannot deal with the Education and Skills Authority; the plight of the education and library boards; the transfer system; the review of special needs; the nought-to-six strategy; area-based planning; the school improvement policy; and the review of school funding?

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. After that contribution, I almost feel the need to pay homage to Ian Paisley Jnr myself, but I will resist the temptation. Instead, I will take matters up with his North Antrim colleague. The motion before the House does not add any value to the debate on poor school attendance because it offers no proposals on a way forward, or any work plan or strategy on how we can collectively improve school attendance. It tells us what we already know:

"the high number of children whose attendance rate...is less than 85 %".

I have done some research, but I cannot figure out which "high number" the proposers

of the motion are referring to. I must look to the motion for that figure, and it seems to be roughly 40%. The motion appears to have been hastily put together, but the motivation behind it is good enough.

Mr B McCrea: I am not sure if I heard the Member correctly, but he seemed to be asking why those particular statistics were contained in the motion. My colleague Mr Beggs was seeking to highlight that there are wards in Belfast and elsewhere — some are in the Member's own constituency — in which, of the children with a less than 85% attendance rate, the rate stands at an incredible 40% to 45%. Therefore, almost half of the children in those wards are not attending school.

It is those specific wards that are the problem for the Ulster Unionist Party, and the proposers of the motion wanted to draw attention to them. I look forward to hearing the remainder of the Member's contribution but, for purposes of clarity, specific areas are affected and the Ulster Unionist Party feels that particular measures should be put in place in those areas.

Mr O'Dowd: I was questioning the validity of some of the percentages and what they refer to. However, the Member's explanation goes some way towards clarifying the matter for me, and, as I said, the motivation behind the motion seems to be well enough founded. We must question ourselves on the issue. We can sit here and get involved in the game of criticising the Minister but, as the Chairperson of the Committee for Education told the House at the beginning of his contribution, this matter has not even been discussed at that Committee. That Committee celebrated its third birthday in May, and I have been a member of it for the past two years.

If each issue that comes before the Assembly is seen as the most important issue, we will keep falling over ourselves because we have no strategy. The Department of Education can be criticised for having no strategy, but the Committee for Education has to have a strategy on education.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I will in one second. Unless the Committee has a thought-out work programme on all the issues affecting education, we will continue to have high rates of poor attendance.

The Assembly is not tackling the issue collectively. I will now let the Chairperson in.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education:

Perhaps I have missed something to do with my role as the Chairperson and Mr O'Dowd's role as a member of the Committee. Is it not the Committee's role to scrutinise the Department's policies? The issue has not been brought to the Committee for Education because the Minister and the Department have not brought forward proposals for a policy to deal with it. That is why I gave an assurance that I will bring the issue to the Committee for Education and ask the Minister what she is doing.

Mr O'Dowd: Far be it for me to outline to a Chairperson of a Committee what a Committee's role is. The role of a Committee is to scrutinise and support the role of a Department, and a Committee has the right to conduct an inquiry into any subject that falls under its mandate. The Committee for Education has had its third birthday and is about to begin its first inquiry, so we cannot point fingers elsewhere. If the Committee for Education gets its act together around a programme of work, we can start to point fingers elsewhere.

Mr B McCrea: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No; I have given way twice. Let me get into some sort of rhythm.

At this stage of the debate, most things have already been said. I have a crucial question to pose that needs to be answered, and I do not have all the answers to it. Why, in certain wards and areas, is the non-attendance rate so high? Deprivation and poverty are factors. Not everyone lives in the perfect nuclear family, and, unfortunately, not everyone has perfect parents. In many cases, a child does not attend school because of reasons concerning that child, but there are many reasons for children not attending school, including the fact that some come from a terrible home life. Some of those children come from homes that have problems with alcohol and in which abuse takes place. That results in a child having no motivation or drive, so he or she does not want to go out to school.

A school should be a place of sanctuary and well-being for such a child, where he or she can go and leave behind the troubles of his or her domestic life. In many cases, that does not happen, not because the school is alien to

a child but because, at times, the pressures on teachers and on schools are so great that they do not identify that a child has a problem. Such a child is labelled a problem child, and, if child A, B or C is not in the classroom, that is sometimes seen as a good thing. Instead of identifying why a child —

Mrs M Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No, I am running out of time. Children are labelled in that way instead of reasons being identified for their not being in the classroom and ensuring that that child receives the support that he or she should get. I know that Members will mention nurture groups, which do an excellent job. If the funds were available, there would be a nurture group in every school in the North. However, we do not have the funds, and there will not be a nurture group in every school in the North. Therefore, we must examine other ways of ensuring that children who are absent —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close, please.

Mr O'Dowd: — from the classroom are rescued at an early age so that they get the education to which the motion refers and that they educate themselves —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

Mr O'Dowd: — away from their terrible home life and out of poverty if that is the case.

Mr G Robinson: I shall concentrate on the impact that poor attendance has on individual pupils' chances for the rest of their lives and how that affects their whole family background. Perhaps an underlying medical problem or possible bullying explains poor attendance, so a child needs to let a parent or teacher know the circumstances. It is in the Minister's and the boards' remit to find ways to address those problems and to ensure that every child in Northern Ireland has the best possible chance in life through the education system. I do not want young people to be let down by the education system, because it is their path to success in life and to betterment for themselves and their families. Therefore, ways must be found to encourage young people to attend school. That is a matter that parents need to monitor and try to resolve as a matter of urgency in the interests of an individual child.

Poor attendance may also lead to a lack of skills in the Northern Ireland workforce. At a time when we are all looking forward to a better economic future, it is essential that young people maximise their skills to benefit Northern Ireland as a whole for the future.

Minister, it is essential that the problem of poor attendance is addressed to ensure that Northern Ireland and all our young people benefit in the future. I look forward to hearing your proposals to address that serious issue. I support the motion.

Mr McCallister: I congratulate Mr Frew on his maiden speech and on his elevation to the House. Broughshane is indeed a very beautiful village and is probably rivalled only by somewhere such as Rathfriland.

Mr Kennedy: Bessbrook.

Mr McCallister: We will go round the whole country now. I see that the Minister was about to jump up and shout "Omeath".

The issue for debate today is very important. Once Mr O'Dowd had finished his role of defending the Minister, he became very passionate about the issue, and I agree with much of what he said in the second part of his contribution. Some of the points that he touched on are some of the reasons that I and others were so disappointed with the nought-to-six strategy presentation to the Committee. I believe that truancy, family background and broken homes are linked and can have a major impact on children's life chances and whether they contribute in education, and in employment when they are older, and on whether they become economically active. All those issues are linked. Our education system is critical to upbringing. That is why the motion is here today.

I will be surprised if, given his contribution, Mr O'Dowd does not support this worthy motion. The motion is not as long as he would have liked because, if we had included references to the strategy, it would have taken forever to read out. That is the role of the Department.

Mr O'Dowd: I reassure the Member that I will support the motion, and I reassure him that I am after quality, not quantity.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: You are in the wrong party then.

Mr McCallister: I was not sure whether he said “quality” or “equality”. He is in the wrong party, or, perhaps, he should change places with the Minister.

Attendance at school is vital. My colleague Mr Beggs focused on the fact that attendance can make a difference in poor, more deprived wards. Other Members mentioned that in their contributions. The figures show a stark contrast. I pay tribute to Mr Beggs for researching the matter and for asking questions of the Department to find out that there is a huge difference in attendance at school and truancy between our more deprived wards and our more affluent wards. What will the Department do about that?

The Committee has an important role to scrutinise the Minister and her Department. I debate whether the role is to scrutinise and support. The Minister may like the Committee to support her blindly on every issue, but that is unlikely to happen. We must reach a stage at which a strategy is in place to tackle the problem. The Minister relies solely on figures on free school meals to highlight areas of deprivation. She has the statistics in her Department. In light of the pilot projects in some wards, will she bring forward a strategy to tackle truancy in our schools? Will she work on that to get the results that we need? The impact on those children's life chances is enormous. Quite frankly, we, as an Assembly, and she, as Minister, will fail thousands of children if we do not address that vital issue.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: The difficulty with the current Minister is that, although the Education Committee wrote to her to raise concerns and included a list of issues that the Committee felt were absent from the early years strategy and the nought-to-six strategy, she still went ahead on Friday and published it. Therefore, what is the relevance of the Minister coming to the House and asking for support when she is looking for money but not being prepared to take advice when she is given it?

5.45 pm

Mr McCallister: I will be even more shocked than the Member when the Minister takes advice from anyone. The nought-to-six strategy was a prime example of that. There were huge concerns from virtually everyone in the Committee room that it was a case of: “so

much for five years' work”. I was disappointed, because I thought that it should have been the Department's flagship policy to look at all the areas.

As my party leader has said on numerous occasions, the problem is not so much at 11-plus but at 11-minus. We are failing children. The purpose of the strategy and the purpose of today's debate is to see what we can do and what the Minister is doing, and will do, to address the issue. That is what we want to hear in her contribution. We do not want to hear the usual warm flannel about the ESA. According to the Minister, if only we had the ESA, the world would be a better place. I urge Members to support the motion.

Mrs M Bradley: School days are supposed to be the happiest days of your life. That is true for some people, but for others it can be 12 years of hell on earth. However, the participation of education welfare officers, working in tandem with schools and parents, should be a positive step in the right direction towards making absenteeism unacceptable.

Numerous debates in this place have centred on underachievement and on providing young people with the educational tools to enhance their chances of achieving their goals in life and enhance the image of a working life rather than one in which the highlight of the week is the receipt of their dole money. It is sometimes difficult for children who come from a family background in which there have been problems or ongoing difficulties to focus on school and its benefits. Sadly, it is also difficult to explain to children that there are benefits in attending school and earning qualifications, when the reality is that they can get involved in illegal practices, such as drug dealing, which result in perks, such as luxury cars, designer clothing, etc. Therefore, we need input from education welfare officers, parents and schools, and communities in order to encourage a change in attitude and approach to school and its importance.

In many instances, the education of parents will have the biggest influence on the child and on the formation of the child's opinions and attitudes towards education. At this point, I am reminded of the need for a comprehensive early years strategy, which is substantive in content and practical in approach, so that it can play its role in affirming a positive approach to

education, and, ultimately, encouraging positive trends in attendance and enhancing the school life of pupils.

The Sure Start programme helps parents and children alike, and an extension to that would help parents and children to avail of that support. However, to deal with the matter in hand, there are issues within issues here, and there are worrying statistics with regard to absenteeism. Those require urgent, positive treatment and attention. I would like to think that when we leave the House today with a firm commitment from the Minister, we will have some insight into her plans to tackle this worrying issue that, unfortunately, has become a trend. I hope that she will reconsider supporting nurture education in schools, because it helps children who need that extra support to enjoy their school years. It also encourages them to attend school.

We also need to consider things that would not have happened some years ago, such as children not being able to go to school because they are caring for their parents. Some children from primary school age up are running their homes because of the problems of their parents. That is a sad situation for those children, and we need to find some way of addressing such issues.

Mr Bell: If the Assembly gets this right and can reduce poor attendance at school, it will have gone a significant way towards reducing the section of the population that will be economically inactive, or become involved with the Prison Service or the Probation Board. All relevant research shows lack of education to be the major factor in people's poor life outcomes and opportunities. It is vital that there be early intervention.

I pay tribute to the Member from Londonderry, who was exactly right when she said that many children of all ages care for people who have physical or psychological illnesses, or who are dealing with the after-effects of alcohol abuse and, more latterly, drug abuse. In that sense, the sins of the fathers are being passed on to second and third generations.

I congratulate Mr Frew on his maiden speech. I must tell him that, until I spoke at a Twelfth demonstration in Broughshane, I thought that the greatest site was in Belfast. He managed to take me through the Braid district to Broughshane. It was absolutely spectacular; it

was like walking through the Garden of Eden — before the Fall, I should add. [Laughter.] I only hope that Hansard has not picked that up.

I turn to the critical issue that must be addressed: parenting. Many agencies, such as Sure Start, put together early interventions that seek to assist parents to overcome neglect by omission or actual neglect. A range of agencies deals with young people who have gone through the trauma of emotional, physical and, indeed, sexual abuse.

That can drive children in either of two ways. In my professional experience, it can drive children to underperform and towards poor attendance at school. Equally, however, it can drive them to over-perform. That is why teachers' professional expertise is needed. In that sense, Northern Ireland's education system has very many highly qualified teachers who take their pastoral commitments seriously and, in many ways, compensate for difficulties at home by providing what one Member referred to as a "sanctuary" atmosphere.

A child's problems must be addressed at the earliest onset, when he or she starts to fail. In that light, I want to take time to pay tribute to the work of the Prince's Trust's Team programme and other agencies that seek to provide a dedicated mentoring service to those children at a critical juncture in their lives — at a time when they fail not only to attend school but in the outcomes that they could reasonably be expected to achieve. In many cases, those bodies can provide a dedicated mentoring service with the help of people who have been in such situations, have walked that way previously, and know where it leads.

I do not congratulate the Department of Education often. However, that project is part funded by that Department. It is a worthy programme that can change the lives of young people at the onset of difficulties. Research from the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) and many other bodies shows that if young people are given educational focus, proper commitment and genuine lifetime opportunities, most of the problems that are associated with chemical dependency, depression and, ultimately, more serious mental health issues can be prevented because those young people have a reason to get up in the morning, and something to do and achieve.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: Does the Member believe that, given recent soundings from the Department that there has been consideration of raising the age for commencement of formal education to six, the benefits of early identification and intervention could be jeopardised if they took place at a later stage in a child's education?

Mr Bell: I do not believe in raising the age for commencing formal education. I have a degree in psychology, although I have never read educational psychology. I believe that Northern Ireland's education system outperforms that of the rest of the UK. It is not perfect; we have to change it in many respects. However, we should seek to retain and enhance what is good about it.

I congratulate Mr O'Dowd on defending the Minister as if he was defending his inheritance. However, I think that we can both agree that some aspects of the issue go beyond the House.

I pay sincere tribute to our education welfare service, which, alongside the Youth Justice Agency and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, has been active in seeking to get young people back into school. I pay tribute to the teachers who have attended the case conferences for many of the children who have fallen through the net. Among other things, they have managed to get those children off child protection registers, through a proper child protection plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close.

Mr Bell: I commend the motion to the House and congratulate Mr Beggs on his diligence in bringing it to us.

The Minister of Education (Ms Ruane): Go raibh maith agat. Go raibh maith agat as an deis seo a thabhairt dom béim a leagan ar thábhacht an fhreastail ar scoil. Muna mbíonn páistí agus daoine óga ar scoil, ní bhfaighidh siad an tairbhe a bhaineann leis na deiseanna foghlama a bhíonn le fáil sna scoileanna.

I thank Mr Beggs and the other Members who tabled the motion for doing so, because it gives us an opportunity to emphasise the importance of attendance at school. It is an issue that my Department has taken very seriously, even if the Education Committee may not have discussed it.

If children and young people are not in school, they will not benefit from the opportunities to

learn that are provided there. Members have mentioned taking advice. I always take good advice, so I look forward to their advice. I look forward to the Committee playing its role by assisting and advising as well as by scrutinising.

Tackling underachievement is at the heart of my vision for education, and we have rightly made it a priority at the North/South Ministerial Council. At every single meeting of the Council, we have heard presentations on underachievement, and lack of attendance is part of that, whether it involves our ethnic minority children; our Traveller children; boys who, in some cases, are switched off by the curriculum; or girls who face particular barriers.

We know that schools and their communities are working in a determined effort to improve the life chances of young people. For example, one programme in the South that was mentioned at a recent North/South Ministerial Council meeting and at an earlier Council meeting on Traveller education is the home/school/community liaison initiative, which focuses on the links between home, community and school. That initiative aims to ensure that when there is a problem, there is somebody who can identify how to bring those three areas together.

In the North, the full service community network establishes strong links between schools, their local community, statutory agencies, the business community, the voluntary and community sector and, crucially, parents. At the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meeting in Warrenpoint last week, we had presentations from the principals of the Belfast Boys' Model School and Belfast Model School for Girls and from the full service community network in west Belfast. All those contributors talked about working on attendance. The Boys' Model School and the Belfast Model School for Girls have significantly increased their attendance rates and achievements and have had percentage rises in the number of pupils getting five good GCSEs. Therefore, there has been an enormous focus on that issue.

The task force on Traveller education will produce a set of recommendations that focus on improving attendance and attainment, some of which will be transferable across all disadvantaged groups and may lead the way in improving overall attendance.

We can aim low and pretend to ourselves that we have a system that is as good as, or better

than, the system in England, Scotland or Wales. However, I always aim high. I am not looking for average, and I compare our system with the best; the system in Finland is achieving for all its young people. England, Scotland and Wales are not achieving in the way that they should, nor is the rest of Ireland. This island is not achieving in the way that it should. So let us not settle for some midway point in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics. Let us aim right for the top and get the best.

If we think that we have a world-class education system, we will have to think again, folks, because we do not.

6.00 pm

Mr Givan: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister of Education: No. There have been improvements. When I came in here in 2007, 12,000 young people, or 47%, were leaving school without five good GCSEs, including English or Irish and maths. That figure has gone down to 9,000-plus, which is something like 43%. I welcome that. We can celebrate those achievements, because that is significant for those extra young people who can get on to at least the first rung of the ladder. It is not good enough, however, because too many young people are not getting on to the first rung of the ladder.

Schools have to play a very important role now. They must provide a support system for those who are most vulnerable, and they must encourage a culture of regular attendance by everyone. When that is not happening, we need to ask why. We need to look at what we can do to support the schools. I think that it was Dominic Bradley who said that we need positive interventions and that we need to understand why some children are not attending school. I support him in that. Of course we need to look at sanctions, but positive interventions are key.

The collection of data and detailed information is a critical part of that process. In the October 2008 school census, my Department collected for the first time detailed attendance data for all grant-aided schools. That related to the 2007-08 school year and was published in April 2009. Information relating to the 2008-09 school year was published in March 2010. Data for the 2009-2010 school year will be published in spring 2011. That is something significant that has been done since I have come into office

here. We will have detailed information for three years, and it will facilitate more in-depth analysis and inform how current approaches to tackling poor attendance might be effectively tailored.

We know that, during 2007-08, at district council level, the highest rate of primary schools with less than 85% attendance was to be found in Belfast, and the lowest was to be found in Banbridge. The ward with the highest rate of primary school pupils with less than 85% attendance was Coalisland South, with 209.8. That equates to 21%, or two tenths. Therefore, there are no wards with up to four tenths of primary school pupils with less than 85% attendance. Perhaps that is what my colleague John O'Dowd was alluding to.

In post-primary school, which covers years 8 to 12, the district council with the highest rate of pupils with less than 85% attendance was in Belfast, and the lowest was in Armagh. Two wards, Shaftesbury and the Mount, had more than four tenths of post-primary pupils with attendance rates of less than 85%. Absence rates for 15 to 17-year-olds show that five wards were above the four-tenths threshold.

The data are based on the ward in which the pupil lives, and, as pupils often attend schools outside that ward, we may need to engage proactively with local communities. We must engage with local communities. The 125 pupils with less than 85% attendance who lived in Shaftesbury were enrolled in 20 different schools in various wards. That is a problem. The Members on the opposite Benches can pretend and delude themselves that the selective system does not make a difference. The energy that goes into that pretence bemuses me at times.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister of Education: No. We should be building good, local community schools, not breaking up primary schools and sending children to 20 different schools in an area.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: What have you done?

The Minister of Education: The Member asked what my Department has done. Every single thing that we have done and every single policy that we have brought in has focused on underachievement, attendance rates and the difficulties that our young people are facing.

Those difficulties may be emotional or related to sexual violence or abuse in the home. Whatever the situation, we are working with Women's Aid and Amnesty International.

We have brought forward transfer 2010. Children transfer from home to preschool, preschool to primary school, primary school to post-primary school and post-primary school to the world of work or further and higher education. Anyone who thinks that transitions are not important does not understand children. If you tell a child that he or she is a failure at 10 or 11, it is not coincidental that gaps start opening up.

We have introduced a good, revised curriculum that stimulates our young people. Fortunately, certain children are no longer at the back of the class not being taught while others are. Jonathan Bell made a very important point with which I totally agree: some of our children suffer mental health problems by trying to over-perform. Psychologists and psychiatrists across the board will say that that is happening to some of our young people. That is something that we need to look at.

Recently, I visited Beechcroft, the new adolescent centre. It is not just underachieving young people who are in centres such as Beechcroft: there are also overachievers in those centres.

Mr McCallister: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister of Education: No; Members had their opportunity to speak.

That is something that we need to look at. What have we done? We have brought forward transfer 2010; we have changed our curriculum; we are working on a literacy and numeracy strategy; and we are working on a Traveller education task force, because that is where some of the worst attendance rates are. Why? Our Traveller children face such problems because the school system has turned them off education. We have put counsellors in every post-primary school for a certain period in the week; we have an anti-bullying strategy across Ireland, north and south, and in England, Scotland and Wales. We are learning from one another.

Last Friday, I launched consultation on the draft early years strategy. *[Interruption.]* I am damned if I do and damned if I don't. We launched it in Cullyhanna, in south Armagh,

where the preschool, primary and foundation stages all work together. I pay tribute to St Patrick's Primary School in Cullyhanna, which is one of the many schools that got an outstanding inspection report. Schools from all constituencies came to Newry last week to celebrate their achievements and their inspection reports. More and more providers from the preschool sector are coming to the fore with very good inspection reports.

Thirty per cent of learning is done in schools, but 70% is done in the community and by parents. The point was made that parental involvement is absolutely crucial. Where generations of parents have suffered and been adversely affected by our poor education system, there are cycles of disadvantage and young people get the wrong messages. We need to break those cycles of disadvantage once and for all. That is what we will do, and my Department is doing everything that it can in that regard.

The Chairperson of the Education Committee may be interested to know that the Education Welfare Service supports schools through proactive work and encourages them to refer pupils when there are concerns about attendance and when the threshold of less than 85% attendance has been reached. It will be useful to the Education Committee to know that the Education Welfare Service offers interventions such as the primary attendance matters programme and the big move programme, which prepares year 7 pupils for the transition to post-primary school.

The Education Welfare Service also provides targeted support for vulnerable groups such as the school-aged mothers project, which supports young women of school age who are pregnant or parenting to continue in education if they wish. Members will be aware that a young girl's outcomes can be significantly affected if she is not given proper support. Members should also note that we have some of the highest levels of teenage pregnancy in Europe. I have said it before in the House and I will say it again: girls do not get pregnant on their own. Our boys and girls need to take responsibility, as does our entire society. We need to put preventative programmes in place across the system on sexual matters so that the best possible age-appropriate information is available at the earliest possible opportunity to all our young people.

I am very aware that children and young people experience stress in their lives, as has been mentioned. There are very high levels of violence against women and children at all different levels — physical, emotional and sexual. That can impact negatively on their capacity to learn and their desire to participate in school. That is why we are now focusing on barriers to learning and developing a pupil's emotional health and well-being programme in partnership with the education sector, the health sector and the voluntary sector. In conclusion, I reassure Members that we take the problem of poor attendance very seriously and we look at all the underlying reasons. I thank our officials, who have worked very hard in that area. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr B McCrea: I feel a little bit like Flash Gordon; I have 10 minutes to save the world. Listening to the Minister go on, I sometimes wonder why she does not get on more with people, because we can agree with quite a lot of what she says. She mentioned a few things. Women's Aid — I recently hosted a reception for representatives from Women's Aid from right across the Province. We talked about that. She mentioned things about children from the Travelling community and the impact of domestic violence; I also launched a report from the Policing Board in the Long Gallery with her colleagues. She talked about some other things to do with sexual health; there is an all-party group on sexual health in which we discuss all of those issues. There is actually quite a lot of information coming from around these Benches, and people can come along and put a point of view. Of course, we are not going to agree on absolutely everything, but we are prepared to have a reasoned debate.

One of the things the Minister said is that she does not understand the energy that we waste talking about transfer and academic selection. Actually, we could turn that around and wonder why she is wasting so much energy on that issue. It is not the cause. There is no cause and effect that she is trying to address. We all do care about educational underachievement. We have talked repeatedly about the nought-to-six strategy because we are all convinced that early intervention is the key. I have to say to the Minister that I am really sorry, but her nought-to-six strategy was not very good. It hurts me to say that, but professionals in that area say that, after seven years, they were expecting more.

The Chairperson of the Committee for

Education: It is not only the nought-to-six strategy, but special educational needs and inclusion. I challenge the Minister to name one organisation that said, when that document was published, that it was the first time the Department had ever listened to an issue that had been raised with it. They do not get it.

Mr B McCrea: I thank the Member for the intervention. I am trying to lift some of the very positive things that the Minister has said. I am speaking directly through you, Mr Speaker, to the Minister about the issues where data is important. The Minister outlined certain amounts of data, which apparently was not available to her colleague Mr O'Dowd. He asked me certain questions, and I went off to get the data. I apologise to those Members whose speeches I missed because I had to go and get it, but here is what the data tells us. This is what the motion is about.

The Minister rightly mentioned the Shaftesbury area in Belfast, with the figure of 428 per 1,000 pupils with low attendance, and the Mount, at 428 per 1,000. However, she neglected to mention the Malone area, at 15.6 — that is 1.5%. The Minister quite often lectures us about what happens in the Shankill or Malone areas. The data are here. Finaghy has a figure of 41.4 — that is 4% — yet in the Falls area the figure is 21%. The issue is that we have data here. I also looked at Mr O'Dowd's constituency, because he raised the issue. In Ballybay in Craigavon, 33% of post-primary schoolchildren have an attendance record of 85% or less. That is a shocking statistic, is it not? That is what we want to draw to the attention of the Minister. The Minister said that she has observed those statistics, but we want to know what actions will come out of that.

6.15 pm

There is poor attendance not only in the post-primary sector but in the primary sector. Although figures for the latter are somewhat lower, which the Minister pointed out, that is still a shocking fact. Does the Minister find it surprising that 15% of children on the Falls Road, 14% of children in the neighbouring ward of Duncairn and 16% of children in the Mount ward are not going to primary school on a regular basis? If children do not go to school, there is little that we can do to help them. The Minister mentioned that school accounts

for 30% of the educational achievement of a child and that his or her environment accounts for the remaining 70%. However, those percentages may change depending on the child's family background. I argue that school plays an increasing and important role in the lives of children from the most disadvantaged areas. Mr Storey made a point about the nurture programme. Children from the most disadvantaged areas need the most help. We are looking for targeted and effective interventions at an early age to ensure that we get the positive outcomes for those children.

Mr Givan: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. The Member spoke about the importance of early intervention in the early years. Earlier today, I raised an issue about the I CAN facility for children with speech and language needs. Does the Member agree that certain children do not want to go to school because their special educational needs are not being identified and met? The Minister could take action on that issue, but she refuses to do so. I am sure that the Member agrees that that issue requires early intervention and that if such an intervention were made children would be keener to attend school.

Mr B McCrea: I thank the Member for his intervention. I also raised that matter today during questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, because we appear to have squandered £60 million, and yet, the I CAN centre needs only £60,000 to stay open.

Although we are entering genuinely difficult financial trials, there is much that we agree on and many things that we can do if we make a concerted effort. I have heard Mrs Bradley and Mr Bradley talk about such measures in the past. There are areas on which we agree and on which we would like to focus, and poor attendance at schools is one area where we can and should make a difference. My colleague Mr Beggs, who led the debate because he was responsible for gathering the figures, has said repeatedly that — and I think that the Minister will agree with this — one of the two most important issues that we can deal with in addressing educational achievement is poor attendance at school.

The Minister said that she now has tracking data. Therefore, perhaps it would be appropriate to see what happened in 2007-08 and what has been the result of the interventions that

she mentioned. In response to an intervention from Mr Storey, she said that her Department has been working on the issue. If that were the case, we would expect to see a marked reduction in the figures. Forty per cent is not a small percentage. Four tenths sounds small but when it is expressed as a percentage — 40% — it does not. We could actually go the other way and say that almost half of the children in those wards are not going to school on a regular basis. Children who fall behind cannot catch up easily. I understand that there are ideological issues about whether a selective system is right or wrong, and we can debate that at another time and place. The real issue is about the need to start dealing with educational underachievement early on.

Mr O'Dowd: In the remaining 60 seconds that he has, will the Member give us some suggestions as to how to deal with that?

Mr B McCrea: I will. First of all, I would welcome proposals from the Minister. However, we need targeted intervention and additional and concentrated resources in those wards in areas of under-education that need it most. We must concentrate on programmes, as highlighted by Mr Storey, that are genuinely effective, the nurturing programme being but one of those.

Mrs M Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mr B McCrea: I am sorry, Mary, I have only 20 seconds left, otherwise I would.

Minister, please take on board, through what I am saying to you now, that we really must do something for our children. For every year that goes by, we are consigning another generation to the dustbin. I am not saying that that is your fault. It is our fault. Collectively, we have to —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up, Mr McCrea.

Mr B McCrea: You must realise, Minister, that if you work with your colleagues in this place, you will get a better result than if you try to go it alone.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

Mr B McCrea: I ask the House to unite behind the issue that my honourable colleague Mr Beggs brought to its attention.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The school bell has rung.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes with concern the high number of children whose attendance rate at school is less than 85 and that, in some areas, up to four tenths of children have an attendance rate below 85 ; further notes that absence from school will reduce the likelihood of children reaching their full educational potential, will limit their future job opportunities and could contribute to cycles of deprivation; and calls on the Minister of Education to detail the specific action she has taken or plans to take to address this pressing issue.

Adjourned at 6.21 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 29 June 2010

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Forestry Bill: Royal Assent

Budget (No.3) Bill: Royal Assent

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed to today's business, I have a number of announcements to make to the House. The Forestry Bill and the Budget (No.3) Bill have received Royal Assent. The Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 and the Budget (No.3) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 became law on 28 June 2010.

Assembly Business

Committee Chairpersons

Mr Speaker: I received the resignation of Mrs Naomi Long as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. The resignation is effective from Monday 28 June 2010. The nominating officer of the Alliance Party, Mr David Ford, has nominated Dr Stephen Farry as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. Dr Farry has accepted the appointment.

I also received notification from the nominating officer of the Democratic Unionist Party, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson, that he has nominated Mr Jonathan Bell as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning. Mr Bell also has accepted the appointment.

I am satisfied that all correspondence meets the requirements of Standing Orders, and I therefore confirm Dr Stephen Farry as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and Mr Jonathan Bell as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning, both with effect from Monday 28 June 2010.

Ministerial Statement

DE: Capital Review

Mr Speaker: I have received notice from the Minister of Education that she wishes to make a statement.

The Minister of Education (Ms Ruane): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ar dtús báire, tá brón mór orm nach raibh mé sa Tionól Dé Máirt seo caite.

First, I thank the Speaker for permitting me this time. I have already done so in writing, but I would like to apologise formally for arriving a few minutes late last Tuesday. I therefore extend my apologies and assure Members that no discourtesy whatsoever was intended. I know that the Speaker knows that.

Is eol do Chomhaltaí gur fhógair mé athbhreithniú ar gach tionscadal caipitil scoile a bhí fágtha i bplean soláthair infheistíochta an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin i mí Dheireadh Fómhair sa bhliain 2009. Tá an t-athbhreithniú seo críochnaithe anois, agus ba mhaith liom an t-eolas is deireanaí a thabhairt do Chomhaltaí ar thorthaí an athbhreithnithe seo inniu.

Members will be aware that, in October 2009, I announced a review of all school capital projects remaining on the Executive's investment delivery plan. That review is now complete, and I would like to update Members on its findings. At the same time, I would like to take the opportunity to inform Members about the constraints facing me in the light of the cuts that have been made to the education budget generally and, specifically, to its capital build aspect.

The objective of the capital review was to validate that each project in the investment delivery plan is consistent with the policy framework and will hence be viable and sustainable in the long term. It was commissioned to ensure that we maximise the impact of the scarce resources that we have available in the best interests of children and young people. A detailed analysis of the proposal for each project to validate them against criteria has been completed.

I am pleased to say that the majority of schools on the investment delivery plan are considered sustainable and viable in the long term and would serve the interests of children and young people well. There are a number of other schools where there are issues that need

further clarification. I did not want to exclude any school where I believe the issues can be quickly resolved and where, with a little work, the projects should be ready to move forward. Finally, I have concluded that a number of school projects cannot be taken forward as currently proposed. More work on those needs to be done by the school managing authorities, particularly in reflecting a more strategic approach to planning provision.

I want to work with the schools and school managing authorities to address the issues that have emerged from the review and to bring forward projects that are consistent with the policy for sustainable schools and with an area-based approach to planning. My Department will write to the school managing authorities and the schools that are in the investment delivery plan to inform them of the outcome of the review, and, where appropriate, it will seek to resolve issues or concerns that may have arisen in the review.

Cé go n-aithním go raibh frustrachas ar roinnt daoine mar gheall ar an athbhreithniú, tá sé de dhualgas orm a chinntiú go ndéanann muid an t-infheistiú ceart agus go dtógann muid scoileanna atá oiriúnach don toadhcháí. Tá mé sásta anois go bhfuil na tionscadail sin a thabharfar ar aghaidh chuig céim na tógála oiriúnaithe don toadhcháí.

Although I recognise that the review has caused frustration in some quarters, it is my duty to ensure that we make the right investment and build schools that are fit for the future. I am now content that we have future-proofed the projects that will be taken forward to construction. Of the projects that are consistent or are likely to be deemed consistent after some clarification, 13 are either at tender or pre-tender stage. I had hoped to be in a position where some or all those projects had been given the go-ahead at this point. However, with a reduced capital budget allocation available to me, we are already overcommitted on capital spend, and those projects will be delayed.

In addition, I would have liked to see another 10 or so newbuilds proceed on site before the end of the financial year. That is still possible if I receive the moneys for which I bid in the June monitoring rounds. If those additional funds are not allocated to the Department of Education for capital build projects, I fear that a delay in commencing those schools for some months

is inevitable. We simply cannot build schools without the money. Many teachers, parents, pupils and governors will be disappointed at the delay. I share that disappointment. To state the obvious, the rate at which the Department can build new schools is totally dependent on available resources. However, my Department's budget has been reduced significantly, and I now face a very challenging position regarding investment in the schools estate. My Department has a net capital budget for 2010-11 of £169 million, which is over £84 million lower in real terms than the net capital budget of 2009-2010. That includes a cut of £22 million that was made to address the increased public expenditure pressures that face the Executive. It would take over £500 million at today's estimate to build all the projects in the investment delivery plan list that are deemed viable and sustainable. If we set that against the available budget, we will see that the future programme is very bleak.

Ní féidir linn dearmad a dhéanamh den chlár tógála atá ar siúl faoi láthair áfach – tógadh 39 scoil nua ó mhí Bealtaine 2007, agus tá 13 eile acu a dtógáil agus cuirfear i gcrích iad ar ball beag.

We must not lose sight of the building programme currently under way. Thirty-nine new schools have been built since May 2007, and 13 more are currently on site and will be completed in the near future. My Department has to implement those cuts despite fully utilising the capital funds available to it in the past two years, completing projects representing an investment of over £253 million in our schools estate since May 2007.

A delay in building new schools means that I will have increased maintenance costs for the existing schools estate. The financial position for maintenance and minor works is also very bleak. I have been able to allocate only £30 million to the minor works programme, which will help to alleviate some of the worst conditions in a number of schools.

I desperately want to build new schools. In addition to the schools on the investment delivery plan, there are a further 100 potential projects at various stages of feasibility study and economic appraisal. All those schools have been identified as having serious accommodation issues, and all those projects need to be delivered.

Is féidir liom a dhearbhu leis an Tionól go leanfaidh mé den bhrú le cistí breise caipitil a fháil sa

bhliain airgeadais seo, agus tá súil agam go bhfaighidh mé tacaíocht ó gach páirtí agus ó gach Comhalta sna babhtaí le linn na bliana.

I assure the Assembly that I will continue to press for additional capital funds in this financial year. I look forward to receiving support from all parties and Members during in-year monitoring rounds. Further, as 2010-11 is the last year of a three-year comprehensive spending review period, I do not have a clear budget in place for future financial years. A new comprehensive spending review will be initiated shortly, which will cover the period until 2013-14.

I appeal to the Assembly: if we are serious about renewing the fabric of our schools estate and allowing our young people to access their education in modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation, we must ensure that capital funding for the schools estate is a priority even in this extremely challenging financial environment. I also believe that such capital investment has the potential to assist the economic recovery, particularly for those working in construction.

Ar deireadh, ba mhaith liom a chur in iúl go bhfuil mé tiomanta don chaighdeán is fearr cóiríochta a chur ar fáil do dhaoine óga. Is ceist í seo a bhaineann le gach toghcheantar agus le gach páirtí polaitíochta a bhfuil ionadaíocht aige sa Tionól.

I am committed to providing the best standard of accommodation for our young people. This is an issue for every constituency and every political party represented in the House. It is a question of priority. It is pointless for representatives to stand up and grandstand on issues such as the capital build programme if they do not follow that through by impressing on their colleagues who sit on the Executive the priority that these projects should, in my view, enjoy, even in these difficult economic times.

10.45 am

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education (Mr Storey):

We welcome the Minister to the House today, one week late. Many will question the sincerity of the reasons given as to why the Minister was not present last week to make an important statement.

The Committee for Education asked the Minister's officials, on several occasions, for the terms of reference for her review on how individual

capital projects would be assessed and prioritised. Indeed, that request was made directly to the Minister at a meeting of the Education Committee on 3 February 2010. At that time, the Minister said:

“the Department will be producing very clear criteria for capital projects, and, at the appropriate time, I will provide those criteria to the Committee.”

One hundred and ten days later, on 21 May, the Minister, through her officials, sent to the Committee a departmental paper on the agreed terms of reference, which included the already publicised sustainable schools policy criteria but not the specific criteria requested by the Committee. When will the Minister provide the Education Committee and Members with the specific criteria on how capital projects have been assessed and prioritised? When will she make available to Members the outcome of this nine-month review in the form of a prioritised list of capital projects that will be given the go-ahead? On 1 June, I wrote to the Minister to again ask how capital projects would be prioritised. To date: no reply, no response. When will she give that information to the House? When will the Minister write to the managing authorities of the 13 schools mentioned in her report?

I make my concluding remarks as a private Member. The Minister said that she wants the support of Members of the House. Until we on this side of the House are convinced of the bona fides of the criteria being used, the reality is, Minister, that we do not trust you to deal with such an important issue and nor do the schools or the managing authorities.

The Minister of Education: Well, the Member is entitled to his opinion.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: So is the ‘Belfast Telegraph’.

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: The capital review will inform a more strategic approach to capital investment decisions and the management of the schools estate. In light of that, it is important that we validate that the capital projects in which we invest are viable and sustainable in the long term.

It is important that the House understands that, since I came into office, we have built an enormous number of schools. We have spent

99.9% of our budget. In the two years preceding my coming into office, direct rule Ministers handed back £62 million in one year and £94 million of capital build money the year after. That £94 million could have built many of the schools on the list. A lot of those schools should not be on this list, because money was approved that was never spent. I have spent 99.9% of my budget, and I aim to continue to spend any money given to me for capital build. My big message is “Give me money and I will build schools” — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: — as I and my Department have done in the past two years.

Secondly, it was essential that we carried out a capital review. The reason for that is that on top of direct rule Ministers not spending their capital funding, they built schools that became empty a couple of years later because they did not plan the schools estate. We are planning the schools estate. We are not going to waste public money building schools that will be empty in two or three years’ time. That is why it is essential that our newbuilds are fully compliant with our policies, including area-based planning, Every School a Good School, the revised curriculum, the sustainable schools policy, the Irish-medium review and the entitlement framework. I hope that that approach is supported by the Chairperson of the Education Committee and by everyone else, because I am sure that nobody in the House would say that we should not be building schools on an area-based planning basis.

I did provide information to the Committee. The Committee has information. I ask the Chairperson of the Committee to depart from his normal way of operating and work with me on this important issue. I ask that, for once, instead of grandstanding, political point scoring and delivering personal insults, he change his focus on this key issue, which affects every person in the House and children in every constituency. I ask people not to play politics with this. Let us do everything that we can to prioritise school building. I have had £22 million cut from my budget. I need funding so that I can build schools. We can do it. We have done it, and we will continue to do it.

Mr O’Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As a member of the Education Committee, I find it disappointing that, every

time we discuss an education matter in the House, our Chairperson acts like a badly behaved schoolboy in a classroom. That reflects badly not only on him but on the Committee. I assure the House that if the Chairperson of a Committee from my party were to behave like that, they would no longer be a Chairperson —

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: What about the Minister?

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member should continue.

Mr O'Dowd: We expect a certain amount of decorum — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: We expect a certain amount of decorum and professionalism from our Members, and perhaps you should learn from that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: The Member is still acting like a badly behaved schoolboy.

To the matter in hand: I welcome the Minister's comment that over 98% — it may have been 99% — of her budget has been spent on school builds. It has not been handed back to the centre; it has been spent. How can the Chairperson of the Committee for Education, speaking as an individual, say that he does not trust the Minister? Surely the figures speak for themselves. Give the Minister the money, and schools will be built.

How does a school get itself on to the building programme? What actions should a school that is not on the list take?

The Minister of Education: I thank the Member for outlining to the House the fact that we have spent money and for his support for my bids to get more money. We have spent the money, amounting not to 99% — it is even better than that — but to 99.9%. That level of spending has never been achieved before.

How will a school get on to the school building programme? In his report, George Bain recommended a more strategic approach to planning. I intend to bring forward area-based planning at the earliest opportunity. My Department will now write to all schools and work with all managing authorities, informing them of any issues. It will not be a one-size-fits-

all approach, because different schools have different issues. For example, in a particular area, two schools that are near to each other might be encroaching on each other's enrolment figures, so it may be a case of CCMS or the relevant board sitting down with the schools, pointing out that the situation cannot continue and working out how they can work together. Alternatively, a school in the post-primary sector may be deemed not to be participating fully in the area-based planning approach and the entitlement framework approach. We cannot — *[Interruption.]* I see that the Chairperson is interrupting again.

We cannot have the situation that exists in some towns, in which four or five A-level classes for the same subject are run with a couple of young people in each. Surely, the proper way to deal with that situation is to have one A-level class in the area, rather than wasting scarce resources — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: We have a situation in which primary school classes have 28 or 30 children in them. We have to take a mature, more thought-out and strategic approach to how we manage our schools estate. In order to take a more strategic approach, my Department will work very closely with the boards, CCMS, the various managing authorities, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and all the organisations that work with schools. However, that would be much easier to do if we had the ESA on board, as it should have been from January. The Chairperson of the Committee for Education is laughing. I ask him to reflect on that, because, by attempting to block the ESA, he is trying to delay many of the key issues in education.

Mr B McCrea: I listened to the Minister talking about her 99.9% success, but, of course, many spending decisions are to do with how planning decisions come through from the authorities. What impact has the £84 million reduction in real terms had on her setting of targets? The Minister said that the implementation of all projects on the IDP list would cost over £500 million. She also talked about being able to allocate only £30 million to the minor works programme, which needs £100 million, and about maintenance problems. I understand that the amounts available are £100 million for essential maintenance and £300 million for other types of maintenance. It seems, therefore,

that we have a problem. Will the Minister outline how she whittles down those projects that passed her review —

Mr Speaker: The Member should come to his question.

Mr B McCrea: She must whittle down the projects. What criteria will she use? When will she tell the House which school projects will proceed and which will not?

The Minister of Education: The response to the Member's point about the £84 million is that the difference is 0.6%. In 2008, my Department spent 99.3% of its budget. Given that very good track record, I hope that the Executive Ministers from the Member's party will support my bids in the June monitoring round.

I have already answered the question on criteria.

Mrs M Bradley: Given that the Minister did not answer the Committee Chairperson's questions, I ask again what criteria she used to make her decisions. Her poor statement will give no comfort to anyone in the school community. What about the schools that have been waiting for 17 or 18 years for a school building? When exactly will the schools be told what is happening?

The Minister of Education: I have answered the question on criteria.

Mrs M Bradley: You have not.

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: I agree with the Member that, historically, the schools estate has been neglected. It was dreadful that direct rule Ministers handed back so much money. That should not have happened, it is not happening on my watch —

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: — and I do not intend it to happen on my watch —

The Chairperson of the Committee for Education: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: I intend to spend every penny that is given to me.

Ms Lo: The statement is disappointing for all the schools concerned. Will the Minister name the 13 schools that are at tender or pre-tender stage and the additional 10 schools? Will she also outline to the House the priority order of those schools? When money becomes available, which school project will start first and which will be last?

The Minister of Education: My Department will contact all schools on the programme. I do not intend to name schools in the House today. Now that the review is complete, the Department has work to do with each school. We will write to the schools today.

Mr Hilditch: We have concentrated on the capital fund today, but will the Minister tell us what sort of thinking outside the box is going on? What initiatives involving the private sector and other agencies and bodies could provide modular-type buildings that have a lifespan of between 20 and 30 years and could get us out of the current predicament? One such initiative in my constituency involves the YMCA in Carrickfergus. Agencies can put together a cocktail of funding to provide multiuse educational buildings. What initiatives that involve the private sector and other agencies are taking place?

The Minister of Education: That is a good question, and the Department is exploring various build options. We are also trying to ensure that public money is used in the most effective way and that schools are open to and used by the public. With cross-departmental support, we are considering, for example, sports provision. I had a meeting with Minister McCausland about how to co-ordinate the resources of his Department and mine. There is no point in building pitches, sports grounds and buildings unless they have been planned in a cohesive and strategic way. However, my officials and I would be happy to hear the Member's ideas. In the current environment, we must explore every option.

11.00 am

Mr Leonard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her statement. Does she think that any school building projects will go forward this financial year?

The Minister of Education: Currently, 13 schools are on site, and Whitehouse Primary School will be going on site very soon. I would

love to get more schools on site, but that will depend on the results of my bid in the June monitoring round and other in-year monitoring rounds. However, this monitoring round is very important, because we need resources. Members will understand that resources are needed for planning. Therefore, it is essential that all parties in the House support our bids in the June monitoring rounds.

If Members were to look at the 39 schools that have been built and the 14 that are on site or just about to go on site, they would see that they are in every constituency, in every county and from all sectors. I ask Members to reflect on that.

Miss McIlveen: Will the Minister clarify her position on PPP projects and how she accounts for them as opposed to traditional procurement? Given the tight financial budget that we face, does she agree that prioritising investment in minor works and refurbishment would make a significant difference for the greatest number of schools in the shortest time frame?

The Minister of Education: My position on PPP projects is very clear. I do not believe that they are the best way to go forward. I do not believe that they provide best value — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: I do not believe that PPP projects provide best value for money. I inherited some PPP projects, which have gone ahead as a result, but I have not initiated any new PPP projects. I believe that there is a better way of doing it, and I believe that the way that we are doing it at present is better.

Of course we have to look at maintenance and continue with our maintenance budgets. However, it is very short-sighted to focus on maintenance and not on newbuilds, because that would mean that the schools estate would just be maintained and a situation would be created where there is constant maintenance but no newbuilds.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for her statement. As someone who spent 30 years in a classroom, I assure her that I have no intention of grandstanding on such a serious issue. The Minister told us that, apart from the shortage of capital funds, she has only £30 million for minor works. Does that mean that our children in many areas will have to cope with more

dilapidated huts, more leaky roofs, more chills and colds, more asthma attacks and more days off school? When will our children have the human right to be taught in buildings that are fit for purpose? Will the Minister assure us that we are not going back to hedge schools?

The Minister of Education: Our children have those human rights now. Those rights are universal. However, the Executive need to meet the rights of those children and provide funding to my Department to ensure that those young people are not in draughty classrooms and that they are not in schools that are in the state that I have seen some of them in. I am not going to stand here and justify the state of our schools. Some of our schools are in dreadful disrepair. There has been historical neglect in our education estate, and it is simply not good enough. Therefore, there is a responsibility on the Executive to provide me with the necessary budget so that I can build schools. I have shown that we can do it, and I have shown that we can spend budgets.

Of course we are not going back to hedge schools. Hedge schools did not have buildings, although they did have a little bit of shelter. Nevertheless, I do not denigrate the learning that was done in hedge schools. They were involved in tremendous learning during very difficult times in Ireland. However, I take the Member's point. Of course we are not going back to the infrastructure of hedge schools, but our curriculum could learn a lot from theirs.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her statement. My question, which other Members partly asked, concerns consideration of schools that have major works that are at the early planning stage. How will those be included in the Department's investment delivery plan? With your indulgence, a Cheann Comhairle, the last question that I will ask is about the list. Will the list of the schools that are to be built be published after the Minister has made her statement today?

The Minister of Education: The list of schools will not be published after my statement today. However, my Department will write to all the schools and their managing authorities and will discuss with them what needs to happen. The Member will be aware that each school has different issues, and those issues must be discussed. Some can be resolved fairly speedily, but others will take a little more time.

With respect to the first part of the Member's question, the Department will use area-based planning to build the schools estate. The needs in each area will be examined, as will the demographic trends and the number of children entering preschool, primary and post-primary education. The Department will not build schools on every corner, but it will build a schools estate that is fit for purpose and meets the needs of young people. There must also be greater collaboration between schools, because we cannot continue with the situation that we had in the past in which each school operated in a silo. Schools must be part of their area learning communities and deliver the entitlement framework with other schools in their area. They must work together for the children.

Mr Ross: Some schools in my constituency could face closure on health and safety grounds, as is the case with schools in other Members' constituencies. Therefore, the Minister's statement this morning is very disappointing. It contained no details about when we will hear which schools are involved. Therefore, there is little point in asking about that. However, will the Minister give a guarantee to the House that schools will be on the list because of need rather than the area of Northern Ireland in which they are located or the community background of the children?

The Minister of Education: The schools that have been built since I came into office were in every sector and every constituency. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: I hope that the Member is not suggesting that there has been inequality in the school building programme. If he is suggesting that, perhaps he can tell us where that inequality exists. It is very easy to make false and wrong accusations — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: It would be better for the Member to think about how his Executive colleagues can support me during the June monitoring process. He must be very careful before he makes wrong accusations, because the approved schools are in every single constituency and every sector. I ask that Members do not play politics with the issue.

Mr P Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I note that some £30 million is being spent on maintenance. Will the Minister clarify how her Department will tackle the backlog in that area?

The Minister of Education: The education and library boards are responsible for maintenance across the schools estate. They are working to address the backlog and have procedures in place to prioritise carefully the areas of greatest need, including health and safety issues. The nature of that task includes any urgent work that is required to address health and safety issues and to avoid any serious deterioration of the fabric or the services of the building. Items must also be deemed to be in a very poor condition. I will continue to press the Executive for further funding for maintenance. It is good to hear that maintenance is a concern among Members, and I look forward to the support of all parties in addressing that concern.

There is a maintenance backlog of £88,273 in the Belfast Education and Library Board area — sorry, that should be £88,273,000; £46,410,758 in the Western Education and Library Board area; £60,071,703 in the Southern Education and Library Board area; £36,642,750 in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area; and £55,504,000 in the North Eastern Education and Library Board area. Therefore, there is a serious problem with the maintenance backlog. The schools estate is facing serious difficulties and is in need of urgent support from the Executive.

Mr Weir: I note that the Minister is not giving any indication today of where individual schools stand on the list. However, can she confirm that the four schools in Holywood, which were the subject of a debate here some time ago and are part of an overall schools project for capital build, and Bangor Grammar School in my constituency will be written to as part of the series of letters concerning capital build? Will those schools receive any definitive indication in those letters as to when new capital build is due to take place?

The Minister of Education: We will write to all schools today in relation to the completion of capital build. Obviously, I am not going to go into individual schools in Members' individual constituencies — the House is not the place for that — but my Department will write to all schools.

Mrs D Kelly: The Minister's statement was very poor, and it was very disappointing for the schools in my constituency. The Minister referred to the fact that 39 new schools have been built since 2007 and 13 more are on site. I take it that those decisions were made under direct rule. It is estimated that 40% of school places are empty. What impact do those empty school places have on the newbuild programme? The Minister has yet to answer the questions. What criteria were used? When will we, as Members, know definitively which school newbuilds will proceed?

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: Actually, the Assembly made decisions in relation to the investment programme. Maybe the Member has forgotten about the Programme for Government and the investment delivery plan. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: Her party voted for that and supported it. It was not direct rule Ministers who took those decisions; it was me in the first instance and then the Executive and the Assembly. The Member needs to get her facts right.

Mr Givan: It is interesting that the Minister wants to claim credit for all the school builds that the education and library boards have delivered but, Pontius Pilate-like, washes her hands of the boards' decisions to cut special needs programmes. I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that it is her failure that has allowed a maintenance backlog of almost £300 million to build up. The Minister's decision has led to a situation in which our schools are crumbling. Inaction is putting our children's education in jeopardy, and the Minister is failing to take her responsibility seriously.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to come to his question.

Mr Givan: Rather than appealing to the Assembly, the Minister needs to take her duties seriously and get on with the job.

The Minister of Education: I understand that the Member is new. He is very welcome to the House, and it is good to see our new Members coming forward. However, I respectfully suggest that the Member go back and look at the

amount of money that was spent before I came into post. In case he does not have time to do that, I can tell him that £62 million was handed back two years before I came into post and £94 million the year before I came into post. That is where the inaction was. I do not know what part of 99.9% of a capital budget the Member does not understand. If he does not understand it, he needs to go and do his sums.

There is no inaction on my part, and there is no inaction on my officials' part. They are absolutely clear on the priority that needed to be given to capital build projects. Often, officials do not get credit. We are always ready to criticise, and rightly so. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: However, our Department deserves credit and support rather than criticism here. We have done the business and we have the track record. We are now saying: give us more money and we will continue to do the business.

This is not a debate about the special needs programme, but I will answer the point that was raised. I do not believe that the boards should have cut special needs summer schemes. I am absolutely clear on that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: The boards have substantial budgets, and I do not believe that they should have done that. It was a wrong decision.

Despite the fact that my resource budget has been cut, we have increased money for special needs provision. We have increased the numbers of children who receive free school meals and we have given an extra £90 to each primary-school child. The boards should not have started with special needs children. The Member needs to talk to the boards about that. *[Interruption.]*

11.15 am

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: The real issue is that we should have ESA on board. I do not believe that the boards are fit for purpose any longer. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: They may have been in the past but they are not now, and that is not a criticism of any individuals on the boards. Everyone in the House knows that we need to establish the Education and Skills Authority. That is what is going to make the change, and the Members opposite, including the Chairperson of the Committee, who is interrupting again, need to understand their role in bringing about the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority and stopping the squandering and wasting of money that results from the duplication of administration. I want to get money into the front line and into the school build programme. I want better planning in the school build programme, and the way to do that is by having one organisation.

Dr Farry: How are schools supposed to plan for the future if they are not going to be told whether they are towards the top or towards the bottom of a long list? Is the talk of the June monitoring round somewhat of a cop-out? As the Minister well knows, this year's monitoring rounds will be used to deal with the £128 million in cuts that the Treasury has asked for. Would the Minister not be better off showing leadership by taking and advocating tough decisions over raising revenue through things like water charges so that we have money to invest in schools and hospitals?

The Minister of Education: Our Department will liaise with all the schools, discuss the issues that relate to them and work with them at each phase of the process.

In relation to the monitoring rounds, the Member must have been a fly on the wall at the Executive. I am not going into any of the detail on what was discussed, but his information is incorrect. I want money from the monitoring round. I am delighted to see the level of concern in the House, and I expect support from each and every Minister from all parties if we are serious about getting schools built. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Allow the Minister to continue.

The Minister of Education: We are ready to spend the money, and I am ready to build new schools. Give me the money, and we will do it.

Mr P J Bradley: I thank the Minister for her statement. She stated that the review is complete and that she wanted to update Members on the review of all school capital

build programmes. I came here expecting to see a list of schools that had been approved and information on what was going to happen and what was not. To me, this is not really an update. I note from her statement that a number of school projects cannot be taken forward as proposed. Why has the Assembly not been advised even of that list? It is important that we be provided with that.

I assume that the Minister is fully versed in the policy on sustainable schools, to which her statement referred. I wish to ask a question about a school in my constituency, which I am mandated to do. The Minister has made many visits to Carrick Primary School outside Warrenpoint.

Mr Speaker: I invite the Member to come to his question.

Mr P J Bradley: Can the Minister confirm or deny that Carrick Primary School meets the criteria of the policy for sustainable schools?

The Minister of Education: I do not know why the Member thought that a list would be provided. He has obviously not been listening to any of my media interviews. I have been very clear that a list was never going to be presented, because that is not the way that we do business. The way that we do business is that we engage with each school and with the managing authorities, such as the boards and CCMS. I do not know why the Member expected a list. I will not comment on individual schools; I have said that already. My Department will liaise with each school.

Mr McCallister: Is it not true, Minister, that this is not an update but more of a cop-out? You keep talking about "we" and the criteria. As you have not told us what the criteria are, perhaps you could define "we". It certainly is not this House or the Education Committee.

The Minister of Education: I am not sure that I understand the question. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Education: The question was very obscure. We approved the investment delivery plan, and I hope that we all understand the importance of school builds. If John McCallister does not understand it, I will be a bit worried.

Mr Speaker: Order. That ends questions on the ministerial statement.

Mr Leonard: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it in order that, during a ministerial statement, behaviour that is tantamount to serial ignorance floats from one person. I estimate that you had to call one person to order at least a dozen times. It truly and utterly shows the place to be a disgrace and indicates that more latitude is, perhaps, given to one person than to any other, which could bring the Assembly into further disgrace. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Let me say to the whole House — *[Interruption.]* Order. Let me say to the whole House that I expect every Member to respect the procedures of this House. Let me make it absolutely clear that Ministers, irrespective of who they are, should not be interrupted when delivering a speech.

Every Member in the House has had an opportunity this morning to ask a question to the Education Minister. However, let me make it clear that Members should not try to speak from a sedentary position. That is totally out of order. It is my job as Speaker to protect the integrity of this House and the business in it. I intend to do that now and in the future. I do not care which Minister comes to the House with a statement or other business; I will protect that Minister and any Member of this House who rises to speak. I want to make that absolutely clear.

Mrs D Kelly: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I welcome your commitment to protecting the integrity of every Member in the Chamber. Would the integrity of this House not be better protected if the Minister asked the question when answered? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member is slightly mixed up. I will try to respond on the basis of what I think the Member tried to say. I have often said in this House that, as Speaker, it is not my duty, irrespective of who the Minister is, to sit in judgement of how a Minister answers a question. I do not intend to do that.

Mr B McCrea: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Lord Morrow: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will call Lord Morrow then I will cut this. I have to say that.

Lord Morrow: You are quite right that it is not your duty to tell the Minister how to answer. However, it would be appropriate if, occasionally, an answer is given. Bearing in mind that the Minister did not consider it worth her while

to come to this House last week to make the statement, and she gave an alleged reason — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Lord Morrow: We hear the crowd warbling on the wall over here. Maybe the individual who was lecturing will take notice of the individuals beside him and have a chat with them. He comes in here as a paragon of virtue and tries to lecture everybody else as to what they should or should not be doing.

Mr Leonard: — *[Interruption.]*

Lord Morrow: No, Mr Leonard, you have a lot to learn in a whole lot of ways.

Mr Speaker: Order. This is turning into a debate. As far as possible, let me make it clear to the entire House that, if a Minister totally refuses to answer a question, it is a different issue. *[Interruption.]* Order. In that event, I have a responsibility as Speaker. However, it is entirely up to Ministers how they answer a question. Once again, I say to the whole House that I will not sit in judgment of how a Minister delivers an answer in this House.

Mr B McCrea: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will take one further point of order from Mr McCrea, after which I will move on.

Mr B McCrea: I am grateful, and I will not press your patience. However, with respect, it is disappointing that, when I asked a direct question, the Minister said that she felt that she had already answered it. Later in the debate, a similar question was asked and was given a fulsome response. I ask for your support, Mr Speaker. All I am trying to do is ask a question. We need some guidance on how we can have a proper debate about these important issues.

Mr Speaker: Members who are not satisfied with the answers that they have received from the Minister should take it up with the Minister directly. I will now move on. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Executive Committee Business

Welfare of Animals Bill: Second Stage

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms Gildernew): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Welfare of Animals Bill [NIA 28/09] be agreed.

The Bill is the result of four years' work by my Department, beginning with the public consultation in late 2006. When I came to office in 2007, I wanted to hear at first hand stakeholders' views and opinions on animal welfare. Over the past two years, my officials and I have engaged in 13 meetings with stakeholders, such as the Northern Ireland Companion Animal Welfare Committee, the Captive Animals' Protection Society, the Born Free Foundation and the League Against Cruel Sports. Those meetings culminated in a major animal welfare stakeholder workshop in September 2009, which was attended by 38 representatives from 21 animal welfare and stakeholder organisations. I listened carefully to the concerns and views expressed during those meetings and took them into account when developing my policy proposals and drafting the Bill.

The proposed new legislation has been welcomed by all stakeholders, who have expressed strong support for many of its provisions. Before I set out the key features of the Bill, I thank everyone who responded to the consultation exercise that my Department carried out. I thank those who attended meetings with me or my officials and those who attended the stakeholder workshop last year. I appreciate the input of all the stakeholders, which has contributed significantly to the Bill. I also thank the Chairperson and members of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development for facilitating presentations from my officials on four occasions and for their comments. They have also helped to shape the Bill.

Before turning to some of the main provisions in the Bill, let me outline its background and the need for new legislation. The Bill is intended to replace the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972, which is almost 40 years old and is no longer sufficient to deal with animal welfare issues. It updates and strengthens the powers in the 1972

Act. The new powers in the Bill will address the gap between the high level of protection afforded to farmed animals compared with the limited protection given to non-farmed animals, including domestic pets.

The 1972 Act is the only welfare legislation in place that seeks to combat cruelty to non-farmed animals such as horses, cats and dogs. However, welfare legislation relating specifically to farmed animals has progressed at a much faster rate, keeping abreast of advances in scientific knowledge, thus the emphasis on farmed animal welfare is not simply on preventing cruelty but on securing an acceptable standard of welfare for animals. It means that farmers must provide for the needs of their animals and not merely avoid causing them unnecessary suffering. However, that has not been the case for non-farmed animals. The Welfare of Animals Bill bridges that gap by extending the requirement to provide for the needs of an animal to anyone responsible for any kind of animal, including a domestic pet.

The key benefits of the new Welfare of Animals Bill are that a duty of care will be provided to all protected animals, including domestic pets and horses; it will be possible to take action to prevent animals from suffering, as opposed to the current position where action can only be taken after suffering has occurred; the current powers will be strengthened in respect of animal fighting, including dog fighting; powers will be provided to regulate, through subordinate legislation, a wide range of activities involving animals, such as dog-breeding establishments, the use of animals in travelling circuses and the keeping of non-dangerous exotic pets; and the Bill will increase the penalties for serious animal welfare offences.

If the Assembly agrees today, the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will scrutinise the Bill on a clause-by-clause basis. Therefore, I do not intend to go through each clause and schedule individually today, but I will take a few minutes and set out the key elements.

The Bill is set out in six parts, with a total of 60 clauses and five schedules. The first 18 clauses and schedule 1 set out the substantive policy behind the Bill, while the remaining clauses and schedules outline the procedural aspects of how the Bill can be implemented.

11.30 am

Part 1 outlines the scope of the Bill, which covers all vertebrate animals. There is also power to extend in the future the definition of “animal” to include invertebrates if scientific evidence becomes available that those animals are capable of feeling pain. Although all vertebrate animals will have protection from cruelty and unnecessary suffering, protected animals will be afforded a higher level of protection. Protected animals are defined as animals that are commonly domesticated in the North of Ireland. Other animals are also protected if they are under the control of man or not living in a wild state. The Bill defines who is responsible for an animal. Although the owner is always regarded as responsible for an animal, a person who is in charge of an animal on a temporary or permanent basis is also responsible for that animal while it is under his or her care.

Part 2 of the Bill sets out powers for the protection of animals through the prevention of harm and the promotion of welfare. That part of the Bill carries forward from the 1972 Act a number of provisions to prevent animals from harm. Those are the cruelty offence of causing unnecessary suffering; prohibited procedures that are referred to in the 1972 Act as cruel operations; administration of poisons; and animal-fighting offences. In carrying those forward, I have retained the substance of the provisions but have simplified and updated them.

It would be beneficial to outline the stronger powers in respect of animal fighting. Those will, of course, cover all animal fighting, including dogfighting and cockfighting. Substantial powers already exist under the 1972 Act in respect of animal fighting. It is currently an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal by causing, procuring or assisting at an animal fight; promoting, causing or permitting any performance; taking part in an animal fight; keeping, using, managing, permitting or assisting in the keeping of any premises for animal fighting; receiving, causing or procuring money for admission to an animal fight; and being a spectator at an animal fight.

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

As I said on Monday 7 June 2010, when the Assembly debated the Dogs (Amendment) Bill, those current offences will be enhanced in this new Bill. In other words, they will become

offences regardless of whether unnecessary suffering is caused. In addition, new powers will be added to make it an offence to keep or to train an animal for use in connection with an animal fight. Therefore, if evidence is present, such as training equipment etc, the power will be there to seize a dog even before it ever fights. The Bill will also make it an offence to cause an animal fight to take place or to attempt to do so; to supply, publish or show a video recording of an animal fight; to possess a video recording of an animal fight with the intention to supply it; and to place or to accept a bet on an animal fight.

In addition, the penalties for animal fighting will be increased from a maximum of three months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine to a maximum of two years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. Other new powers allow for the destruction of animals involved in fighting offences, forfeiture of equipment and reimbursement of expenses incurred by the PSNI in connection with keeping animals involved in those offences.

Powers are also included to allow a court to disqualify a person who is convicted of animal-fighting offences for any one or more of the following: owning animals; keeping animals; participating in the keeping of animals; controlling or influencing the way that animals are kept; dealing in animals; transporting animals; and arranging for the transport of animals. A court can also cancel any current welfare licence or disqualify a person from holding the licence following a conviction in respect of animal fighting.

I believe that those new powers will strengthen existing powers significantly and send a strong message out to those individuals who are involved in that type of abhorrent activity that animal fighting is not acceptable in civilised society.

The Bill's key aims are not only to stop cruelty and unnecessary suffering but to promote and to enhance the welfare of all protected animals. In a bid to prevent pups from suffering unnecessarily, the Bill imposes a specific statutory ban on the docking of dogs' tails unless it is undertaken by a veterinary surgeon for a dog's medical treatment or to save its life. The Bill also makes it an offence to take a dog to another jurisdiction to have its tail docked.

The promotion of welfare is at the heart of the legislation, and the provisions in part 2 of the

Bill bring the protection afforded to non-farmed animals into line with that given to farmed animals. Under the 1972 Act, a person can be prosecuted for causing unnecessary suffering to any animal, including a domestic pet. However, there are cases where, although animals are not yet suffering, their welfare needs are not being met. Under current legislation, enforcement action can be taken against owners of farm livestock, but owners of domestic animals and horses can only be encouraged to improve the conditions in which their animals are kept.

The Bill addresses that anomaly by placing a general duty on a person to ensure that the needs of any vertebrate animal for which they are responsible are met to the extent required by good practice. That is often defined as the five freedoms: the need for a suitable environment; the need for a suitable diet; the need to exhibit normal behaviour; the need to be housed with or apart from other animals, as appropriate; and the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. To comply with that duty, owners and keepers will need to understand their responsibilities and take all reasonable steps to provide for the needs of their animals.

While there are many sources of information to help owners and keepers understand how to look after their domestic animals, my Department will try to help further by producing codes of practice, under clause 16, similar to those widely used for farm animals. All such codes will be subject to consultation with stakeholders. To help promote animal welfare, the Bill creates a more flexible statutory framework than that available under the 1972 Act. It sets out the key principles, but leaves detailed matters to subordinate legislation. I believe that that flexibility is critical if our legislation is to keep pace with advances in animal welfare.

The Bill therefore provides primary powers to make regulations to secure the welfare of animals, to license or register activities involving animals and to prohibit the keeping of certain animals. For almost 40 years, we have had regulatory powers under the 1972 Act to secure the welfare of farmed animals, and those have generally worked well. They have enabled us to keep up to date with the latest advice and scientific evidence without needing to come to the Assembly to change primary legislation. In

the Bill, those new powers will be extended to non-farmed animals, including domestic pets.

The 1972 Act provided limited powers to license pet shops and animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments. The powers in the new Bill will allow us to extend the licensing or registration requirement to cover other types of establishments, such as animal sanctuaries, open farms and breeding establishments. Using subordinate legislation to introduce the detailed requirements in those areas will ensure that the relevant stakeholders are consulted on the issues that directly affect them and will help us get the balance right in protecting the animals and avoiding unnecessary burdens on businesses.

Earlier this month, when the Assembly discussed the Dogs (Amendment) Bill, the issue of dog-breeding establishments was raised. I will use the powers in the Welfare of Animals Bill to regulate and license dog-breeding establishments, to improve the standards for those establishments and to assist legitimate local breeders in marketing their dogs. Substandard breeders will have to raise their games, or they will not be licensed.

Following consideration of the available scientific evidence, the powers in the Bill will also allow me to regulate or prohibit the keeping of wild animals in travelling circuses and, if necessary, the keeping of exotic animals as pets. In seeking the power to make regulations, I will provide two assurances to the Assembly. First, the welfare of animals will not have to wait until the subordinate legislation is made. Animals will benefit immediately from the introduction of the welfare offence and the duty of care. Secondly, all new subordinate legislation under the powers in the Bill will be subject to consultation with stakeholders and scrutiny by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. Many will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

In promoting animal welfare, a principle of the Bill is that responsibility for animals must rest with adults. For that reason, the Bill makes it clear that parents or guardians are responsible in law for the welfare of their children's animals. The Bill sets the minimum age at which children can buy animals at 16 years. Clause 15 makes it an offence to give an animal as a prize to anyone under 16, unless the child is accompanied by an adult who is responsible for the care and control of the child.

I stress that those provisions will not prevent a child from keeping or looking after pets or from actively learning about the husbandry needs of animals. I fully accept that that can be a very important aspect of a child's education. However, the Bill will ensure that a responsible adult makes the decision about the keeping of a pet.

Part 3 of the Bill deals with animals in distress and sets out the steps that an inspector or constable can take to immediately alleviate an animal's suffering or to prevent an animal from suffering if its circumstances do not change. The clauses in part 3 also outline the powers of entry and provide powers to apply to the Magistrate's Court in advance of any criminal hearing for disposal of the animals taken into the possession of the enforcement body. Part 3 of the Bill also provides safeguards for the owner of the animals. Following the court's determination, nothing can be done with the animals until either the period given for notice of appeal has expired or, if an appeal has been lodged, it has been determined or withdrawn. Entry to a private dwelling will, in the main, be by warrant. Schedule 3 to the Bill sets out a range of safeguards for powers of entry, inspection and search under warrant. Those include the use of a code of practice similar to that agreed for the Diseases of Animals Act 2010.

Part 4 of the Bill deals with enforcement and sets out the powers of entry for all offences in the Bill and general powers of inspection. To act as a deterrent, an increased penalty will be introduced for very serious welfare offences, such as animal fighting and cruelty offences. The current penalty of a maximum of three months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine will be increased to a maximum of two years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

Enforcement of the powers in the Bill will be the key to its success. Under the new powers in the Bill, many of the existing arrangements will remain in place. For example, similar to the arrangements already in place, my Department will appoint inspectors to implement and enforce powers in respect of farmed animals on agricultural land. The powers that are currently afforded to the PSNI will remain, and the PSNI will, as necessary, continue to provide support for the appointed inspectors. The PSNI will also lead on welfare issues involving organised animal fighting or where other criminal activities are involved. The Bill will provide powers to

councils to appoint inspectors. It is proposed that councils will implement and enforce provisions in respect of non-farmed animals.

This legislation, if enacted, will keep us at the forefront of the protection of farmed and non-farmed animals. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (Mr Elliott):

On behalf of the Committee I thank the Minister for bringing the Bill so far. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill today. I will keep my comments short, as the Committee has already had a number of discussions with the Department on the matter, and, undoubtedly, will do so again in the months ahead.

The Bill is important because it aligns the welfare of domesticated and non-farmed animals with that of farmed animals. The Bill supersedes the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, which is almost 40 years old. It is also important because it creates new offences to protect animals from abandonment, from suffering and from being used by criminals in fights and baiting.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that the Bill is almost void of any detail. Despite the fact that it contains 60 clauses and there are five schedules, it is empty. The Department describes it as an enabling Bill, stating that the detail will follow in the form of subordinate legislation. The Department says that that will provide it with the flexibility to quickly update the legislation, to provide the depth that is required and to respond to technological developments. We are expected to hand the Department the power to make regulations to secure the welfare of animals and to delegate regulations for the introduction of licensing and registration regimes for any activity involving animals. We are also expected to enable the Department to secure animal welfare by prohibiting the keeping of certain types of animals at domestic or other premises. To do that without seeing the detail is neither reasonable nor feasible.

The Committee does not share the Department's view, and it is, again, unfortunate that the Department has not learned any lessons from previous Committee Stages. The Department will argue that the Committee will have the opportunity to examine the detail during the policy stages of the subordinate legislation processes.

However, the Committee has always argued that, if it is relevant, if there is a genuine need to legislate, and if the evidence presents itself, it should be included in primary legislation. We do not believe in giving the Department powers without knowing their detail, and we will not start now.

11.45 am

The Department wants the Bill to progress through the House during the current mandate, and the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development shares that objective. However, we do not intend to rush it through Committee Stage so that we can tick a box. As I stated, it is an important Bill that deals with important issues.

The Bill is empty not only because of the absence of detail that I mentioned, but because it avoids tackling issues that are relevant to the welfare of animals. It is almost as though the Minister and the Department, in their quest to earn brownie points by passing another Bill, want to avoid controversial issues, with the exception of tail docking. It contains nothing on securing the welfare of progeny, the use of wild animals in circuses or the keeping of primates as pets. All those issues were raised during stakeholders' presentations to the Committee.

The Bill includes nothing on the regulation of breeding establishments, despite that industry's pleas to the Minister and the Department. The industry wanted regulation and controls to stamp out those practices that contribute to the appalling number of dogs, for example, that have to be put down each year in Northern Ireland. While all others in the agrifood sector call for fewer regulations, here is a sector that wants more controls in place. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, the Department said no. Perhaps that is another example of the detail that has yet to come.

It appears that the Department tried to steer clear of controversy. Unfortunately, through the creation of an offence that relates to tail docking, it failed. That issue was at the centre of some heated debates at Committee and during the Department's public consultations. Clauses 5 and 6 will continue to attract much attention today and at Committee Stage.

Legislation in other places bans the practice of tail docking outright or restricts it to certain breeds. Departmental officials claimed that, in

the case of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which applies in England and Wales, the decision to restrict tail docking to certain breeds was taken for political reasons and was not based on scientific evidence. The Department should bear in mind that this place, as well as being a legislative Assembly, is a political institution. If we legislate based on political reasons now or in the future, the Department should not be surprised.

To help us to inform our decision, I ask the Department to provide the evidence that it has so far failed to produce. The Department should explain why a lamb's tail or pig's tail can be docked, yet it seeks to prohibit the docking of a working dog's tail. How is the pain associated with the castration of an animal any different to or less severe than the docking of a dog's tail?

The Department should not be totally reliant on the study that was published today, 'Risk Factors for Tail Injuries in Dogs in Great Britain'. That study is inconclusive, and it suggests that, although the risk of tail injury is rare, working dogs appear to be at greater risk than other dogs. To allow further evaluation of the risk factors in specific groups, the study calls for additional studies to focus on the high-risk groups, including working dogs.

The Minister will be pleased to note that I consider some aspects of the Bill to be positive. It will introduce a number of offences relating to the repulsive practice of animal fighting. All Members will agree that such practices need to be stamped out. The Committee will, as normal, scrutinise the punitive clauses. We will ensure that they are stringent enough to guarantee the appropriate punishment of criminals and to act as a suitable deterrent to those who participate in that heinous crime.

I started by saying that the Bill is important, and I hope that my contribution has reinforced my point. The Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development looks forward to receiving the Bill and taking it through Committee Stage.

Mr Irwin: I welcome the opportunity to comment on this important legislation. As Members are aware, the Bill is intended to update what is essentially a 40-year-old piece of legislation. I said in a previous speech to the House that it is good for Northern Ireland that we have devolved institutions through which we can have a say in how legislation is shaped to ensure that it addresses the precise needs of the Northern

Ireland public. It is also good that we no longer have to suffer the one-size-fits-all approach that was taken during direct rule.

The Committee received a presentation from DARD officials on the main points of the Bill. That raised a number of important questions about a host of issues, such as tail docking, dogfighting and dog breeding. I wish to deal with the effect of clause 8, particularly where dogs are concerned. I am pleased that the Dogs (Amendment) Bill and the Welfare of Animals Bill, which the Committee has not yet fully scrutinised, are proposing to improve the law on the illegal practice of dogfighting. I welcome that it will be an offence to be involved in dogfighting, regardless of whether unnecessary suffering is caused.

I stated in the Second Stage debate on the Dogs (Amendment) Bill that there is a disgraceful record of dogfighting in my constituency. Indeed, that has been documented in a BBC 'Spotlight' investigation. Everyone is keen to see that sort of behaviour suitably legislated against to bring to justice those who are involved in such a barbaric pursuit in any form, be it providing a location, lifting money, or supplying or owning the animals that are involved.

Part 2 of the Welfare of Animals Bill refers to the promotion of good animal welfare. As a farmer, I know that animal welfare is a key requirement of the industry, and I welcome the inclusion of important clauses on that matter, especially after a number of incidents occurred in the Newry and Armagh constituency recently when animals starved to death and were caused unnecessary suffering.

I welcome the extension of powers in clause 11 to secure the welfare of domestic animals. There have been a number of incidents where people have accumulated high numbers of domestic animals in unsuitable conditions, particularly in dwellings. When such cases are eventually uncovered, they are particularly sad.

On the Committee's meeting on 22 June, I raised the issue of tail docking on working dogs. I feel that the Committee will take the time to discuss that in more detail, because I believe that tail docking is acceptable and necessary in a number of legitimate situations. A number of groups, particularly those from the shooting fraternity, have told me that they are concerned that tail docking will be banned outright. I feel that it would be foolish to legislate for an

outright ban, especially considering the damage that working dogs with a full tail can sustain. The evidence is clear: in specific circumstances, tail docking is favourable for a dog's well-being. For instance, a spaniel hunting in thick scrub benefits greatly from having a docked tail, because it prevents the dog becoming caught in thorns and sustaining open wounds in trying to free itself. That issue needs greater debate and deliberation.

Many more issues could be raised in the Chamber. However, the Committee will have the opportunity in the near future to discuss the finer details of the Bill, and I look forward to that.

Mr W Clarke: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for bringing forward the Bill to this stage. I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak at the Second Stage of the Welfare of Animals Bill. As has been stated, the Bill supersedes the 1972 Act and strengthens its powers. As has also been said, the legislation is almost 40 years old, so it is about time that it was updated.

Clause 17 is one of main elements of the Bill. It authorises an inspector who finds a protected animal that is suffering to take immediate steps to alleviate that animal's suffering. I am sure that we all know of a number of cases where animals were neglected but nobody had the power to step in and take control of the situation. The power that clause 17 provides is important, because the public want to see immediate action being taken in response to the neglect of animals.

Animal fighting is a barbaric sport, and I find it hard to believe and hard to stomach that anyone could get satisfaction from watching two dogs or two cockerels killing each other. I, therefore, welcome the provision on animal fighting, which includes dogfighting and cockerel fighting. I am sure that we have all seen examples of such fighting on the television, YouTube and other IT facilities.

It is absolutely shocking to see that on the Internet. A person will commit an offence if he or she causes a fight to take place; receives money making or taking a bet; publicises a fight; keeps or trains an animal for the purpose of fighting; or photographs or records an animal fight. Authorised officers will be able to seize animals that are involved in fights.

Under the promotion of welfare and ensuring the welfare of animals, it will be an offence not to take all reasonable steps to ensure an animal's welfare. Animals' needs will include protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease; a suitable environment; and diet.

Under abandonment provisions, a person commits an offence if, without reasonable excuse, he or she abandons an animal for which he or she is responsible and fails to make provision for its welfare. The provision includes the length of time for which an animal is left alone. There can be unforeseen circumstances — for example, if someone is taken ill — so there has to be a certain amount of leeway. However, people do leave animals in cars during hot weather, and those animals become dehydrated and, in many cases, die. Animals require food, water, shelter, warmth, light and ventilation. Those are simple but important requirements for the welfare of animals.

The Minister touched on the transfer of animals by way of sale or prize to persons under the age of 16. When DARD representatives gave evidence to the Committee on that issue, members had some concerns. Agricultural shows and fetes are important ways for young people to learn about husbandry skills, the welfare of animals and the rural way of life. A person under the age of 16 can have an animal, but it must be under the supervision of an adult. That is an important caveat.

Tom Elliott talked about the Bill allowing for subordinate legislation on the licensing and registration of any activity that involves animals. We need to be able to introduce fit-for-purpose legislation speedily at any time, because it is an evolving world and things change. Therefore, we need that flexibility.

We all, including professional breeders, agree that puppy farms must be eradicated. In areas such as Loughbrickland and Katesbridge, pups and bitches are being kept in terrible and appalling conditions where the only thing that matters is greed and making as much money as possible. Never mind the welfare or condition of the animals or whether those pets will survive, as long as breeders get their money, they do not care. Puppy farms are a conveyor belt system in which bitches are continually breeding.

Mr Wells: I am extremely worried. This is the second time in the month of June that I have

agreed with the honourable Member, an issue on which I will have to examine my conscience.

However, being serious, I agree absolutely with the Member on the issue of puppy farming. Perhaps he has an insight into the Minister's thinking that I do not have, because I am not quite certain where in the legislation that puppy farming is specifically banned. Perhaps, therefore, he or the Minister will indicate where it is banned. If it is not banned, I make the absolute categorical assurance that I will table an amendment to ban puppy farming. What goes on in those establishments is an utter disgrace. Female dogs are used as nothing but breeding machines, puppy farms are often in damp barns or byres at the back of farmyards, and the people involved are, sometimes, far from wholesome.

Puppy farms are something that Northern Ireland can do without, and I would be the first to say that we should banish them to history.

12.00 noon

Mr W Clarke: I thank the Member for his intervention. I agree entirely with him. We will scrutinise the issue in Committee.

Responsible dog breeders want regulation. When some of them appeared before the Committee, they told Members that they deserved recognition. They said that they wanted regulation and to be treated in the same way as any other rural business. There is work to be done in Committee, and I am sure that the Minister will address the issue in her response.

The Bill provides powers to make subordinate legislation to deal with certain issues, such as circuses. I know that the issue of banning animals at circuses is close to Jim Wells's heart. The welfare of greyhounds in racing and the use of electronic training devices are also covered. Those issues will all be looked at, including at Committee Stage. It is important to note that any subordinate legislation will have to come before the Committee and that it will be subject to a full consultation process.

The docking of dogs' tails is an emotive issue. Across the water, opinion was divided. In Scotland, there is a complete ban on tail docking, while, in England and Wales, there is a partial ban to allow for the docking of working dogs' tails. The Royal Veterinary College and the University of Bristol recently published a

report on tail injuries and docking. I have only just received the report, so I have not had time to study it in detail. However, its summary states that 281 tail injuries were recorded from a population of 138,212 dogs attending 52 participating practices between March 2008 and March 2009. The weighted risk of tail injuries was 0.23%. Some 36% of injuries occurred in the home; 17.5% were outdoor-related; and 14.4% were due to the tail being caught in a door. In 16.5% of cases, the cause of injury was unknown. The report also says that greyhounds, lurchers, whippets and spaniels sustained most of the main injuries, while injuries were not as prevalent in Labradors or retrievers. A lot of information is available, and we could pick out different scenarios. My point is that the tails of 500 puppies would have to be cut to save one dog from having its tail damaged.

Account must be taken of other issues. For example, greyhounds, lurchers and whippets need their tail for balance. Dogs use their tail in a number of ways. They use it to communicate, so they will be compromised by having their tail docked. They use it to convey fear, caution and aggression. Some breeds even need to use their tail as a rudder when swimming, while others need it for balance when running. It is not as simple as saying that, if a dog is a working dog, it should be exempt from tail docking. We do not even know how many working dogs there are. We do not have that data. Moreover, there is a difference between a working dog that is used in a hunt and a dog of a working breed that is kept in the house. How many puppies are we talking about? A number of dogs could be working dogs: terriers, Alsatisans, Rottweilers, which were originally used as cattle drovers, and poodles, which were used for catching ducks. Where do we stop? Where do we draw the line? I look forward to the issue coming before the Committee and to scrutinising the Bill.

We need the all-island approach, particularly to the barbaric sport of animal fighting.

Mr Elliott: I hear what the Member says about the all-island approach. However, we were told some 18 months ago that the Republic of Ireland was well ahead of us in that process. Would the Member care to tell us how far they have got? I believe that, at that time, one of his party colleagues — it may have been Mr O'Dowd — indicated that the Republic of Ireland was perhaps only a month from legislating. I have not heard of such legislation coming forward.

Mr W Clarke: I thank the Member for his intervention. I am not au fait with that. I know that they are fast-tracking the Bill to catch up with ourselves. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that point.

Mr Wells: The honourable Member mentions the all-island approach. There is some logic in saying that, for cross-border activities such as dogfighting, it is important that the rules on both sides of the border be equally stringent. However, the Minister has always argued in correspondence with me that it was important that we waited until the Irish Republic brought in its legislation so that the two matched, as it were. Surely, the other way of doing it is for us to ensure that our animal welfare legislation is some of the best in Europe and to say to our colleagues in the Irish Republic, "This is what we have; now you draft something similar so that cross-border activities can be controlled".

Mr W Clarke: Again, I agree with the honourable gentleman. I see his point. It is important to set the mark in all our legislation. Too often, we look to other legislatures for guidance. I agree: set the legislation, and let the rest follow. That is a fair point to make.

We are regarded as being animal lovers on these islands. Sadly, that is not the case. This legislation will give us the opportunity to protect all animals and to bring pets and non-agricultural animals up to the same standard as agricultural animals in Ireland. That has to be welcomed by everybody. I look forward to the Committee's further scrutiny of the Bill, when we will get an opportunity to look at all the fine detail and the points that Mr Wells raised.

Mr P J Bradley: Last Tuesday, 22 June 2010, DARD officials took the Committee through a wide range of issues in relation to the Welfare of Animals Bill. It was an informative and helpful meeting, and I thank the officials who attended. However, as the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee said, there is still a long way to go. A lot of work has to be done before we reach an acceptable animal welfare Act.

We were told that the new Bill will update, strengthen and improve the framework for animal welfare that was set out in the 1972 Act. It aims to stop cruelty and prevent unnecessary suffering to any vertebrate animal and to promote and enhance the welfare of all protected animals, including domestic pets. It was made clear to the Committee that, within

the definition of the Bill, all farmed and non-farmed animals are automatically covered.

Every Member who has spoken so far has mentioned tail docking. I will not dwell on the tail docking issue, because one week I will be voting for it and the next week against. However, the lobbying on tail docking is intense. Although we had good evidence earlier, further evidence is to come, and we can only wait for that before we reach any conclusions.

I sought clarity on a few points during the discussions last week, and I wish to more or less repeat them now. First, I wish to deal with the issue of individuals being disqualified from keeping animals. In Committee, I referred to past cases in which individuals were disqualified from keeping animals, only for them to find that there was a simple way out of that situation. As a paper exercise, the animals could simply be transferred into the name of a spouse or neighbour, when the same animals really remained in the so-called care of the disqualified person. I was advised by the officials that the Department had tried to extend the powers in clause 33 to prevent a situation in which someone is disqualified and animals appear on the land two days later.

Clause 33 sets out clearly that the disqualified person is disqualified from owning animals, keeping them, participating in keeping them and being a party to someone else keeping them. The Department tried to sort out that aspect of the problem. However, its powers are restricted by human rights legislation. For example, if a husband is disqualified, his wife or neighbour cannot be banned from keeping those same animals. People have human rights and cannot be disqualified if they have not committed an offence. That is the law, and we must accept it. However, more could be done to address the legal loopholes left in the Bill. To leave such loopholes in a Bill is wrong, and we must consider how to tighten the law further.

I must express my view on clause 53, which provides:

“anything which occurs in the normal course of hunting or coursing”

is not covered by the Bill unless:

“the animal is released in an injured, mutilated or exhausted condition”.

I suggested that it might be proper to add the words “or hunted” after the word “released” because, when an animal is being hunted and is injured or exhausted, it is more prone to attack or being killed. I was informed that the responsibility for hunting dogs does not rest with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and my understanding is that no Department has been allocated that responsibility by the Executive. I stress again that, in preparing the Bill, we should look at that. I accepted that on the day that I was told it, but since then I have been thinking about it. Let us forget about the hunting aspect. Surely it is possible in this Bill to deal with cruelty directed towards an animal, whether hunted or not? As I have stated, an animal in an exhausted condition is liable to attack or to be killed. I once witnessed an exhausted stag being hunted to a standstill and savagely attacked by the pursuing pack. Though it was a single incident, the sight will remain with me forever. The poor animal had run for miles across the countryside and could go no further; it had to submit to vicious attack.

I welcome the ongoing work on this Bill. However, there are so many outstanding issues to be dealt with that I doubt that it will progress as the Department or Minister expects. It will take much longer before all the t's are crossed and the i's dotted.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for bringing the Bill to the Assembly and for her introductory statement. I also thank the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for his contribution. I have joined the DARD Committee only recently, and I have a lot to learn. I see the Minister looking at me; she wonders what I will throw at her, but she will hear it as we go along.

I welcome the Second Stage of the Welfare of Animals Bill. Anything that the House does to ensure that animals — farmed or not, young or old, big or small — do not suffer unnecessarily or, if possible, at all must be welcomed.

As has been said, our Committee listened to DARD officials last week, and Members had the chance to question officials on the Bill. We were given a good steer as to why the Bill was necessary. As I understand it, the Bill makes it an offence for people responsible for animals to fail to take reasonable steps to ensure their welfare. It prohibits the docking of dogs' tails. I must say that I cannot get my head around

why anyone would want to dock the tail of a dog. Perhaps, during the debate, someone will enlighten me. This provision prohibits the practice and must be welcomed.

The Bill also prohibits the:

“Transfer of animals by way of sale or prize to persons under 16”.

The Minister referred to that in her speech. It also specifies that abandonment is an offence, whether or not the animal is likely to suffer. It strengthens provisions relating to animals' rights. We welcome the fact that an inspector or police personnel may take into their possession an animal that is suffering or is likely to suffer and that, on conviction for certain specified offences, a person can be deprived of the possession or ownership of an animal.

Clause 3 clearly assigns responsibility to anyone who has control of an animal, even temporarily. That includes veterinary surgeons keeping animals in their surgery overnight.

12.15 pm

Clause 8 creates offences in relation to animal fighting. The Minister and other Members also referred to that. That is very welcome. Even wrestling and baiting are to be outlawed.

My comrade Willie Clarke, who is not in the Chamber, mentioned clause 17. That clause authorises inspectors and police officers to take immediate steps if they find an animal suffering unnecessarily.

Clauses 21 and 22 are also welcome. They allow that seizures can be made if animals are being used for illegal purposes; indeed, search and entry powers are also to be used to put an end to that cruelty. That would apply to a number of cases that we have heard of this morning. Clause 31 sets stringent punishments for a large range of offences under the Bill. Surely this should be a real deterrent to anyone ill treating any animal.

I welcome and support the Bill. Everything must be done to safeguard the welfare of animals. I look forward to the next stages of the Bill and to its becoming law in the near future.

Mr Wells: This has been a good week for animal welfare in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Many of us sat here until 11.00 pm last Tuesday debating the Wildlife and Natural Environment

Bill. At the end of that debate, the House took the extremely encouraging decision to ban the barbaric sport of park hare coursing. That took 28 years to achieve, and I for one went home with a spring in my step and a smile on my face. At last, the days of Crebilly and Eglish are over, over for good. I will take great delight tomorrow in writing to the Irish Coursing Club in Clonmel in the Irish Republic to tell it the good news. It no longer reigns on this part of the island of Ireland, and it can pack its bags and go. I will have a grin on my face as I do that.

Park hare coursing has been banned, which is great news. We now have the introduction of this Bill, which is a step in the right direction. I strongly welcome the Bill, but I also wish to raise a procedural issue. The First Stage of the Bill occurred last week, and we are now at Second Stage, the consideration of the principles of the Bill. I have to ask why there is such a short time in which Members have a chance to read the Bill and consult in their constituencies and with the various animal welfare organisations. That may not be the fault of the Minister of Agriculture; it may be the fault of the procedures of the House. However, I do not think that that is sufficient time. This is the first view that those of us who are not on the Agriculture Committee have had of the legislation. Frankly, I do not think that that is good enough.

I also hope that we do not reach the situation that we did with the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill —

Mr McCarthy: Now that there will be vacancies on the Agriculture Committee, the Member would be more than welcome to join us.

Mr Wells: I would not wish to inflict myself on the good members of the Agriculture Committee. The Health Committee has done its penance over the past year, and it would be unfair to put me on the Agriculture Committee, as I would increase the length of the meetings considerably.

Apart from that point, I think that the introduction of the Bill is good news. It is also good news that, because of European legislation, the welfare of farm animals in Northern Ireland has improved significantly over the past decade. As a result of the EU's wise measures, we have, for instance, banned veal crates. That was an appalling practice whereby animals were locked in wooden crates where

they could not turn or move and were kept in total darkness for almost their entire life. They were fed milk when they craved food with roughage in it, and they were then slaughtered for veal. You may ask why I am a vegetarian; I think that veal crates alone, if they were still in action, would convince anyone to be vegetarian. That was a disgusting practice. However, it has been banned, and we now have a humane way of raising calves for veal that few people could complain about.

The Minister is right to stick to her guns. We are outlawing battery cages for egg-laying birds on farms from 2012. We will have an enhanced system of cages where hens can at least move and exhibit some form of normal behaviour. I for one would not eat an egg produced under the battery system. I am delighted to say that I have my own free-range hens, who are perfectly happy and certainly do not live in battery cages.

We are moving in the right direction; however, it is important that we bring animal welfare standards for non-farm animals up to at least those of animals kept on farms. Therefore, although this is a step in the right direction, we have some way to go.

First, the Bill concentrates too much on physical distress and physical cruelty. It assumes that the only way an animal can be ill treated is by cutting it, starving it or keeping it in insanitary conditions. I would like to raise the issue of how guard dogs and some farm dogs are treated in Northern Ireland. As part of my interest in wildlife, I regularly visit farms. In my constituency, I also regularly visit industrial premises. Is it acceptable that dogs which are intelligent are kept on a short lead of 6 ft or 8 ft for their entire life? Such dogs have no form of intelligent contact with anything else and no form of exercise.

I dealt with a case when I was in Ballycastle a couple of weeks ago, where I saw a dog that in my opinion was being — *[Interruption.]* Sorry, I cannot compete with the honourable Members for Mid Ulster and Upper Bann. That animal in Ballycastle had clearly been tethered to a chain about 6 ft long for its entire life and had never been released. OK, it was being fed and watered and it may have had shelter, but what way is that to keep a dog? I have a dog: Molly. She will be delighted to have her name in the Hansard report. Molly is walked at least two or three times a day. Were she not given that exercise,

she would become extremely distressed. I believe that there is merit in stipulating in the Bill or its regulations that every dog must be exercised for half an hour a day. I think that that is entirely reasonable. A dog needs and should get that stimulation. I have also seen sheepdogs not being used during the sheep breeding season being locked up in hen houses or small barns or being tethered for months on end without any exercise. That is unacceptable, and I am seriously considering tabling an amendment later on.

In the Minister I believe I have detected a personal interest in the issue. I know her view on hare coursing, and I notice that she did not turn up on Tuesday night to vote against hare coursing because she would have been whipped by her party into voting a certain way. Without wishing to make a party political point, that is good news, in so far as some Sinn Féin Members may be developing a conscience about what they did on Tuesday night. However, it was good that some of its Members, rather than be forced through the Lobby in favour of park hare coursing, decided they had better things to do. As a result of that, we had a great victory.

Puppy farming is another issue that I feel strongly about and that is particularly relevant to my constituency. Unfortunately, South Down is the heartland of this desperately evil activity. We in Northern Ireland can do without puppy farming. Dog breeding establishments in which numerous bitches are kept and intensively bred, often in appalling conditions, simply for their puppies to be sold on should be banned. I cannot see how Northern Ireland would become a poorer place if we were to ban puppy farming full stop. Frankly, the goings-on in establishments in South Down and Mid Ulster are ghastly. Bitches are kept in darkened hen houses, never seeing the light of day. They are kept in a perpetual state of pregnancy, breeding large litters of pups that are quickly taken from them and sold before the bitches are made pregnant again for further breeding purposes. Now, will someone in this House tell me why we should not ban puppy farming? Will the Minister tell us whether there is anything in the Bill that will enable the Department to step in to stop this awful abuse? Puppy farming is often ancillary to the activities of the few individuals responsible, some of whom are unsavoury characters for other reasons. I do not think that the ordinary man on the street in Northern

Ireland would care if puppy farming were to be banned for ever.

I am also concerned about circuses. A distinction can be made in relation to the use of horses, dogs or domesticated animals in circuses. A horse may be perfectly used to being transported around the country for showjumping or three-day eventing. Therefore, their use in circuses is not a huge step forward from that. I could live with domestic animals being used in circuses. However, I have enormous problems with animals such as elephants, tigers and lions being taken from their native habitat, kept in cramped conditions and used in performances. In real life — I have been to national parks in Kenya and South Africa — a lion would range over several hundred square miles in its lifetime. How can we justify such an animal being put into a cage, let out only for performances and, in my opinion, treated in a totally unsatisfactory way? Lions do not normally exhibit the behaviour that is seen in circuses. If it is wrong for lions, it is totally wrong for elephants, which are very large animals that are kept in cramped conditions.

Rather than leering at animals in a circus as they perform unnatural acts, we should try to enhance people's perception of wildlife. Again, I do not see why it would be wrong for the Assembly to follow the lead of many county and city councils throughout the United Kingdom and, indeed, the Irish Republic, which have decided that there will be no circus performances involving wild animals in their area. That does not mean that I am a killjoy. There can still be a huge range of acrobats, clowns and so on who are the norm in circuses. Indeed, some of the world's greatest circuses, such as the Chinese and Russian state circuses, do not have any animals, yet they are packed out as they tour the world. Therefore, I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to a ban on the exhibition or use of wild animals in circuses, which would go a long way towards improving animal welfare standards in Northern Ireland.

I shall now raise an issue that some people may think is slightly offbeat. I shall raise it anyway because I have received letters about it from constituents and people throughout Northern Ireland: namely, the treatment of lobsters. Members may wonder why on earth the Member for South Down is raising the issue of the treatment of lobsters. I have a slight problem with any culinary practice that

involves boiling an animal alive before serving it up to be eaten. Members can call me odd, offbeat or strange, but, first, I would never eat it, and, secondly, there must be a more humane way to kill a lobster before eating it. To me, throwing a lobster into a tub of boiling water, which sometimes happens to crabs and other crustaceans as well, is extremely cruel. I am trying to tease out of the Minister whether there is anything in the regulations that would allow that practice to be altered. I understand that animal welfare organisations in the UK have devised electronic means to kill lobsters which could be used to allow them to be eaten without difficulty.

That said, the legislation is very much a step in the right direction, and, with amendment, we can have strong laws on how we treat animals. The ordinary man in the street is very much on our side, and I do not think that anything that I suggest would have a radical economic impact. A few people might lose out, but the vast majority of people would be unaffected because the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland treat their animals extremely well. One thing that I love about coming up to Stormont in the morning is seeing all the dogs being exercised in the grounds. They are some of the best treated and probably some of the poshest dogs in Northern Ireland. No other Parliament in the world would dream of allowing people to walk dogs in its grounds. People would not be allowed within 500 yards of another Parliament's buildings, but we have an open estate in which people can exercise their animals, which are extremely well kept. Therefore, for 99% of dog and pet owners in Northern Ireland, the legislation will not apply, and they have absolutely nothing to worry about. However, the 1% or 2% of people who bring pet keeping into disrepute do need to be worried.

Other aspects of the Bill are fine. The possibility of a USPCA, council or police inspector moving in to seize an animal when there is every likelihood that suffering will occur is good news. I also welcome clause 9, which deals with the five freedoms. That clause replicates the equivalent legislation in GB, which has been a considerable success. The Minister has wisely taken some of the best aspects of GB legislation, and she has consulted our colleagues in the Irish Republic about measures that they are introducing.

My view on cross-border co-operation is thus: if I find that my wife is having a very friendly

relationship with a very handsome man who lives next door, I consider the issue. If I find that she is having that relationship so that they can more effectively manage the hedge that separates our two properties, I am happy. If I find that the relationship is based on anything more sinister, I start to get worried. However, I assure Members that, in my wife's case, the relationship is simply about the hedge.

[Laughter.]

12.30 pm

Equally, if cross-border co-operation — Northern Ireland being a self-governing part of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic being an independent, free-standing state — is based on what we can do to manage issues of mutual concern, I am behind it 100%. I have no difficulty whatsoever with that type of co-operation. If the Minister is liaising closely with her colleagues in the Republic to ensure that the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland have the best possible animal welfare legislation, that is good news for all concerned and I am behind her 100%.

Something is going on — notes are being given with great flurry to the Minister. I must be saying something heretical — there is nothing new there.

If that is what is being done, it is good news because there is most definitely a cross-border element to animal welfare. We do not want a situation in Northern Ireland in which our legislation is some of the best in Europe and those who wish to abuse animals simply hoof it across the border and commit their nasty deeds in the 26 counties of the Irish Republic. Equally, we do not want a situation in which our legislation is weaker than that in the Republic and people come up here to carry out particularly distasteful acts.

On balance, the legislation is good. However, let us look at the psychological abuse of animals. It is absolutely vital that we look at circuses, and let us ban puppy farming forever.

Mr Savage: As someone who has been on the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development from the very start, I say to the Member for Strangford that we are very careful about whom we ask on to the Committee.

[Laughter.]

I welcome the Second Stage of the Bill. However, it is not unfair to say that it has been a long time coming. In repeated Assembly

questions, the Minister insisted that she would hold up this Bill to have compatible animal welfare legislation on both sides of the border. However, the Department watered down that argument as time went on. Finally, we have arrived at the Bill's Second Stage today, which I welcome. It is long overdue.

The legislation that the Bill will replace was brought through by my former party leader Harry West in 1972. At that time, it was seen as adequate and it was very much better than the 1911 legislation that it replaced. However, this Bill provides further protections that are necessary.

Two years ago, an open farm was raided and the scene was horrifying. Dozens of dead animals were found rotting and dozens more live animals showed signs of real neglect. It was widely reported that this new legislation was needed to help to fight that sort of animal cruelty. On the back of that scandal, my party brought a motion to the House that called for action. I am sorry that that has taken 18 months, but we are glad to see that the legislation is here at last.

The Bill allows authorities to take action if the condition of an animal is likely to cause it to suffer. We have been waiting for that for quite a while, and it is absolutely necessary. Sadly, it will not prevent animal cruelty, but it will prevent some animals from suffering if their conditions can be assessed on time. Clause 9 refers to what are known as the five freedoms of animal welfare, and I welcome their inclusion. This brings Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK and enshrines in law the responsibilities of owners of animals.

There are some contentious aspects of the Bill, one of which relates to enforcement. Powers of entry are available when animals are in distress. In certain circumstances, that is a necessary provision, but some stakeholders are concerned about who will be provided with that power. It is important that the Department, like the Bill, ensures that the appointment of inspectors is left to councils and that those councils make adequate provision for inspections by their officials.

It is vital that the state retains those powers of entry. That means that inspectors who are appointed under the powers of the Bill must be employed and have their role overseen by councils or the Department. Other citizens should exercise their duty to be vigilant to

instances of welfare abuse. However, it is dangerous when people other than government officers are given powers of entry and seizure.

I hope that those matters and other contentious issues can be ironed out quickly in the Bill's Committee Stage, because we all know that legislative time is short. I hope that disagreements can be resolved so that the protections in the Bill that are vital to animal welfare can become law before next summer.

Mr Kinahan: I congratulate the Committee and the Minister on the excellent work that they have done in producing the Bill, which contains many matters that we should all admire. I want to raise one or two matters. I am not going to go into great detail about all the things that are good about the Bill, but I have some concerns.

During last week's debate on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, I spoke about the need to balance the rural and the urban. Through this Bill, we need to balance animal welfare and the rural way of life, as well as farming businesses. I find it slightly perplexing that the Bill is coming from the Agriculture Committee. However, the more I think about it, the more I admire the Committee for all the work that has gone into the Bill.

Anyone who travels round the world will see that some countries over-regulate. I will sound a note of caution, however, because I feel that, with such lengthy Bills, we must be careful to think through what we are doing. We must also be careful that we do not have too many rules and we set good frameworks. Too many rules lead to the need for enforcement, and with that comes the need to employ people to do the enforcing. As we have just heard, that adds another cost to councils. We need to find a way to do it so that the costs are kept low.

I want to touch on one or two matters, especially the docking of dogs' tails. If I may add a little bit of humour before I go into details, I should say that I think that there is nothing nicer than having your dog welcome you home. I read an article a few years ago that gave 15 reasons why a dog is better than a wife. Those reasons included that a dog is always pleased to see you, which goes back to the tail wagging; it welcomes you home whatever state you are in; and it does not cost as much to keep. There was, however, a very good reply later explaining why a cat is better than a husband.

However, if I may return to the point, I do not fully understand why docking tails is necessary. I am sorry that Mr Elliott is not here to hear about this, but I worked on a farm many years ago, and I remember the docking of lambs' tails. Every year, I saw the lambs with runny bottoms, looking ill and uncomfortable. Each year, we quite happily stood with a bucket of Dettol and a lamb between our legs as we sliced off its tail. I remember thinking that it must have been painful. Legislation, quite rightly, changed that practice, and we then used a rubber band or a similar technical method. However, it all seemed very strange when, a few months later, we were eating the same beast.

I wonder whether it is necessary to dock tails. I know that the debate relates to working dogs, but it also involves country dogs. We have schnauzers at home, and most schnauzers have docked tails, although we had one that did not have its tail docked. After picking up burrs and thorns during its walks with me through the woods, it would spend most of its life having those burrs and thorns removed. It used to take ages, cause the dog much pain, and, occasionally, I would have my hand bitten by my dog as I tried to clean the burrs from its tail. Therefore, it is necessary to have tails docked, and we should just find the right way to do it.

At a later date, I would like clarification on clause 7, which deals with poisons and who judges what is given to or put into an animal. I remember an Olympic Games a few years ago when Peter Elliott ran after having an injection that was illegal for horses, but legal for humans. When it comes to setting the regulations, we must ensure that we are thorough and get it correct for animals and humans.

Clause 8 deals with animal fights. I am totally against any form of ghastly animal fighting, whether it is cockfighting or the awful dog fighting that occurs illegally in Northern Ireland, and I long to see strong punishment for those who organise those activities. However, when we consider the wording of the Bill, which states that the legislation still applies even if both animals are wild animals and that an animal is protected if:

"it is under the control of man...on a permanent or temporary basis"

it gets more vague. Taking a simpler example, when an owner walks their dog in the countryside without a lead, is that animal under

control? Most would feel that it is, but it really depends on how strong the owner's voice is.

If we continue down that line, I am concerned that the Bill may serve as a back door to the banning of hunting. Hunting dogs are not wild; they are kept in cages and are well looked after by the hunting fraternity. They are bred to chase hares or foxes, and we heard last week, during the debate on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, how much damage foxes do and that some 600 foxes were caught in Glenwhirry. I want the Minister to think that provision through and, perhaps, specifically to exclude hunting. We are going down a line that is the thin end of the wedge. That is very dangerous and may take away some of the great enjoyment of those in the countryside who ride to hounds.

There is much more in the Bill on which the Minister and her Department should be congratulated. However, I am wary of the cost involved in implementing its provisions.

Clause 19 refers to the owner of the animal or another person with a "sufficient interest" being consulted when it comes to controlling or putting down an animal. Lawyers will love that, because it is difficult to define what a "sufficient interest" is. That also needs to be thought through.

I am very sad that Mr Wells is no longer in the Chamber. Listening to him earlier, it seemed that he had never been told that it was rude to gloat, such was his enjoyment of his victory on hare coursing last week. Mr Wells was absolutely correct in his comments about puppy farming, but I would love to know how he would tell the difference between puppy farming and dog breeding.

I want to finish by once again congratulating the Minister on the Bill, because there is so much in it to be praised. However, there are a few issues that will cause great concern and one or two things that could be used in different ways. That said, it is good Bill, and I will certainly be supporting it.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I am grateful for Members' contributions to the debate, which have been valuable and informative. Many of the Members who spoke are no longer here, but I will still respond to their points. I will also

carefully read the Hansard report of the debate and write to individual Members if necessary.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development raised a number of points. He began his contribution by saying that the Bill was empty and had nothing in it. Given the learning process that we have all been through during the past three years, I would have thought that the Deputy Chairperson would understand that the purpose of primary legislation is to provide an overarching legal basis on issues and to provide for the introduction of subordinate legislation as necessary.

As I explained during my opening remarks, the key principles are set out in the Bill, but the Department needs flexibility to react to new scientific evidence that may necessitate changes to legislation. Similar provisions for farmed animals are contained in the Welfare of Animals Act 1972, and the Bill will allow the Department to react to new European regulations and implement them in the North of Ireland.

The EU will continue to put forward regulations for farmed animals as scientific evidence develops, and we need the ability to implement those. However, the EU is also turning its attention to domestic pets. Again, we need the ability to react, and those regulation powers will enable us to do that.

12.45 pm

The purpose of subordinate legislation is to provide detailed legal provisions on issues that are not already covered in primary legislation. Subordinate legislation may require frequent change, the process of which is much quicker than that of primary legislation. By providing regulation powers in the Bill, my Department will be able to consider the need for subordinate legislation for specific establishments or activities on a case-by-case basis. Subordinate legislation provides the flexibility to introduce detailed requirements that are specific to the activity that involves animals. I am sure that Members will appreciate that that cannot all be covered in the Bill. Otherwise, we would have a huge Bill with hundreds of clauses. More importantly, there would be no flexibility to make changes in the future.

Consultation with relevant stakeholders is paramount, and it will be undertaken to ensure that any regulations are proportionate and

workable. I have listened to stakeholders who have concerns over welfare issues relating to dog-breeding establishments, open farms, wild animals in travelling circuses, primates being kept as pets and greyhound tracks, to name but a few. The powers in clauses 11, 12 and 13 provide the power to regulate those activities, to license or register them, or to ban them if the evidence is there to support doing so. Obviously, the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee's detailed scrutiny will also ensure the appropriateness and proportionality of any subordinate legislation.

Some Members said that they were keen to get the primary legislation through in the lifetime of this Assembly. Indeed, Mr Wells made the point that we had the First Stage last week and the Second Stage this week. The reason for that is to allow the Committee to do a lot of work on the Bill over the summer and to enable it to scrutinise it in detail. If we had put Second Stage back, we would have lost our time in this period of the Assembly and restricted the Committee's ability to scrutinise the Bill properly. That is why Second Stage has come so soon after First Stage. A number of Members also raised points about the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill. Many aspects that were raised today are covered in that Bill, and I am content for the Environment Minister to take those forward.

I will now go through the detailed aspects of Members' questions, one of which concerned primates. The Welfare of Animals Bill provides the primary power to make regulations to prohibit the keeping of certain types of animals at domestic or other premises. The powers in the Bill do not extend to dangerous wild animals within the meaning of the Department of the Environment's Dangerous Wild Animals Order 2004. Therefore, the Bill only covers primates that are not classified as dangerous wild animals. There is quite a bit of detail in that, but, as Mr Elliott is not in his seat, I will not go through it.

Quite a few Members spoke about wild animals in circuses. The Bill provides a range of powers to deal with them. For example, powers will be available to regulate their use under clause 11, to license the circus under clause 12, or to ban their use under clause 13. Although the 2006 consultation asked some basic questions on the general use of animals in travelling circuses, it was not issued to any circuses or representative bodies of circuses. However, my

officials met representatives of the European Circus Association. They were totally opposed to a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses but in favour of regulation.

I will now take time to consider the evidence and what is best for wild animals in circuses. We also need to consider what would happen to the animals if they stopped performing. I certainly do not want those animals to be destroyed, and, therefore, I want further input from stakeholders. Once all the evidence is available, I will, if necessary, issue a further consultation that sets out specific proposals on the future use of wild animals in circuses. A point was made about liaising with our counterparts in the South. The actions that I take will have to take account of the fact that many circuses in Ireland that have wild animals for use are based in the South.

Mr Elliott raised the issue of progeny. The powers in the Welfare of Animals Bill cover all animals once they are born. However, a provision is included to extend the powers in clause 11 to secure the welfare of progeny as well as the parent animal through regulations that govern animal breeding should future scientific evidence show that it is necessary.

Quite a few Members raised the issue of tail docking, on which people have strong views one way or the other. Recent research by the Royal Veterinary College and the University of Bristol on tail docking confirms that, overall, the risk of tail injuries to dogs is small. Generally, dogs have a 0.23% risk of tail injury. Willie Clarke cited that figure, and it means that 500 dogs would have to have their tails docked to protect one dog. In a year, that would mean about 10 dogs in the North being protected. The risk of a tail injury to working gun dogs, while slightly higher, is still extremely low at 0.29%.

The report concludes, therefore, that, among ordinary dogs, 500 puppies would have to be docked to prevent one tail injury in later life and that, among working dogs, 345 puppies would have to be docked to prevent one tail injury in later life. Although information on the number of working dogs in the North is limited, the available information suggests that about 5,000 working gun dogs are born here every year. Tail docking every dog would save 10 dogs from injury and three from an injury requiring amputation. The evidence suggests that there

is no justification for allowing the tail docking of working dogs.

We looked at best practice in other places. Our counterparts in Scotland believe that there is no justification for changing the legislation there, which bans the tail docking of all dogs, to allow the tail docking of working dogs. The question that follows on from that is: if we are not happy with docking the tails of dogs, why is the practice of docking the tails of lambs and piglets still in place? The proposal to ban tail docking for all dogs is consistent with separate legislation that allows for the docking of pigs' and lambs' tails. Tail docking in lambs and pigs should not be routinely carried out. It should take place only where there are clear husbandry needs in a herd or flock.

The same rationale cannot be applied to the argument for docking dogs' tails. Although it is argued that some tails are docked to prevent injury — for example, to working dogs — it is far more widespread and is a far more common practice that tails are docked on certain breeds purely for cosmetic reasons. Animals should not be docked for reasons other than welfare and, in this case, the evidence supports what is proposed in the legislation.

Dog-breeding establishments, which Jim Wells, Willie Clarke and others raised, caused some discussion. Earlier this month, when the Assembly discussed the Dogs (Amendment) Bill, the issue of dog-breeding establishments was raised. I will use the powers in the Bill to regulate and license dog-breeding establishments to improve standards in them and to assist legitimate local breeders in marketing their dogs.

There is a huge difference between a legitimate breeder and a puppy farmer. I have met breeders who are anxious to ensure that their businesses are regulated and that the checks and balances are in place to enable them to carry out their work. I differentiate between those who apply good husbandry, breeding and welfare standards and who rear dogs as a legitimate business and those who breed dogs in a hayshed or a chicken house in very poor conditions.

The Canine Breeders of Ireland fully support proposals for legislation on dog-breeding establishments, and substandard breeders will have to improve their standards or they will not be licensed. I will want to discuss with stakeholders the regulations that will be brought

forward in subordinate legislation. It is to everyone's benefit to include the regulations in subordinate legislation, where we will have the flexibility to change them as necessary.

P J Bradley made the point that, in the past, people who were disqualified from keeping animals continued to have access to them. To ensure that a disqualified person does not remain in control of an animal or animals, the Bill proposes to extend the scope of disqualification. That will cover any activity whereby a person can be party to an arrangement under which he or she is entitled to control or influence the way in which animals are kept. Such activities include owning an animal; keeping, arranging for or participating in the keeping of an animal; dealing in animals; and transporting or arranging for the transport of animals. A person who breaches a disqualification order will be guilty of an offence. The penalty for breaching a disqualification notice is up to six months' imprisonment and a fine of up to level 5 on the standard scale, which is about £5,000. Although we need to be mindful of human rights, I take Mr Bradley's point that people are getting round the rules.

Mr Elliott, Mr Wells and Willie Clarke mentioned the progress that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF) has made with its Bill and how that impacts on us. I assure the House that DAFF continues to work on that, but it is not at an advanced stage. At one point, DAFF was ahead of us, but it had to postpone its work. We keep in close contact with the South. I met Minister Smith to discuss our respective Bills, and our officials continue to be in close contact.

Mr Wells, who is not in his seat, talked about the arrangements for hedge cutting. I hope that he will not trim his hedge, or let his wife do so, during the nesting season. I hardly need to remind Mr Wells about that. He also asked what the Department is doing about owners who cause unnecessary physical or mental suffering to animals. He made a point about guard dogs and said that such animals do not receive proper stimulation. That will be an offence under the Bill, whether it happens by omission or positive action. Anyone who permits another person to cause unnecessary suffering will also commit an offence. Mr Wells is familiar with the five freedoms that will be extended to companion animals.

Mr Wells made a point about lobsters. Invertebrate animals are excluded from the

Bill because, at present, insufficient scientific evidence exists to prove that invertebrates feel pain. It is known that invertebrates do not have a central nervous system to transmit or to process the intensity of pain, and, therefore, it is believed that invertebrates are capable of only a stimulus-response reaction. However, should future scientific evidence indicate that invertebrates are capable of experiencing pain and suffering, the Bill includes a provision that will allow its scope to be expanded accordingly. I asked my officials those questions because we want the Bill — the previous one was almost 40 years old — to last for a considerable period. Furthermore, we want to ensure that the Bill enables us to bring new scientific evidence to bear in the future.

Some Members brought up the role of the USPCA. There will be no change to the role of the USPCA under the Bill. The USPCA is an independent charity, and nothing in the Bill affects that. The Department will continue to work closely with the USPCA and all other agencies, such as the PSNI, the Environment and Heritage Service, Revenue and Customs and local councils on the welfare of animals.

George Savage asked who will enforce the Bill when it becomes law. Many of the existing powers of enforcement will remain in place. The Veterinary Service will continue to appoint inspectors to implement and to enforce powers that relate to farmed animals on agricultural land. The Veterinary Service will have new powers to seize farmed animals that are suffering or are likely to suffer. The Bill will enhance and extend the existing powers of enforcement by making new powers available to district councils to appoint inspectors to implement and to enforce provisions on non-farmed animals, including powers to seize non-farmed animals that are suffering or are likely to suffer. District councils will undertake the licensing and registration functions that are currently undertaken by the Veterinary Service for pet shops, animal boarding establishments, riding establishments and zoos. They will also be responsible for any new licensing and registration functions that are introduced via subordinate legislation.

1.00 pm

The PSNI will provide support as necessary for DARD and district council inspectors and will lead on welfare issues involving organised animal fighting or where other criminal activities

are involved. Following guidance from the Department, district councils will be able to appoint inspectors from existing resources or by new appointment.

Danny Kinahan raised the point about hunting or fishing. I can clarify that the Bill does not impact on anything that occurs in the normal course of hunting, coursing or fishing. I have gone through most of the issues, but I will keep an eye on the Hansard report to see what I need to follow up on after the debate.

I thank Members for their contributions to the debate and for the questions and issues that they have raised. To conclude, I am confident that the powers in the Bill will keep us at the forefront in our protection of farmed and non-farmed animals and improve animal welfare standards in the North of Ireland. My officials and I look forward to working closely with the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee as it now begins its detailed scrutiny of the Bill, which I have no doubt will prove to be very valuable. I am aware that the Committee has not yet decided to what date it will extend the Committee Stage for the Bill. If it is extended to no later than the week commencing 29 November, that should ensure that sufficient time remains for the Bill to complete its progress through the Assembly and for Royal Assent to be obtained before the Assembly rises. I commend the Bill to the House. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Notice taken that 10 Members were not present.

House counted, and there being fewer than 10 Members present, the Deputy Speaker ordered the Division Bells to be rung.

Upon 10 Members being present —

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Welfare of Animals Bill [NIA 28/09] be agreed.

Transport Bill: Second Stage

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr Murphy): I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Transport Bill [NIA 29/09] be agreed.

The aim of the public transport reform programme is to create efficient, effective and sustainable public transport services that contribute to the Executive's transportation, environmental, social inclusion and equality objectives, while supporting the development of the wider economy.

A major public consultation exercise and continued engagement with key stakeholders and the transport community and business sectors have served to underpin and significantly inform the proposals. The Transport Bill will provide new arrangements for the delivery of public transport services in the North. It is more than 40 years since the last major change in legislation. The law needs to change now to keep pace with the requirements of a modern public transport system.

Under the Transport Act 1967, the Department of the Environment was responsible for granting road service licences for the carriage of passengers and their luggage by road; that licence included both an operator element and a route element. Under reform proposals, the Department for Regional Development will take over responsibility for the route element of the licence and the Department of the Environment will retain responsibility for bus-operator licensing as well as its other licensing responsibilities.

The Bill introduces a duty on my Department to secure the provision of public transport services with due regard to economy, efficiency and safety of operation. It provides the framework for the Department to do so through a new contracting regime supplemented by a service permit system. The new contracting regime and permit system will allow the Department to enter into agreements with operators for the provision of public passenger transport services, enable the continual regulation of the market and, as I already stated, allow the Department to comply with EC regulation 1370/2007.

I should explain that the EC regulation requires that where a public service obligation exists in respect of the provision of public passenger transport services by road or rail, a public

service contract must be awarded. The regulation allows for that contract to be awarded directly to an internal operator, such as Translink, or to be competitively tendered. I have ruled out the privatisation of public transport now or in the future; it is, therefore, intended that Translink will continue to deliver most public transport services through a directly awarded contract.

The proposed contracting powers will also allow the Department to award contracts for services that are not included in the directly awarded contract on a competitively tendered basis. It will be open for all operators, including Translink, to bid for those contracts. For example, contracting powers will allow the Department to take forward the Executive's objective of introducing Belfast rapid transit and of awarding that contract on a competitively tendered basis.

The contracting regime will be complemented by a service-permit system to allow operators to apply to my Department for a permit to run public transport services that are not already being provided in the contracted network. That will facilitate innovation by operators and enable them to propose new services and allow the public transport market to grow. Northern Ireland Railways will remain the sole provider of railway services. Its statutory duty under the Transport Act 1967 will remain.

The Bill contains offences and enforcement powers to allow my Department to enforce the regulated public transport system effectively. Under the Bill, the Department will have the power to determine the general level and structure of fares for all contracted services and for services that operate under a service permit where fuel duty rebate or concessionary fares are paid. The Bill contains powers for the Department to provide vehicles, information systems and technology and will allow for the introduction of on-street ticketing and integrated ticketing systems. It also contains powers for the Department to acquire and dispose of land where that is necessary for public transport purposes.

The legislation will allow the Department to exploit commercial opportunities arising as a result of its functions that relate to public transport. That power could be used to generate revenue from the sale of advertising, for example, at rapid-transport halts. The Bill amends the statutory role of the Consumer Council and requires it to publish a forward work

programme in respect of its public transport functions. It also puts in place arrangements for co-operation and exchange of information between the Department and the Consumer Council.

The Bill amends and updates grant-making powers on the provision of passenger transport services. The Department has power under article 6 of the Transport Order 1977 to pay grants to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company towards capital expenditure for the purchase of vehicles to be used for the provision of stage-carriage services. The Bill will allow grants to be paid to any eligible person for the purchase of vehicles for the provision of public passenger transport services.

Under section 75A of the Transport Act 1967, the Department has power to make grants towards expenditure that is incurred in facilitating travel by members of the public who are disabled. The Transport Bill will extend that power to include two additional sections of the community: elderly people and those who live in rural areas. The Department provides funding to the Community Transport Association, which offers training, advice and information to its members. To date, the Department has relied on annual budget legislation for those payments. The Bill will introduce a power to allow the Department to fund transport advisory bodies and, therefore, to continue the funding of the Community Transport Association.

The Bill will also introduce a power to make regulations in respect of conduct in bus stations; in railway premises a power already exists to make by-laws to regulate conduct. Such a power would bring bus stations into line with railway premises, allowing effective enforcement against misconduct to improve passenger and staff safety.

Under the Bill, the Department will be able to direct that bus stations be made available for use by other specified service providers; that will allow operators who have been granted a permit or who receive grant aid to gain access to bus stations. In such circumstances as the Department determines, the aim is to improve service to public transport users.

The Bill will also clarify the Department's powers in relation to appointments and terminations to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

In conclusion, the enactment of the legislation will ensure the provision of a high-quality, integrated public transport system that will put greater focus on delivering efficient, affordable services that are responsive to local customer needs.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development (Miss McIlveen):

As Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development, I welcome the opportunity to speak at the Second Stage of the Transport Bill. The issue before the House is whether the Assembly is content to endorse the principles of the Transport Bill. The Bill, as introduced, makes provisions relating to public passenger transport and ancillary services, and for connected purposes. It is a substantial Bill, with 50 clauses and two schedules, and it allows the Department a substantial amount of delegated powers.

As the Minister has indicated, the Bill makes provision for powers relating to the regulation of public transport service delivery in Northern Ireland. It covers the duty of the Department to secure the provision of public passenger transport services by rail and by road; the power to enter into agreements and to award service permits for that purpose; the ability to attach conditions to, and to vary, service permits, along with powers for the revocation, suspension and curtailment of service permits. The Bill creates offences and provides enforcement powers in respect of the contracting service permit regime. It also provides powers for the Department to regulate fares; designate bus stations or premises as shared facilities; regulate passenger conduct in bus premises; provide for integrated and on-street ticketing systems; make grants for the provision of bus services of benefit to certain sections of the public; acquire and dispose of land; provide vehicles and facilities for public transport purposes; and exploit commercial opportunities arising from its public transport functions.

At its meeting on 23 June 2010, the Committee for Regional Development considered the Bill and was broadly content with its principles. The Committee took evidence from the Department for Regional Development, Translink, the Federation of Passenger Transport and the Consumer Council during the pre-legislative stage of the development of the Bill. During those sessions, the following issues, among others, were explored: access to public facilities

for private sector operators; and the meaning of “most” in clause 1(3). That clause states:

“The Department must, subject to subsection (1) and Regulation (EC) No. 1370/2007, secure that most public passenger transport services continue to be provided by the Holding Company and its subsidiaries.”

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company is the holding company, and its subsidiaries are the Translink companies.

The availability of data to underpin an understanding of the full costs and benefits, outside those identified in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill, were also explored during the Committee sessions. With regard to that issue, the Committee has received an assurance from the Department that the additional work with Translink arising from the gaps in data identified and recommended in the outline business case would be completed and made available to the Committee during the Bill’s Committee Stage. The Committee looks forward to receiving the Bill and exploring those and any other issues that arise in evidence during the Committee Stage, and it is broadly content with the principles of the Transport Bill.

I will speak now in my capacity as a Member and refer to a few aspects of the Bill that I feel need to be considered carefully by the Committee. I welcome the aim of the Bill in relation to seeking compliance with EC regulation 1370/2007, which came into effect in December 2009. That regulation on public transport services by rail and by road repeals earlier Council regulations 1191/1961 and 1107/1970. Although I am not an expert, my understanding of that regulation is that it introduces standardised European-wide rules on the procurement and funding of contracts for public transport services and introduces more competition into public transport, particularly in states relying on state involvement, the award of exclusive rights or direct awards of contracts without competition. That has particular impact in Northern Ireland, given the public funding of public transport services.

As a result of that regulation, it is incumbent upon the Department to show that it is not overcompensating in the award of contracts. It seeks to ensure that there is as much regulated competition as possible in public transport delivery and that that is as transparent as

possible. However, I understand that, although not explicitly stated in the Bill, it is intended that the achievement of that be contemplated through the agency model. It is vital that in scrutinising the Bill, the Committee considers carefully whether the agency model is the best method to achieve greater transparency and value for money in practice.

We will have to determine whether creating another arm’s-length body will allow for adequate scrutiny of how public money is spent in the public transport sector.

1.15 pm

While there is limited scope for competition in the market at present, I welcome the potential opportunities for competition to arise in public transport provision in Northern Ireland under clause 4 of the Bill. This allows the Department to authorise the provision of services that are supplementary or complementary to services that are already in place. That will not just give the public transport network the capability to grow, but encourage innovation in a sector that can be replicated across that sector.

I am mindful of the effect that competition has had on services, for example, from Belfast to Dublin Airport, in frequency, fares and provision of services, specifically overnight services, which also had a knock-on effect on the frequency and fares of the service from Belfast to Belfast International Airport. I will, however, be keen to ascertain in the Committee how the Department will seek either to limit or promote that aspect of the Bill in practice. Consumers in Northern Ireland have suffered for some considerable time from a lack of competition in public transport services and, although the provisions in the Bill do not permit direct competition, I hope that the Department does not stifle innovation and entrepreneurship by interpreting clause 4 too narrowly.

The Bill proposes a raft of offences and powers of entry in relation to the service permit system, which will also have to be scrutinised carefully by the Committee. Clause 1(3) states:

“The Department must ... secure that most public passenger transport services continue to be provided by the Holding Company and its subsidiaries.”

I will be interested to hear during Committee Stage what the word “most” will actually mean in the context of regulation EC 1370/2007 and

how that equates with the requirement in clause 1(1) that the Department should have:

“due regard to economy, efficiency and safety of operation.”

In particular, I will also be keen to see how the Department will ensure improved value for money for customers. As I said earlier while speaking as Deputy Chairperson of the Regional Development Committee, there were substantial gaps in the data that were identified and recommended in the outline business case. Those gaps will need to be filled and acceptable answers given in that regard. Obviously, I have deep concerns that we will have to wait until Committee Stage to consider that information, rather than prior to this stage.

The Bill also provides the Department with the contracting powers that it requires to secure the provision of public passenger transport services, including rapid transport and integrated ticketing systems. The Bill is a particularly permissive piece of legislation, and not simply in that area. It will be important for the members of the Committee to satisfy themselves that such wide, permissive powers are appropriate.

In general, I welcome the wider principles of the Bill. I look forward to the opportunity for closer scrutiny that Committee Stage allows in order to address those issues that may give some concern at first glance.

Mr Leonard: There are many general principles in the Bill that we should welcome, such as the move towards integrated ticketing. The by-laws and provisions for misconduct in bus stations are important, bringing that into parity with other locations. People need to feel safe as they go to stations to embark on journeys, finish journeys or whatever. That is an important issue for the general public and is one of those things that can attract people to use public transport.

There is good provision for stations to garner economic benefits. We all know how tight budgets are, and it will be interesting to see how the practicalities of that will flow from the legislation and practice to follow.

Obviously, I welcome strongly the Minister's remarks about ruling out privatisation. We know of many examples around the world where privatisation has led to a fragmentation of services, whereby the ripe parts of the service are bought up to make fortunes, leaving the

less ripe parts to others and creating unequal service provision. The Minister's statement makes that situation clear.

Then there is the whole idea of where we go with some of the provisions of the Bill, and there are a couple of issues at this point that it would be interesting to hear from the Minister on, today perhaps or even at Committee Stage. The Bill sets out how public transport services are to be provided, and it refers to economy and efficiency.

We need to look at possible fragmentation, although I am sure that that is not the Minister's intention; we have to be wary that those more or less profitable areas do not come out of the system. I know that, to balance that, there is a provision for grant-making powers. I will be interested to hear from the Minister, as he highlighted rural areas in his remarks, that rural provision will be equal to urban provision, that there will be connectivity, and that a service will be provided. The intention is that grant-making powers will provide for the elderly as well as the disabled.

In that meeting point of economy and efficiency of public transport services, the grant-making powers to service rural areas and the idea of community transport, it will be interesting to see how we roll out the practicalities and equality of provision across the board. Those are the main areas of principle that we will have to explore, but in general we welcome the Bill and will work hard at its Committee Stage. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Kinahan: I too am very pleased to speak on the Second Stage of the Transport Bill, especially since its general principles aim at creating an effective, efficient and sustainable public transport system with its new service delivery arrangements. I note that there was a good consultation, with 103 written replies and 11 public meetings attended by 194 people. I sometimes wonder whether we should look at our consultation system from time to time. The public service agreement (PSA) target is for 77 million journeys to be undertaken by public transport, but we sound out only a very small number of people. Consultation is vital, but perhaps a better way of doing it would reach more people.

I welcome the agency idea outlined in the Bill; it brings independence and the freedom for the Minister to direct and choose a publicly

owned company. Can we please include the Committee in that? Some Committees work well with their Ministers; others have less contact. The Committee for Regional Development does pretty well, but this is a plea that we be always kept as part of the system.

We want more people to use public transport, we want it more available, we want it to represent value for money and we want it integrated. We will see some of that coming through in the Bill. However, I am sometimes concerned about whether anyone has actually sat down and planned the long-term layout of our transport, because that is the basis of everything that we are trying to do and what we are trying to fit in on the back of the Bill. Integrated ticketing is welcome, but our use of roads means that we will not hit our carbon emission targets for 2025.

That is what law should be about: making things easier for the public and giving them more and better services. I welcome the Bill's powers to enter into agreements, award permits, create offences and give more enforcement powers; I also welcome the power to regulate fares, and, particularly, the power to cause shared facilities, the absence of which is holding us back. I also welcome on-street ticketing and the grants for the provision of bus services to benefit certain sections of the public. I am sure that there is a mass of people in Northern Ireland hoping for sorely needed community transport.

There is a need for rural transport and, of course, care and medical transport. There are many other areas in which Departments over 10 or 15 years have decided that transport is not their responsibility. It is our job, and we must ensure that we get the transport system working for everyone and reaching out to everyone.

I welcome the fact that the Bill provides for competition. Somewhere there is a balance between a state-owned system and a privatised one with many owners.

That has worked around the world in many different ways, and the Bill gives us a chance, through the agency, to explore both systems. I welcome the Bill, and I hope that we get there. I look forward to being part of the Committee Stage, when we will put our heads together to try to find ways of delivering a better transport system.

Mr G Robinson: As a Member of the Regional Development Committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I agree with the general principles of the Bill, although I am sure that there will be much debate at Committee Stage on particular aspects. As the Minister is aware, I am particularly interested in public transport and its development. I, therefore, wish to see the Bill make a good legislative base for providing public transport in all its forms.

Translink staff deserve praise for the proactive manner in which they have overseen public transport to date. The Bill seeks to aid them in continuing that approach into the future. The one topic that I am pleased to see included in the Bill is the provision of integrated ticketing and new ways in which that will be accessible for passengers. The Bill provides for the future direction of public transport and ensures that the vulnerable in society will continue to be supported. The powers of enforcement in relation to passenger conduct will help to ensure that public investment in facilities and equipment is protected through sound legal regulation. I look forward to exploring all those issues in Committee, and I support the progress of the Bill at this stage.

The Minister for Regional Development: A LeasCheann Comhairle, I thank the Members who commented in the debate on the Bill's Second Stage. I am a bit surprised that there were a limited number of contributions on what is a significant Transport Bill. However, perhaps that is because Members were relatively satisfied with the discussions that were held in Committee. Nonetheless, I am grateful to those Members who contributed. They raised a number of points to which I will now respond as best as I can. My officials and I will study the Hansard report and will endeavour to respond to any issues that I miss out or do not manage to pick up on.

I welcome the Deputy Chairperson's comments that the Committee is broadly content with the Bill. Of course, it will now have the opportunity to apply a much greater degree of scrutiny in Committee Stage and will be able to tease out certain issues, such as the use of bus stations. For example, the Committee may discuss and take evidence on the generally held view that people who wish to avail themselves of other coaches offering public transport in Belfast should not have to queue for them outside a

hotel that is around the corner from the Europa bus station, which is paid for out of the public purse. If we address the issues in relation to that, such as who has control and authority over that service, we can make better use of public transport facilities and encourage a much broader uptake of public transport, which is the objective of the Bill.

Another issue that will be teased out during discussions in Committee Stage is the level of services that Translink will retain. The percentage of public transport services currently run by Translink is in the mid-nineties, and I do not envisage that changing very significantly. However, the system that we will set up will ensure that there is proper scrutiny of that. Miss McIlveen, when speaking as a private Member rather than as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, raised an issue about scrutiny and described the agency as an arm's-length body. However, the agency will not be such a body; it will be part of the Department and will be directly responsible to me. I do not think that the work of private operators will lead to a significant change in the level of provision that Translink provides. However, the agency will ensure that the Department gets value for money from the public funding that it supplies and that customers get an efficient and effective transport service. Of course, Translink already provides such a service, but, as with every system, that can be improved, and the agency will help to make those improvements.

The Deputy Chairperson is correct that the issue has been driven by EC regulation, with which we are attempting to comply.

1.30 pm

Billy Leonard raised the issue of fragmentation of the service and competition from private providers. In Britain, a number of years back, deregulation of the service was completed to allow private operators to compete. That proved to be a negative experience. Here, we have urban areas in which some routes would be commercially viable. However, we also have a large dispersed rural population, and routes in rural areas would not be profitable for private operators. Therefore, we want to ensure that we continue to provide a public service, which is, essentially, the purpose of public transport, and that we do not go down the route of deregulation, which would allow, as Billy Leonard said, for fragmentation in the provision of

public transport. We do not want to deregulate public transport in any case, and our particular geographical circumstances reinforce our view that deregulation is not the way to go.

Billy Leonard and George Robinson raised the issue of integrated ticketing as a means of ensuring a better and more accessible transport system. As I said, this is the first major legislation in more than 40 years. The purpose behind it is to achieve a more clearly defined system of public transport, not only for ourselves in attempting to regulate and operate it but for members of the public whom we want to use it. To ensure that people will avail themselves of the system, we must make it as accessible, comfortable, reliable and efficient as possible.

Danny Kinahan raised the issue of carbon emission targets. If we do not up the usage of public transport, as opposed to the private car, we will struggle to meet the Programme for Government targets. The purpose of the legislation is to regulate and improve public transport. However, the general sense is that issues such as integrated ticketing, more information for travellers and better facilities will increase the public's understanding of how to use public transport and will lead, therefore, to an increase in the number of people who use it.

Billy Leonard also raised the issue of grant-making powers. As I said in my opening remarks, grants, particularly for rural community transport, were previously based on their inclusion in the annual budget. The legislation specifically provides for funding for community transport, which will be welcomed.

Danny Kinahan talked about a long-term plan for transport, which is, of course, the intention behind the Bill. That is why we are creating an agency that will allow for a strategic approach to regulate public transport and make it more understandable and accountable. The agency will also make other public transport providers that are not necessarily linked to Translink more comprehensible to the general public. It will give some strategic direction to developing and enhancing that transport to ensure that more people use it. Other features, such as the rapid transit system will also come on board. The objectives of the Bill are to provide to the general public a clearer sense of how public transport works, to make it easier to access and to run, to extract the maximum efficiency and

effectiveness from the system and to allow for longer-term strategic planning through an agency that will be within the remit of the Department.

I look forward to continued engagement with the Committee and Members as the Bill progresses. The Committee will undertake detailed clause-by-clause scrutiny. I will ensure that my officials and I continue to be available, if required, for discussions with the Committee.

Danny Kinahan made a point about the breadth of consultation. We tried to make the consultation process as inclusive as possible, and there was a fairly good response to it. However, if, during scrutiny, the Committee considers that gaps exist in the responses to the consultation, it is at liberty to invite whomever it wishes to give evidence to assist it in its deliberations. The fairly decent consultation that took place on the Bill will strengthen its provisions. I look forward to further dealings with the Committee as the Bill progresses.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Transport Bill [NIA 29/09] be agreed.

Tourism (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs Foster): I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Tourism (Amendment) Bill [NIA 30/09] be agreed.

It will be helpful to Members if I begin by outlining the background to this short Bill. The Tourism (Amendment) Bill is intended to amend the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which provides the Northern Ireland Tourist Board with the powers to encourage the development of the tourism industry in Northern Ireland.

The amendments proposed in the Bill fall under three main headings. The first proposes a change in the frequency of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's statutory inspections of tourist accommodation. The second proposes a change in the mechanism for appointing the chairperson of the board. The third provides for the transfer of tourist accommodation grants from Invest Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Members might find it useful if I summarise the policy rationale for each change before providing a brief summary of the clauses.

As regards the frequency of certification inspections, a key aim of the Bill is to update Part IV of the 1992 Order, which deals with the regulation of tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland, commonly known as certification. Northern Ireland is unique in the United Kingdom in having a statutory certification regime for tourist accommodation. We have operated such a scheme since 1948. Indeed, until the introduction of the Tourism Order in 1992, certification was so wide that it included coffee shops and chip shops. The 1992 Order narrowed the board's certification role, which now focuses solely on establishments that offer overnight tourist accommodation: hotels, guest houses, self-catering facilities and so on.

In practice, certification of tourist accommodation means that tourists are guaranteed a minimum standard of accommodation when they stay in Northern Ireland. The system provides tourists with the reassurance that their choice of accommodation has been inspected and approved by the board. Tourists, therefore, know that, if they are disappointed with what they find or feel that the accommodation does not meet acceptable

standards, they can complain directly to the Tourist Board. The board takes such issues extremely seriously, as standards have a strong bearing on the quality of the visitor experience and it is important that those standards are upheld. The Tourist Board will invariably look into any complaint that it receives and take action, if appropriate. A tourist in England, Scotland or Wales who is in similar circumstances does not have the same means of redress.

The mandatory certification system, which is fully supported by tourist accommodation providers throughout Northern Ireland, is complemented by a voluntary classification and grading scheme, which is also administered by the board and awards the familiar stars according to the standard of accommodation provided. Although certification guarantees a minimum standard of accommodation, the classification scheme seeks to encourage higher standards of quality. No changes to the voluntary classification and grading scheme are proposed in the Bill.

I turn now to the changes that are proposed in the Bill. Under the current legislation, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is required to carry out an annual statutory inspection of each tourist accommodation establishment. Therefore, every hotel, guest house, bed and breakfast, self-catering enterprise or hostel is inspected by Tourist Board inspectors every year. Those inspections focus primarily on the physical attributes of the establishment, the size and number of rooms, catering facilities and so on. As Members will appreciate, in most cases, those physical features change very little from year to year. Therefore, my Department, in consultation with the Tourist Board, has concluded that it would be appropriate to move away from the current system of annual statutory inspections in favour of inspections once every four years. That will clearly reduce the burden on proprietors and on the Tourist Board.

It is important to note that it is not intended that establishments should be ignored and left to their own devices between statutory inspections. Rather, to help to ensure that establishments continue to comply with the minimum standards required by the legislation, the Bill will require them to provide an annual self-review — in effect, self-assessment statements — to the board. That will enable the board to operate an arm's-length regulatory regime in between statutory inspections. The

board will still retain the power that it currently enjoys under the 1992 Order to carry out ad hoc inspections as required — for example, in response to a complaint. That is an important safeguard that is maintained in the legislation. The proposed reduction in the frequency of inspections is fully justified and does not risk any dropping of standards in tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland. It is a sensible move to reduce the regulatory burden on accommodation providers and will result in an overall saving in fees paid by such providers to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. That is particularly important in today's challenging economic climate.

I turn now to the part of the Bill that will change the mechanism for appointing the chairperson of the Tourist Board. The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 requires the chairperson to be appointed by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment from amongst board members. That means that members must first be appointed to the board. Therefore, the position cannot be directly advertised with the aim of appointing a chairperson directly to the board. That is not to say that members of the board would not be qualified to assume the responsibilities of the chairperson. On the contrary, under the changes set out in the Bill, members of the board will be as eligible as anyone else to apply for the post. The change means that, when the next vacancy arises, the pool of candidates for the post of chairperson will be much wider by virtue of no longer being restricted to the eight or nine members of the board. The Bill will, therefore, permit the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to be directly appointed by the Minister via external open competition.

I emphasise that the change that I propose to the mechanism for appointing the chairperson in no way reflects on the integrity of any of the chairpersons of the board, nor on the process followed in making that appointment. It is essentially an updating exercise to ensure that our procedures are consistent with best practice as set out by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

I turn now to responsibility for tourist accommodation grants. The recent independent review of economic policy (IREP) presented an opportunity to expand the scope of the Bill. Members may recall that, in December 2008, I commissioned Professor Richard Barnett

to undertake the IREP, the overarching aim of which was to assess DETI and Invest Northern Ireland policy to determine whether it was sufficient to help to deliver the productivity goal in the Programme for Government. One recommendation was:

“Invest NI should transfer its budgets relating to tourism accommodation back to DETI to be redistributed to a more appropriate body”.

It is important to note that that recommendation is in no way a criticism of Invest NI's role in grant-assisting tourist accommodation but recognises that grant-assisting tourist accommodation is misaligned with Invest NI's mission to increase business productivity. Having considered the IREP recommendation, I decided to make provision for the transfer of responsibility for tourist accommodation grants from Invest Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Including such a provision in the Bill is appropriate because a key statutory function of the NITB is the encouragement of tourism in Northern Ireland. It will play a key role in the implementation of the new tourism strategy for Northern Ireland, which will set a vision for tourism until 2020, and already has a statutory power to provide grant assistance for non-accommodation tourism projects.

Although the Bill will make provision for the Tourist Board to grant-assist tourist accommodation, I have not yet decided a date for the transfer of that function from Invest Northern Ireland. My officials are giving full consideration to the issues associated with tourist accommodation grants and will report to me in due course.

The changes proposed in the Bill were the subject of two consultation exercises. A full public consultation on the changes to statutory inspections and the mechanism for appointing the chairperson of the board took place between 6 July 2009 and 2 October 2009. That was preceded by external informal consultation with key stakeholders, such as the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation. The public consultation did not throw up anything to justify a change in policy. The transfer of responsibility for tourist accommodation grants from Invest NI was included in the public consultation on the IREP proposals, which ended in November 2009. The majority of consultees were in favour of that proposal.

1.45 pm

The Bill is relatively short. It comprises six clauses and one schedule. Clauses 1 to 3 relate to the statutory inspection process and, in particular, to the change in the frequency of statutory inspections of tourist accommodation to once every four years. They also relate to the statutory review process that will operate in the years between statutory inspections. Clause 4 permits the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to grant-assist tourist accommodation. Clause 5 amends schedule 1 to the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 so that the DETI Minister is no longer required to appoint the chairman from members of the board, and clause 6 allows the Department to bring the various clauses into operation on a day or days to be appointed by commencement. Schedule 1 provides for the transfer of certain assets and liabilities from Invest Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board where tourist accommodation grants are concerned.

To summarise, I consider that the changes that the Bill will introduce are necessary, wholly appropriate and proportionate and that each represents a positive step forward in tourism.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mr A Maginness):

I welcome the Tourism (Amendment) Bill and the opportunity to contribute to the debate on it. In essence, the Bill will bring about sensible and reasonable changes. It contains provision for changes in the frequency of statutory inspection and reviews of tourist accommodation. It also provides for the appointment of the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and for financial assistance to provide or to improve tourist accommodation.

The Committee first considered the Department's policy proposals on the frequency of statutory inspection of tourist accommodation during the prelegislative scrutiny. The Committee had concerns at that time that suddenly changing the period between statutory inspections from one year to four years may have an adverse effect on accommodation standards in the intervening period. For that reason, the Committee suggested to the Department that the time between statutory inspections should be determined through secondary legislation, rather than be embedded in the primary legislation. The effect of that is that the period may be changed more easily,

should it be decided at some future date that four years is too long between statutory inspections.

It is right and proper that the Committee impressed that view on the Department and the Minister. There is always the risk that standards could drop if statutory inspections were too long in coming about. I am happy to say that, having taken the Committee's suggestion to take legal advice, the Department agreed to include the time period between statutory inspections in secondary legislation. I thank the Minister for taking on board the Committee's suggestion, because it is an example of good co-operation between a Committee, a Department and a Minister. The Minister considered our position carefully and accommodated it.

The Committee was also keen to see provision for ad hoc inspections between statutory inspections. That is also included in the Bill. Committee members noted that the Bill provides for statutory reviews between statutory inspections that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board can instigate. The effect of increasing the time between inspections is to remove too burdensome a duty on proprietors of accommodation. It is important that we try to lessen the statutory burden on people in the tourist industry. That is to be welcomed. Individual establishments will also be able to review themselves. That is important, because it creates a new discipline for the proprietors of accommodation. The Committee wants to hear the views of other key stakeholders on those provisions.

It is proposed that the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board be directly appointed by the Minister through external open competition. That is consistent with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments and with mechanisms used elsewhere in the public service. That seems to be a reasonable and sensible provision in the Bill, and the Committee supports it.

The provision to allow the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to grant-assist tourist accommodation provides for the transfer of certain assets and liabilities from Invest Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. The proposal is a result of a recommendation in the independent review of economic policy that was carried out under Professor Barnett. Again, that is a sensible and

reasonable provision that has the Committee's support. However, as the provision was not part of the Department's public consultation on the Bill, the Committee wishes to fully scrutinise the independent review of economic policy's consultation responses relating to that recommendation. We will also wish to hear the views of key stakeholders on the matter. The Committee is supportive of that provision, although we await the views of others, which may be different. It must be accepted that the Tourist Board has a duty and a right in some circumstances to provide grants for non-accommodation facilities. In circumstances where the Tourist Board already exercises that power, it is right and reasonable that it should be transferred.

The Committee generally supports the principle of the Tourism (Amendment) Bill and will further consider the proposals in the autumn.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her thorough explanation. I welcome the change in the annual statutory inspections of accommodation establishments, as that would allow businesses to concentrate on exactly that: their businesses and the service that they provide. I welcome the right of the NITB to carry out ad hoc inspections. That would help to concentrate resources and attention on accommodation establishments that might be causing problems and would allow the time and resources of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to be freed up.

Taking responsibility for tourist accommodation grants from Invest NI and placing it with NITB could have merit, not because it would be a slight on Invest NI but because it would keep everything much neater, bring everything into one box and cut bureaucracy and red tape. It would mean that the businesses and the individuals running them would know that they only have to go to one body. It would also mean that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board would have more control, as it would play a key role in the implementation of the new tourist strategy for Northern Ireland, which is vital for the growth of that industry.

Is the Minister of the opinion that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is up to that challenge and can deliver on the outworkings and provisions of the Bill? Can it deliver on the needs of our tourist industry? Can it promote Northern Ireland in the way in which it should be promoted? There have been certain failures

over the past years in my constituency of North Antrim, one small example being that the Tourist Board has only recently recognised that Slemish Mountain exists. Will the Minister detail how much grant funding Invest NI has offered to tourist accommodation businesses in recent years and, in particular, how much support the bed and breakfast and guest house sector has received?

Mr Kinahan: I welcome and support the Bill and its objectives. The Bill provides for statutory inspections of tourist accommodation to be changed from annual to every four years. The inspection regime benefits the tourist industry and accommodation providers in Northern Ireland by providing a uniform rating system, in order that visitors know exactly what they will get in any given establishment. That makes it much easier for accommodation providers to target their marketing and prices. As a result, it is right that the industry should pay for those inspections. Downgrading the inspections will remove three quarters of the cost of inspections to business and lighten the regulation load, which I very much welcome.

The provision that the Tourist Board retains the right to conduct spot checks is also welcome, in that it will ensure that, should a complaint be received, the board can check that the rating given at the previous routine inspection remains accurate. Yesterday, as part of a question to the Minister, I raised the concern of one or two Americans who complained about our personal services, and the Minister answered. However, a good feedback system should be considered as part of the inspection provided for in the Bill, so that we do not rely just on those who use accommodation. We somehow forget that users of tourist accommodation are not us; they tend to be visitors. Therefore, it is essential to get some feedback, but we also need our own feedback. I do not want to slight those who do an extremely good job, but I have spoken to other people since my comment yesterday and I have heard exactly the same thing: sometimes, our personal service is not as good as it could be.

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

The Bill also provides the Minister with the power to appoint a chairperson of the Tourist Board directly rather than from board members, of whom one is appointed. On the face of it, that is a minor and technical alteration, but it allows for greater professionalisation of the role. Currently, it would not be possible to

advertise the chairmanship of the board, only board membership. It may well be that the wider competition does not attract the best candidates for the position of chairperson. An open, external contest for the position will provide greater competition, thus ensuring that we get the best person for the job. Yet, as the Minister said, we must not see this as a slight on those who have held the post in the past or today, all of whom have been excellent. Given the work that must be done to improve our tourist industry, the change is welcome.

The Bill transfers responsibility for the provision of tourist accommodation grants from Invest Northern Ireland to the Tourist Board. It stands to reason that the board is the best body to make such decisions. The Tourist Board's greater knowledge of the tourism industry, the gaps in provision and the existing development opportunities puts it in a better position to give those grants. However, I seek some assurance that the relevant expertise in the administration and distribution of grants will be available in the Tourist Board.

It is good that the House finally has the opportunity to see what the Minister is doing on tourism. As with so many Departments, DETI has taken a long time to come forward with its legislative programme. As a result, we have seen a legislative logjam. Our tourism industry lags behind its potential. The Bill is a step towards providing the Tourist Board and the tourism industry with the tools that they need to make progress. I look forward to seeing more enabling legislation on tourism from the Department that will loosen regulation and improve governance and other matters.

2.00 pm

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: I am grateful to those Members who took time to consider the Bill. I am also pleased to note the broad support for the Bill, which, although relatively short, will result in some significant changes. Those changes will be positive, proportionate and, as the Chairperson said, reasonable.

The reduction in the frequency of tourist accommodation inspections has been welcomed by the tourist accommodation sector. The Bill will lessen the statutory burden on the sector, taking a little bit of the regulatory and financial pressure off, which is the point that Mr Kinahan made. I was surprised to hear that the cost per

room — albeit the rate that was set in 1992 — is in the region of £16 a year. Even though the maximum fee is £1,500 a year, for a large hotel, it is quite a lot of money to pay the Tourist Board every year, and I am sure that it could be used in other ways. Therefore, I am sure that the industry will welcome the better regulatory proposals.

The appointment of the chairperson of the Tourist Board has been welcomed, and the appointment process was in line with that stipulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, who welcomes the change. No controversy surrounds the appointment.

The shift of responsibility for awarding tourist accommodation grants from Invest Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is part of moving tourism grant-making facilities into a one-stop shop so that people get a more holistic view of tourism grants in Northern Ireland. My friend Mr Frew asked whether the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is up to the challenge. I have yet to set the commencement date for the transfer, and, before doing so, I will ensure that it is up to the challenge. He also asked how much money Invest NI paid out in grants in the past five years. The tourist accommodation sector received £11.4 million of capital assistance, by far the greatest proportion of which went to hotel accommodation, although I will write to the Member in response to his specific question.

The introduction of spot checks has also been welcomed. As I said in my opening comments, there is no comparable system in the rest of the United Kingdom, and we should be proud of the fact that a tourist who is dissatisfied with the standard of their accommodation can complain to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, which will take their comments on board and go out to look at the accommodation.

I do not think that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board website has a feedback facility, which is a point that Mr Kinahan made about service delivery. The Bill is concerned with minimum standards of the physical attributes of accommodation; nevertheless, the Member's point about service standards in tourist facilities is well made. We all know about websites such as TripAdvisor that allow people to record what they feel about their tourist experience. At present, there is no such facility on the NITB

website, but perhaps the board should look at including a facility for people to record how they felt about their visit to Northern Ireland and their experience of accommodation or, indeed, another facility. That is something that we might be able to take forward.

I am pleased that the legislation has been welcomed. I note Mr Kinahan's comments about bringing forward more legislation, but it is not always necessary to legislate to promote the tourist industry. The industry has been working very hard with me to develop the tourism strategy and with the Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland to drive forward the industry here. Great strides have been made in the past two or three years, and I commend the industry for what it does, day and daily, despite the difficult times that it has to face. Legislation is not always necessary. Nevertheless, I am grateful to the Members who contributed to this helpful debate on the Tourism (Amendment) Bill, and I look forward to engaging with the Chairperson and the Committee as it progresses.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Tourism (Amendment) Bill [NIA 30/09] be agreed.

Committee Business

Motions to Amend Standing Orders

Mr Deputy Speaker: As the next seven motions relate to amendments to Standing Orders, I propose to conduct the debate as follows. I propose to group motions (a) to (g) as detailed on the Order Paper and to conduct only one debate on all the motions.

Debate will take place on all the motions from (a) to (g). When all Members who wish to speak have done so, I shall put the Question on motion (a). I shall then ask the Chairperson to move formally each of the remaining motions in turn, and I shall put the Question on each of those motions without further debate. If that is clear, I shall proceed.

The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne): I beg to move

(a) In Standing Order 10(3) leave out from line 6 to line 9.

The following motions stood in the Order Paper:

(b) In Standing Order 10, after paragraph (3) insert

“(3A) Where it appears that Monday’s business may not be completed by 7.00 pm, a motion to extend the sitting into the evening may be moved by –

(a) a member of the Executive Committee (in respect of outstanding Executive Committee Business);

(b) a member of the Business Committee (in respect of any other outstanding business).

(3B) A motion under paragraph (3A) may only be moved if –

(a) notice of the motion has been given to the Speaker by –

(i) 11.00 am on the Monday in question; or

(ii) such later time as the Speaker may allow; and

(b) the motion specifies the latest time at which the Assembly is to adjourn and the Speaker considers that time to be reasonable.

(3C) Consideration of business on the Order Paper not concluded by the time the Assembly adjourns on a Monday shall be postponed until such time as the Business Committee determines.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

(c) In Standing Order 10(4) line 1, leave out “7.00 pm” and insert

“the time the Assembly is to adjourn”. — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

(d) In Standing Order 10(8) line 3 leave out “a motion made by a member of the Executive Committee” and insert

“a motion moved by a member of the Executive Committee”. — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

(e) In Standing Order 12 leave out paragraph (7) and insert

“(7) Motions relating to the business of the Assembly –

(a) subject to Standing Order 10(3B)(a)(ii), shall be taken at the commencement of public business after notice; and

(b) shall be decided without amendment or debate.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

(f) In Standing Order 20(1)(b) line 1 leave out “3.00 pm” and insert

“2.30 pm”. — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

(g) In Standing Order 20, after paragraph (8) insert

“(8A) Answers may be no longer than two minutes. Answers to supplementary questions may be no longer than one minute.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Today, Members are asked to consider seven motions to amend Standing Orders. Amendments (a) to (e) permit Monday sittings to continue after 7.00 pm. As Members know, under current arrangements, Monday sittings must finish by 7.00 pm unless there is a motion on the Order Paper to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) and 10(4). Usually, that procedure works satisfactorily, but, occasionally, there is insufficient advance information to allow a motion to suspend Standing Orders to be placed on the Order Paper. As a result, there have been several occasions during this session when business could not be taken because the sitting would have gone beyond 7.00 pm. For example, there have been oral ministerial statements, questions for urgent oral answer, matters of the day, items of business such as legislation, which

is not time bound, or a series of Divisions, all of which may consume more time than expected.

If a motion to suspend Standing Orders is to be on the Order Paper, it must be tabled by the previous Tuesday at the latest, when the probable length of the sitting may not be known. As a result, when a sitting continues until 7.00 pm, outstanding items of business have to be rescheduled by the Business Committee. That is very frustrating for parties and for Members who have carried out all the research to inform their speeches and may have invited interested parties to attend the debate or informed the media that the topic will be debated.

To remedy that problem, the amendments to Standing Orders 10 and 12 allow a member of the Executive, in relation to Executive Committee business, or a member of the Business Committee, in relation to all other business, to table a motion on the day to extend the sitting to a time specified in the motion. The motion to extend must be notified to the Speaker in writing, normally by 11.00 am that morning or at a later time agreed by the Speaker. In agreeing to a time after 11.00 am, the Speaker will take into account matters such as the impact on timings of any emergency or business that could not have been foreseen earlier, such as urgent ministerial statements. The Speaker has discretion over whether the time stated in the motion is reasonable, and his decision will be notified as quickly as possible. Standing Order 12(7) has been amended to provide that the motion to extend cannot be amended and will not be debated. The Standing Orders outline what the provisions are, and the Speaker will detail the procedural and practical arrangements that will apply through a Speaker's ruling.

There is general agreement that the Assembly should be a family-friendly organisation, and I wish to emphasise that, normally, Monday sittings will continue after 7.00 pm only if there is a motion on the Order Paper. That acknowledges the Business Committee's responsibility for arranging the business of the Assembly, and it ensures that Members, their staff and others can plan in advance around their other commitments. The amendments provide a facility to extend the sitting only in exceptional circumstances that could not have been anticipated and when the impact of not continuing the sitting would be significant.

Amendment (f) to Standing Orders relates to Question Time, which takes place on Mondays from 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm and on Tuesdays from 3.00 pm to 3.30 pm. The amendment provides that Question Time will be for one hour from 2.30 pm on both days. Since the Justice Minister now takes Assembly questions, and it is possible that the Attorney General may answer questions in the Chamber, the impact on the number of appearances by other Ministers will not be significant.

Amendment (g) relates to the amount of time that Ministers have to respond to oral questions. The Committee on Procedures was concerned that some Ministers did not reply to a sufficient number of questions during the half hour allotted to them. The Committee had agreed that a time limit of two minutes should be imposed on the Minister's response to a lead question and one minute to each supplementary question. However, since the motion was placed on the Order Paper, the Committee has met and decided to re-examine the matter. Therefore, it was unanimously agreed by the Committee that amendment (g) will not be moved today.

If Members agree the amendments moved today, they will come into effect from the start of the next session in September.

Mr Leonard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Chairperson has outlined the main provisions, and debate and work has been going on in the Committee for some time. Obviously, one amendment has been left aside for further consideration. The amendments are intended to increase the efficiency of the place, and we agree with the provisions.

Lord Morrow: Like the previous Member to speak, I will be brief. I entirely agree with the amendments. I congratulate the Chairperson on his efforts in bringing it to this stage, and I also congratulate the hard-working staff who have applied themselves very effectively and efficiently to ensure that we have these changes.

The changes are not of monumental size by any means, but they are very much common sense. They will ensure that the House operates on a more user-friendly basis. In the past, we have been tied by our Standing Orders, and rightly so. However, there was never a provision to be flexible, and that is one of the things that has been lacking. The proposal put forward by the Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures

is practical and sensible, and it brings a degree of rationale to the sittings of the Assembly. Without this provision, there was no flexibility whereby the Assembly could meet after 7.00 pm, even if an additional 20 or 30 minutes were needed to tidy up the business, and, to some degree, it brought some confusion later.

Amendment (f), which relates to Question Time, is a sensible move, particularly in light of the fact that justice is now devolved to this Administration. It is only right and proper to have one hour on a Monday and one hour on a Tuesday for Question Time. Question Time should be the highlight of the week in the House. Unfortunately, it is not. It behoves us all to work hard to change that and to bring about a situation where Members are fighting to get through the doors to get their seats at Question Time. Unfortunately, that is not the way at present. I suspect, as someone said, they are fighting to get out before it starts, and we want to kill that sort of atmosphere.

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

However, as a result of the further devolution of powers to this Assembly, it is a sensible proposal to have two Question Times on a Tuesday. I give that proposal my wholehearted support.

2.15 pm

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Mr Storey): As there are no issues of concern and there is consent among Members for the proposed changes to Standing Orders, I support the motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that the votes on the motions require cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(a) In Standing Order 10(3) leave out from line 6 to line 9.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(b) In Standing Order 10, after paragraph (3) insert

“(3A) Where it appears that Monday’s business may not be completed by 7.00 pm, a motion to extend the sitting into the evening may be moved by —

(a) a member of the Executive Committee (in respect of outstanding Executive Committee Business);

(b) a member of the Business Committee (in respect of any other outstanding business).

(3B) A motion under paragraph (3A) may only be moved if —

(a) notice of the motion has been given to the Speaker by —

(i) 11.00 am on the Monday in question; or

(ii) such later time as the Speaker may allow; and

(b) the motion specifies the latest time at which the Assembly is to adjourn and the Speaker considers that time to be reasonable.

(3C) Consideration of business on the Order Paper not concluded by the time the Assembly adjourns on a Monday shall be postponed until such time as the Business Committee determines.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(c) In Standing Order 10(4) line 1, leave out “7.00 pm” and insert

“the time the Assembly is to adjourn” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(d) In Standing Order 10(8) line 3 leave out “a motion made by a member of the Executive Committee” and insert —

“a motion moved by a member of the Executive Committee” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(e) In Standing Order 12 leave out paragraph (7) and insert

“(7) Motions relating to the business of the Assembly —

(a) subject to Standing Order 10(3B)(a)(ii), shall be taken at the commencement of public business after notice; and

(b) shall be decided without amendment or debate.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(f) In Standing Order 20(1)(b) line 1 leave out “3.00 pm” and insert

“2.30 pm” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

The following motion stood in the Order Paper:

(g) In Standing Order 20, after paragraph (8) insert

“(8A) Answers may be no longer than two minutes. Answers to supplementary questions may be no longer than one minute.” — [The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures (Lord Browne).]

Motion not moved.

Public Accounts Committee Reports

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 15 minutes to propose and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have seven minutes.

The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (Mr P Maskey):

I beg to move

That this Assembly takes note of the Public Accounts Committee Fourth Composite Report (NIA 62/09/10R) and First Thematic Report (NIA 65/09/10R).

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I saw the Minister of Finance and Personnel running through the door to the Chamber. I am glad to see that he was able to make it in time for the debate and did not make the same mistake that someone else did last week. Fair play to him for making the effort, particularly as we are ahead of schedule today.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) monitors public expenditure through its scrutiny of the reports of the NI Audit Office. At the front end of the process, the elected members of the Committee offer a high level of attendance and commitment, and I thank them for the sustained effort that they give to the Committee.

The Committee's objective is to examine, on behalf of the Assembly, whether public spending has been properly authorised and wisely carried out. That role is a crucial part of parliamentary democracy, and it demonstrates the legislature's putting a brake on, or adding a checking mechanism to, the power of the Executive.

The Committee receives evidence from departmental accounting officers about the spending decisions that are taken in their Departments. PAC considers and weighs that evidence, often asks for more detail by correspondence and prepares a report and recommendations. Under the authority of the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Departments prepare memorandums of response to the Committee's recommendations. The Committee follows those up as it sees fit or refers them to the relevant Statutory Committee to monitor progress. The Committee enjoys a significantly high profile but also significant responsibility. That is because the officials who answer to it are the most senior in their Departments. It

is also because, unfortunately, the cases that come to the PAC are usually the worst examples of financial management in the public sector.

To set that more clearly in perspective, I will read from the most recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, which was published in 2009:

“Despite a challenging environment for all concerned, I consider the standards of financial accounting remains high, demonstrated by the quality and timeliness of financial reporting in 2007-08. The vast majority of accounts submitted received an unqualified audit opinion. Such attainments help to build public confidence in the process of accountability and governance.”

The Comptroller and Auditor General, having prepared 175 statutory audits and audits by agreement, qualified about 5% of central government audits. In other words, 95% of audits demonstrated good financial management and strong governance arrangements. That is an impressive statement of performance on the local public sector, and I am delighted to recognise that. It is difficult to maintain such a high standard at all times. The optimal performance that we expect of accounting officers is one that we expect of few professionals. Given that they do not meet our expectations only 5% of the time, the stakes are high.

I repeat that the cases that come before the PAC are the worst examples of financial management in the public sector. To do our job, we have to highlight the relatively rare examples in which performance is not optimal. As an American President once said of parliamentary scrutiny:

“There is some scandal and discomfort, but infinite advantage, in having every affair of administration subjected to the test of constant examination on the part of the assembly”.

The Public Accounts Committee has been bringing an annual take-note debate to the House for some time. On each occasion, the Chairperson has reminded the House of the singular business and remit of the Committee. Since its most recent take-note debate in September 2009, the Committee decided to report to the House more often. As Members become more familiar with the role of the Committee, I expect that I will explain less and discuss more during the debates.

After a lengthy period that was spent catching up on reports that the Comptroller and Auditor General had written during the suspension of the institutions, the Committee caught its breath last autumn and agreed to consider fewer reports, but in more depth. The Committee also considered some of the points that were made by the Minister in September 2009, and it has demonstrated how to take constructive criticism. The Minister suggested that systems and bureaucracy had perhaps sprung up in response to the Committee's 450 recommendations since devolution. He pointed out that departmental resources were diverted to implement the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee agreed to focus and revise its recommendations before signing off its reports and to make fewer and tighter recommendations. We also agreed to prioritise the lessons learned from each inquiry in the hope that fewer recommendations would lead to more effective implementation. We referred an Audit Office report to the Statutory Committee for the first time and received positive feedback from that exercise. The Minister was also struck by the time that had passed since the events that led to some of our inquiries. I pointed out that the Committee's aim was simply that lessons from those events should be learned.

As Members will see today, the Committee decided, on foot of its deliberations, to bring a different product to the House. Its first thematic report deals with the management of complex projects and recaps on lessons from the Committee's back catalogue that it wanted to reaffirm. In looking back at the themes that it has encountered, it did not find that old cases have nothing to teach us. The Committee's first thematic report demonstrates that learning in the four stages of project management has been repeatedly overlooked in successive projects.

The Committee drew out stark lessons on specification, the composition of project teams, the complexity and size of projects envisaged, the appraisal process, actions to protect the taxpayer and post-project evaluation. Those lessons must now be learned. It is not only unacceptable but negligent to repeat such costly mistakes. The Committee reviewed 11 cases of project management for its first thematic report. Those ranged over the past three years of the Committee's work, but, in some cases, many years had passed since the events that

provoked inquiry. One issue that concerns me greatly is that over-optimism or optimism bias by public servants recurred over time. In some instances, pressure of time allowed optimistic judgements to carry on a project that would not have passed rigorous appraisal.

For instance, in the Committee's case study inquiry into the inward investment of grant aid to Valence Technology, safeguards were bypassed at the appraisal stage due to the pressure to create jobs and to snap up what appeared to be an innovative product. That led the Committee to recognise:

"weak project proposals may well be accompanied by demands for quick decisions. It is a particular responsibility of senior management, therefore, to ensure that previous experience is not overlooked under the pressure to secure a project."

and to recommend:

"sufficient time is always devoted to project appraisals and that all aspects are thoroughly assessed, with any weaknesses properly addressed".

That failure was compounded by the fact that the project was not reappraised and subsequently halted. Rushing such projects also increases the risk that the public sector does not get a good deal for taxpayers' money.

Optimism has also been a problem in planning projects that are simply too complex. From the composition of project management teams to the capacity of Departments to support reforms and service transformation, several cases have demonstrated how optimism can create an unworkable burden that ends in poor or failed delivery, demotivation and waste. The PFI pathfinder project and the statement of rate levy reports spring to mind. However, I must credit some of the good work that has been done in the shared services reform programme.

We are aware that Departments see PAC hearings as a daunting prospect, but we must insist on rolling out good practice. The Committee is also aware of the good work that is being done, and we hope that our first thematic report will start a new and positive conversation about how to improve project management across the public sector. It is not like me to endorse words from politicians from Westminster, but I am happy to endorse the conclusion of Edward Leigh, who recently stood down as Chairperson of the Westminster Public Accounts Committee:

"Government must learn from experience. Government needs to learn from its failures and its successes, so that mistakes in one part are not repeated elsewhere. ... Public scrutiny adds value."

That is the message that our Committee wants to send out, loud and clear. Our reports have tried to send that message out, and the Committee is presenting its fourth composite report to the House. Members will now address the content of both reports.

Mr Beggs: One of the issues that our thematic report brings out is the need for a robust and complete project specification. A project specification is essential because it acts as the terms of reference for a project and provides a description of what it aims to achieve, as well as the timescales and the work that is required to ensure that it achieves the desired outcomes. If a specification is wrong, a project will be flawed from the outset, and it is likely that there will be a cost to the public purse. A project specification also serves as an accountability tool that can be used to assess how well a project is progressing, and it helps us to measure its success on its completion.

Unfortunately, at our evidence sessions in recent years, the Public Accounts Committee has seen poor-quality project specifications for a number of major projects, and those failings have seriously undermined their prospects for success, as well as resulting in poor value for money.

For example, in our 2008-09 report on rate levy and collection, the Committee concluded that the specification for the IT system was incomplete. We examined some basic and fundamental aspects, perhaps the most obvious of which was the fact that a function to assist the chasing and recovering of rates arrears was missing. It is astonishing that a new IT system was designed to manage the rates system and a basic core function — that of chasing, collecting and recovering rates arrears — was missing. That left a gap that led to rates not being chased for a period. Further bad debts were incurred and, because a modification to the original specification had to be made, additional moneys had to be paid.

Furthermore, the system had no validation checks to prevent manual input errors. That resulted in the issuing of some interesting bills, including some for millions of pounds because a few extra noughts had been added by someone

who inputted the information. That brought the system into disrepute.

2.30 pm

The nature of the contracts, or of any contract for that matter, is that the contractor will charge extra for any changes to them. In the construction industry, contractors make very tight estimates because they make their profit on extras. That is well known in the construction industry, and government needs to get wise to the fact that that applies to other contracts as well. One needs to be particular when issuing a contract, because if one fails to produce a proper specification for the project, additional moneys will be required. Given that that happens mid-term in many projects, the contractor may ask for a blank cheque because no one else is available to do that essential work. Therefore, people are caught out and ridiculous costs can be incurred.

In examining the performance of the Planning Service, the Committee identified similar problems that have resulted from incomplete and inadequate specification of the flagship IT project, e-PIC, which has yet to be finished. I hear that it will be finished later this year, and I hope that that is the case. However, the so-called off-the-shelf system that was procured did not meet the specifications of the Northern Ireland Planning Service, and, therefore, expensive and considerable adaptation was required, which introduced additional costs and significant time delays. As the changes were outside the contract, the Planning Service was in a weak negotiating position. When our report was issued in February the project was four years behind schedule with capital costs of £7.3 million, which is 130% over the original budget.

Unfortunately, those are typical examples that the Committee has repeatedly encountered in which inadequate specifications were made. That leaves government at the mercy of experienced private sector contractors who use the opportunity to make significant profit. That undermines the value-for-money principle that the public sector ought to be striving for through competition.

The Committee examined issues with the Belfast to Bangor railway line. As well as incomplete specifications, we encountered a rather strange situation, in which poor value for money arose because projects were over-

specified. Our report into the upgrade of the Belfast to Bangor line highlighted significant downgrading of the level of the work that was originally planned. However, one is equally exposed to a contractor's costs when a contract is upgraded. Who will put an accurate figure on the value of work that has to be carried out to a lower level? It is the public sector that is exposed.

The relay of the line demonstrated basic failings — things that even someone wanting to buy a model railway would get right. The speed limit was specified at 90 mph but, guess what, they discovered that only 70 mph was needed. When building any surface, one would get it to the required quality because there is no point paying for extra that is not needed. Considerable extra money would have been required to achieve that additional 20 mph, and, therefore, the mid-contract downgrade added significant costs.

There was also a significant reduction in bridge work, drainage and sea defences. Because the change happened mid-contract, who can put an accurate figure on the cost of the work that was carried out? It certainly was not open to competition, because the contract had already been entered into and the contractor was in a strong position of leverage. I see that my time is nearly up.

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

Mr Beggs: Detailed specification and accurate work are important if we want to protect the public purse.

Mr Dallat: Unfortunately, I must begin my contribution by saying that there is still a culture of public money being regarded differently from money in your pocket or mine. That culture has to change. Every penny of taxpayers' money must be protected and tracked to its final destination, ensuring that it is accounted for and that the services it buys represent the best value for money available. That is essentially what the Public Accounts Committee has sought to do as an all-party Committee, and, to date, I believe that we have been successful.

I will illustrate my point with a couple of examples of taxpayers' money not being valued or protected as it should have been. Our investigation into the transfer of surplus land in the private finance initiative pathfinder project tells its own sorry story. In one example, land

was transferred without anyone even bothering to measure it. As a result, a developer scooped half an acre of prime land worth an estimated £400,000, with the Department receiving not one brass penny for the taxpayer. That is bad practice and it must be avoided in the future.

In another example, an enterprising developer managed to acquire an asset and sell it on in a few weeks, yielding a profit of £175,000. For those who do not have accountancy skills, I should say that that is a return of 23% on an investment of £750,000. That was a very good return for the developer, a huge embarrassment for the Department and a really bad deal for the taxpayer. I could mention other examples, but I think that the issue has been adequately covered. Therefore, I do not intend to go into any more detail except to emphasise that the gravy train has come to an end.

At no time should taxpayers' money be squandered, but I think that I am right in saying that there is an even greater need to guard the public purse with more zeal than ever before. Every day, we are told of the most vulnerable people in society being deprived of basic services, such as summer schemes for children with special needs, which is very topical here today. That money could possibly be found if taxpayers' money was guarded with greater respect and there was a new culture of good practice, which would stamp out waste and get best value for money.

The PAC reports addressed the vexed question of consultants representing very poor value for money on several occasions. Again, not a single penny was paid in compensation where they failed miserably to perform at the levels expected. Let us hope that the message about consultants has finally got through.

The Civil Service is a vast organisation with a great deal of resources and backup. The practice of bringing in consultants on a whim must end, except in circumstances in which it is not economical to retain such skills in-house. When consultants must be brought in, there has to be a clear understanding of the terms and conditions and the defaults if they fail to deliver. That has not been happening across the board. Unfortunately, millions of pounds have been wasted on dodgy IT systems that are not fit for purpose, such as the e-PIC, which Roy Beggs mentioned. Not once have the consultants been taken to task. That is not only wrong but truly

amazing. That would not be tolerated in the private sector, and it should not be tolerated in the public sector.

During these bad times, the entire procurement issue is exercising the minds of the members of the PAC and the general public. I look forward to more Audit Office reports that dig deep into practices across the board where procurement is a serious issue. Recently, there was the scandal of Northern Ireland Water awarding contracts of £500,000 without tendering.

In these difficult times, government contracts are the lifeblood of small and medium-sized businesses. Questions will be asked when it is not immediately obvious that procurement practices are crystal clear or easily understood. That applies not just to Departments but to other agencies, health and social care trusts, education and library boards, and just about every other organisation that survives on public money. People who fail to win contracts or who have lost existing contracts are entitled to clarity at every stage of the process. The tendering system must be designed to deliver the best possible service at the least cost.

In conclusion, I want to pay tribute to the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff for their professionalism and determination to work in harmony with the Public Accounts Committee to achieve a level of scrutiny that is first class and is most likely to reduce costs and to produce a much better level of service for the public whom we all represent.

Dr Farry: As a non-member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am privileged to speak in the debate. I want to take the opportunity to place some of the reports in a slightly wider context. First, I want to join other Members in paying tribute to the Committee's work, both the contribution of elected members and that of staff. Certainly, I am impressed by the sheer volume of reports that have arrived on my desk from the Committee. I do my best to, at least, read the executive summaries of all those reports. I also want to recognise the good work that is done by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Northern Ireland Audit Office to provide the background work to the scrutiny that is conducted through the Public Accounts Committee.

Clearly, in the current context, every penny and every pound of public expenditure counts. Therefore, it is vital that the Assembly ensures

that there is value for money and that, where there is waste in government and poor decisions are made, those issues are brought to our attention and are challenged properly. It is also important to recognise that the Assembly must not simply be reactive, respond to mistakes that have happened and give someone a slap on the wrist or even stronger chastisement. It is important that we actually try to front-load best practice in governance; to learn lessons from what has happened and make changes; and to ensure that all Departments and public bodies employ best practice in such matters as internal governance, risk registers and running audit committees, which should include independent members to challenge how policies are implemented.

Although I recognise the sterling work that is done, in the past, the PAC's work was often almost a snapshot of individual mistakes in different areas. I certainly welcome what I understand now to be a different approach as regards thematic reports. That is an important contribution to try to tie some of those issues together to widen the process of learning lessons.

That said, it is also worth acknowledging that, although MLAs will be critical of officials when mistakes have been made — which is quite right as part of the scrutiny process — we must be aware that we also have to look back at ourselves. We take decisions in the Executive, the Assembly or elsewhere that have implications for how well public money is spent or otherwise. Certain political decisions are taken, not taken, delayed or taken in haste that have major consequences for public spending. Sometimes, scrutiny does not fall back on us to the same extent that it falls on individual project-management decisions taken by officials, which are often put through the Public Accounts Committee process. Therefore, although today's debate and the exercise that has been conducted during the past number of months are useful, they can be only part of a wider process of scrutiny.

2.45 pm

I also want to stress that we must balance public accounting and audit activity with the need to ensure that, in government, we make swift and effective decisions at a political level. Our officials must do likewise when, for instance, they produce economic appraisals for Ministers. There is an impression that, for a

host of reasons, decisions are made slowly in Northern Ireland. That has consequences for the economy. I do not want a conservative and risk-averse culture to become engendered in government, particularly at an official level. That is not for one minute an invitation to people to cut corners. It may point to a need to invest properly in the internal machinery of government to ensure that decisions are taken effectively.

That comes back to the neat distinction that Members often make between front line services and the back office. We try to put all the money into the front line and cut administrative costs. Administrators are important in informing proper decision-making and ensuring the effective use of front line services. Our taking note of the PAC reports should remind us of the importance of ensuring that we resource the internal scrutiny processes in Departments and that proper, effective and speedy decisions are being made. The remedy is to achieve value for money at the same time as being able to seize, rather than miss out on, opportunities that come our way.

In the context of the looming financial cuts that will only get deeper over the months and years to come, I stress that the Civil Service will have to do things differently. If we simply fall back into a conservative consideration of issues and concentrate on the statutory duties of the Departments, we will not make the best use of the resources that are available to us. We must focus on early intervention and prevention and encourage collaboration between Departments. That, however, involves taking risks and entering new and unfamiliar territories. Sometimes, the evidence base for success that, traditionally, would have justified a decision to shift resources may not exist. If we are to preserve the level of public service that we want, however, we will have to consider adopting that different approach.

As MLAs, we must communicate to the officials who work for us the importance of being imaginative and of being prepared to be innovative. We must stress to them that resources must be protected and used to achieve value for money. That involves resourcing, but it is not a licence to cut corners. In discussing the issue, we must take that kind of rounded and balanced approach.

Mr Hilditch: I welcome the debate, which highlights the fine work of the Committee. I take the opportunity, as other Members have done,

to thank the Committee staff for their sterling work in conjunction with the Audit Office. It is an area of work that came to the fore only because of devolution, before which no one paid much attention to what the PAC at Westminster was doing.

I am a member of the PAC and speak as such. However, as an individual, I have seen the benefit of having an Assembly Public Accounts Committee. Back in 1998, I was a member of the PAC during the first mandate. It was regrettable that the momentum was lost when devolution was suspended, and a few people went back to their bad old ways. We are three years into the current mandate, and the culture of good practice is returning. It is up to the Public Accounts Committee to ensure that delivery, value for money and best measures are put in place across the board.

The PAC has examined cases ranging from bad practice and maladministration to fraud. I will focus on one particular case of fraud in the Sports Institute Northern Ireland, which is an arm's-length body and a joint venture company that was established by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and the University of Ulster. The Committee learned from the Comptroller and Auditor General that a senior member of staff at the Sports Institute Northern Ireland had committed fraud.

The tale of this fraud — how it was committed, the control weaknesses that gave rise to it and the response of the company and its sponsors to its discovery — presents some important lessons for the public sector. Nearly £75,000 was stolen during an 11-month period from October 2005 to August 2006. The fraudster stole the money in several ways, including writing and cashing company cheques, but he took most of the money by abusing the company's online banking system to make payments on his own behalf and manipulating the payroll records to cover his tracks.

He was able to get away with it for nearly a year, due largely to the lack of effective controls in the Sports Institute Northern Ireland. There was no functioning separation of duties in its finance section, and there was inadequate management supervision of the individual's work. It was clear that the most basic controls and general governance arrangements were not in place. Such controls would have helped to prevent or detect the fraud.

More alarming is the fact that there was no evidence of any check of the fraudster's academic or professional qualifications, which seems strange in this day and age. Nor was there evidence that references from previous employers were taken up before he was employed. It also appears that several warning signs in his behaviour went unnoticed by management for some considerable time, and an opportunity was missed to launch a fraud investigation when some absolutely damning facts came to light.

Once the fraud was discovered, the Sports Institute Northern Ireland took swift action to suspend the fraudster and report his activities to the police. He was subsequently dismissed and prosecuted. The Sports Institute Northern Ireland undertook a forensic audit to establish the history and extent of the fraud, but, unfortunately, it was not carried out by professional investigators and some of its activities could have compromised a prosecution. In the event, however, the fraudster chose to plead guilty in court.

We were pleased to be informed by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) that robust financial management and reporting has now been established in the Sports Institute Northern Ireland and that action has been taken to ensure that the lessons learnt from the NIAO's report were applied effectively in the Department and in its arm's-length bodies. We were also heartened by the improvements made to the Department's arrangements for undertaking proactive and reactive counter-fraud work. DCAL has issued updated guidance to all its arm's-length bodies detailing the controls that should be noted and requiring an assurance that such controls have been implemented. DCAL has also made significant progress on the sponsorship arrangements.

The Department states that it has a service level agreement for the provision of fraud investigation services, which provides sufficient resources for the Department and its arm's-length bodies to respond appropriately to any suspected or, indeed, actual cases of fraud. It remains a concern, however, that £10,000 has yet to be recovered, despite the fraudster's conviction in 2007. Some may say that we were lucky to get the balance back, but the Department has told us that it is considering options on the way forward. We expect to see

the recovery of those outstanding public funds some time in the future.

No one is beyond the reach of the PAC, whether in a Department, an arm's-length body, or even if they are at a hand's length or a fingertip's reach. Lessons are being learned and we expect to witness improvements across all Departments in the way that we did as time passed in the 1998 Assembly.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr McElduff): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure was, obviously, aware of the primacy of the PAC in the matter of the fraud in the Sports Institute. We were aware that the PAC was looking into that matter when our Committee began its own review of the Department's management of the NI Events Company and its arm's-length bodies. The PAC report found that there was a lack of oversight of the Sports Institute by Sport NI and the Department and that that was also the case with the Events Company because it was so much at arm's length that the Department did not know that it was in debt until it was far too late.

I want to diverge briefly. The company's inspectorate, as I understand it, is still carrying out an investigation into what happened with the Events Company, and the Committee does not want to prejudice that in any way. However, the report refers to lessons learned by DCAL about departmental oversight of arm's-length bodies, and those lessons should be disseminated to other Departments. Everyone knows, not least the Committee and the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, that a significant percentage of the Department's work is devolved to arm's-length bodies in DCAL.

In October 2008, the Committee agreed to review the role of the Department in managing the Events Company and its other arm's-length bodies. We took evidence from the Department in closed session.

In its findings on how the Department managed that particular arm's-length organisation, the Committee noted with concern the Department's shortcomings with regard to how it discharged its sponsorship function. However, because of the potential for future criminal and/or civil proceedings and possible sub-judice issues, and the risk of prejudicing any future prosecution or legal action, the Committee decided to take no further action at that time.

The Committee believes that the undertaking that the Department has given is a positive step, and it looks forward to receiving regular updates from the Department on, for example, matters relating to the Events Company. The Committee also conducted case studies with Sport NI and the Arts Council on sponsorship arrangements with the Department. The Committee made 10 recommendations, which it followed up with the Department during 2009. I will outline the four key points.

First, board members of arm's-length bodies need to take their responsibilities very seriously and must attend mandatory training within six months of joining a board; if they do not, the Department must ask them to reconsider their position. Secondly, arm's-length bodies' senior management teams should include someone with an accountancy qualification. Thirdly, boards should have at least one qualified accountant on them; they also need financial skills so that they can scrutinise the body's accounts. Finally, the quorum of internal audit committees of arm's-length bodies should be three persons. Those are strong recommendations from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure with respect to departmental sponsorship of arm's-length bodies.

Mr Deputy Speaker: As Question Time commences at 3.00 pm, I suggest that the House take its ease until that time. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member called to speak will be Patsy McGlone.

The debate stood suspended.

3.00 pm

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

Oral Answers to Questions

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 1, 2, 5 and 15 have been withdrawn.

Sports Provision

3. **Mr McCallister** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the findings of his Department's 'Experience of Sport and Physical Activity in Northern Ireland' survey, which found that 53% of people were satisfied with sports provision. (AQO 1512/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr McCausland): The most recently published findings from the continuous household survey, 'Experience of Sport and Physical Activity in Northern Ireland', confirms my long-held view that, although there are some good examples of sports provision in Northern Ireland, it does not fully meet public need and is, therefore, inadequate as a whole. It is partly for that reason that I recently launched a new 10-year strategy for sport and physical recreation entitled 'Sport Matters: the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019'.

Sport Matters already reflects the aspirations of people in Northern Ireland for a sea change in the quantity and standard of sporting provision. Delivering that requires not only significant and sustained investment but a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the use of existing provision. Work on implementing Sport Matters has begun. In that context, I recently met the Minister of Education, Cairtriona Ruane MLA, to discuss how our Departments might work together to help to address the demand for improved public access to sports facility provision in, for example, the education sector. That is one of a range of actions aimed at improving sports provision that my Department and I will be seeking to take forward in conjunction with relevant partners and stakeholder groups as part of the delivery of Sport Matters.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply. Given the disappointing results in the survey, I welcome the 10-year plan to address the problem. When does the Minister hope to

see those results improve? Is there a chance to review that plan at different stages in order to ensure that we are making progress in the right areas?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

I hope that we will soon see progress in a number of areas and that the strategy will improve those figures. The report was launched on 13 May, and we have already established a Sport Matters monitoring group to oversee the delivery of the strategy. The group includes representatives from the Departments of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Health, Education and Social Development; Sport NI; local government; and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum.

Mr Frew: Will the Minister tell the House how the results of the recently published survey on satisfaction with sports provision compare with, for instance, national trends across the UK?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

The most recent figures available suggest that Northern Ireland still falls well below the national trend for overall satisfaction, which currently stands at just over 69%. In my view, there is a correlation between the Northern Ireland results and the separate but more general evidence that, in comparison with other regions of the United Kingdom, we are significantly underprovided for in respect of, for example, sports facilities, such as swimming pools, pitches, playing courts and athletic facilities. That is one of the matters that I will be seeking to address through Sport Matters.

Mr Leonard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister mentioned the Department of Education and the Department of Health. How does he see the rolling out of co-operation with those Departments in trying to instil in young people a positive attitude to participation in sport and physical exercise in the immediate future?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

I encourage the Member to read the strategy, which is comprehensive. It has three main pillars: places, which relates to facilities; participation, which deals with trying to increase the number of people participating in sports activities; and performance, which deals with helping people to realise their potential. In that regard, the strategy sets out a number of avenues, and working groups across those Departments will operate under the overall

monitoring group to see that the strategy is implemented and is effective.

Mr Burns: What is the Minister's assessment of the finding that 40% of people do not enjoy taking part in sports? Does he agree that a culture change is needed in our schools to tackle that attitude?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I welcome the Member's valid question about how we can encourage more people to adopt a less sedentary lifestyle. Our society has become much more sedentary. For some, the solution could include cycling, which would keep Mr McDevitt very happy, and, for others, it could include a great deal of walking over the next few months, which would keep the rest of us very happy. Many things could be done over the coming months to improve the activity levels of Members.

Seriously and more generally, increased participation has to be and is a target in the strategy. Improving aspirations and attitudes towards sport has to be done through education and health services to make people realise the physical and health benefits that flow from activities, whatever they may be, in the realm of sport. There is no single answer to that question. The entire strategy will come together in a range of ways that will, I hope, increase the percentage of people participating in sport in Northern Ireland. It will help if we have more facilities that are more accessible. Events such as the Olympics impact on participation levels. The other day, I was at a gymnastics club in Bangor, and it had noted an increase in the number of young people registering as a result of the success of a gymnastics group on 'Britain's Got Talent'. Therefore, a range of factors come into play, and anything and everything that will increase participation must be welcomed.

Féile an Phobail

4. **Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the cultural and economic importance of Féile an Phobail. (AQO 1513/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department does not have figures on the economic value of Féile an Phobail. However, we know that investment in the arts and the creative sector directly strengthens the Northern

Ireland economy because such investment fuels the emergence of creative people, services and enterprises. In August, Féile an Phobail provides festival goers with a wide range of music, comedy, drama, exhibitions and family events. The programming range extends to the early spring through Féile an Earraigh and to October through the Draíocht children's arts festival.

Ms S Ramsey: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his answer. Are figures available to show what is happening at an economic level? Given current trends, we need evidence. I think that the Minister would agree that Féile an Phobail plays an important role not only in the local community but in the wider community, and it is regarded as one of the top community festivals in Europe. Will the Minister explain the support that his Department gives to the festival and whether DCAL is working closely with Invest NI and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to promote tourism, especially as we examine other ways to get money into the North?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The responsibility for a particular festival to demonstrate its economic benefits has to lie with that festival. My recollection is that work was done some years ago, possibly funded by the Department for Social Development, to examine the economic benefits that flow from Féile an Phobail. However, if we were to start to do that, we would have to examine all festivals. General work could be done, but it would be impossible to deal with each festival individually.

The Member asked about the funding provided to Féile an Phobail. Last year, under the annual support for organisations programme (ASOP) funding scheme, the Arts Council provided £123,000 to Féile an Phobail. Lottery project funding of £23,000 was given to the programming costs of the August Féile, and £50,000 from the creative industries innovation fund went towards the cost of a creative development officer post. This year, the Arts Council is providing £123,000 in ASOP funding towards the festival. For the past two years, Foras na Gaeilge has provided £15,000 towards the August Féile, £4,000 towards the spring festival and £1,000 towards the children's festival.

Mrs M Bradley: Does the Minister have any plans to attend the festival this year?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I have not seen the programme, and I have not received an invitation.

Mr K Robinson: I thank the Minister for his precise answers. I wish that his colleagues in the House would stick to that regime as well. Congratulations, Minister.

The Minister has given us some good figures on funding sources. How much public money from central or local government goes to the West Belfast Festival, and how much money does it attract from private sponsorships and donations from the public?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

The figures that I provided are for central government funding. I presume that local government funding is also provided. I am aware that a number of private sector organisations sponsor Féile. For example, in previous years, even Translink gave money to Féile. Therefore, it receives some private sector funding, but I am not aware of the exact amount.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 5 has been withdrawn, and the Member who tabled question 6 is not in his place.

Windsor Park

7. **Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the proposal to redevelop Windsor Park. (AQO 1516/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am disappointed by some Members' lack of attendance. I had prepared some good answers, and I am disappointed that I am not able to use them. However, I welcome the fact that Mr Wilson is in his place.

Sport NI commissioned consultants to produce an outline business case on the value for money, operational viability, sustainability and affordability of the stadium options put forward by the governing bodies of football, rugby and Gaelic games, and it is aimed at meeting their long-term needs. Members will be aware that the Irish Football Association (IFA) has said that its preferred option is the refurbishment of Windsor Park. That has proved to be a complex and time-intensive exercise. However, it is important that the ongoing consultancy fully and rigorously appraises the governing bodies' stadium options together with a range of other options for stadium development and that it

provides a sound basis for determining the way forward.

The sports governing bodies have been actively involved in discussion with the consultants, the Department and Sport NI throughout the process. It is anticipated that the consultants will report to me formally in the near future, after which my Department and Sport NI will review the proposals. It will also be essential that the Department of Finance and Personnel scrutinise and comment on the outline business case. Ultimately, having fully considered the outcome of the outline business case, I will bring my proposals on regional stadium development to the Executive for their consideration.

Mr B Wilson: I thank the Minister for his response. Many issues have still to be resolved. I have attended Windsor Park as part of a crowd of 50,000. It is absolutely deplorable that we are under threat from FIFA and may not be able to hold international matches there. The future of international football at Windsor Park and in Belfast in general is in danger, so will the Minister ensure that something is done very soon?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: A limited remedial programme of work at Windsor Park is planned to ensure that international football can continue to be played there until a longer-term solution is found. That work will involve arresting the deterioration of the north stand roof, regrading the pitch perimeter and bridging the moats at the north and west stands. The cost, to which the IFA will contribute, is estimated to be £443,000.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister confirm that his approach and that of his Department to stadium development is based on the strategic requirements of each of the governing bodies of football? What percentage contribution is each of the governing bodies expected to make to the individual projects, and how much is in the pot of funding for stadium development?

3.15 pm

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The answer to the first part of the question is yes. The answer to the second part is that the cost of each stadium has not been finalised. We have to await completion of the outline business case and our consideration of it before that can be assessed. I made it clear to the governing

bodies that they will be required to contribute to the cost. I am also conscious that their ability to do so will vary between the sports. As the Member is aware, the indicative envelope originally mentioned was about £110 million.

Mr I McCrea: The Minister detailed his commitment to the short-term future of Windsor Park and its redevelopment. Will he assure the House that he and his Department are committed to the future of Northern Ireland games in Belfast and to ensuring that Northern Ireland football can move forward?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am determined that Northern Ireland should have a facility for football games at international level that is fit for purpose, suitable for the twenty-first century and meets the sport's strategic needs. We are determined to see that through to a conclusion.

Mr McDevitt: Given that £110 million is available, would it not be worth the Executive's time to consider, even at this late stage, whether that should be invested in one new shared stadium, possibly in Belfast, rather than investing it in three separate, never-to-be shared stadia?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The decision to move in the present direction was taken before my time. It was taken by my predecessor and agreed by the Executive. The Member speaks of never-to-be shared stadia. I do not share his sense of despondency. I would hope that each ground would be open and accessible to others. I am sure that the Member shares that aspiration and would want to see each of the three grounds accessible to sports other than the sport that is the primary user of that facility.

Motorsport

8. **Miss McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the value of motorsport as part of the culture of Northern Ireland. (AQO 1517/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Northern Ireland enjoys a motorsport tradition dating back to the 1920s and has produced world-class competitors in two- and four-wheel disciplines. Motorsport, particularly motorcycle racing, provides some of the major sporting events held in the Province. The North West 200 festival week, for example, is the biggest event in our sporting calendar, attracting an estimated

100,000 spectators from all over the world. I am also aware that many people of all ages from across the whole community regularly enjoy the thrills of different types of motor racing on offer at dedicated circuits such as Bishopscourt, Nutts Corner and Kirkistown. Such events provide us with a wonderful opportunity to promote a positive image of Northern Ireland on an international stage, showcasing our many attractions while making a major contribution to the economy.

I am committed to working closely with the umbrella body for motorsport in Northern Ireland, 2&4 Wheels, to help to develop the sport to its full potential and make Northern Ireland the motorsport capital of the world.

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. Sport NI obviously delivers for sports in Northern Ireland and is just one of the Department's many arm's-length bodies. What is the cost of the chief executives of DCAL's arm's-length bodies?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The annual salaries of and expenses paid to chief executives of all DCAL's arm's-length bodies in the year ending 31 March 2010 are as follows: for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, salary expenditure was £72,126 and expenses were £997, making a total of £73,123; for Northern Ireland Screen, the salary amounted to £65,976 and expenses were £4,769, which makes a total of £70,745; in the case of the Armagh Observatory, the Armagh Planetarium and the Northern Ireland Museums Council, the information is not available; for Libraries NI, the salary amounted to £96,888 and expenses came to £3,324, making a total of £100,212; for National Museums Northern Ireland, the salary was £119,745 and expenses amounted to £1,738, which makes a total of £121,484; for Sport NI, the salary comes to £90,755 and expenses to £4,566, which makes a total of £95,321; for Foras na Gaeilge, the salary comes to £119,271 and expenses to £6,603, which makes a total of £125,874, which is the largest total amount; for the Ulster-Scots Agency, the salary was £50,224 and there were no expenses; for the Fisheries Conservancy Board, which no longer exists, the salary came to the small sum of £8,074 and expenses to £294; and for Waterways Ireland, the salary came to £91,436 and expenses to £3,704, making a total of £95,140.

Mr McCarthy: The Minister is aware that the Strangford constituency provides an excellent short circuit racecourse at Kirkistown, and I am glad that he mentioned it in an earlier response. Can he tell the House to what extent his Department supports that excellent facility, in finance or publicity, so as to secure its future?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department has earmarked up to £2 million to help motorsport improve health and safety at venues across Northern Ireland. An approved business case for that funding was developed by Sport Northern Ireland together with the umbrella body for motorsports here, the 2 & 4 Wheel Motor Sport Steering Group Limited. As part of that, consideration is being given to the possible allocation of £1,155 million to Nutts Corner, Kirkistown and Bishopscourt race circuits. A further award of £219,700 has already been made for the purchase of a range of safety equipment, and £155,000 has been spent on urgent safety works at the North West 200 and the Cookstown 100. Other safety works at various venues have been identified, covering 33 projects at 25 motorsport clubs, and a project management team has been appointed to oversee those works.

Mr O'Loan: There has been a great tradition of four-wheeled motorsport in Ireland, which is now significantly diminished. I welcome anything that the Minister can do to maintain and enhance that tradition. In particular, are there any plans to hold another Rally Ireland event in the grounds of Stormont, following the great success of the Stormont spectacular?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I have no knowledge of any plans in that regard.

Community Festivals Fund

9. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what assessment his Department has made of the success of the community festivals fund since local government became responsible for its delivery. (AQO 1518/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The transfer of the community festivals fund to district councils has been a success. Councils report that value was added to existing festivals and that events and activities not previously supported have received funding. Eight times more festivals were funded in the first year that the fund was administered by the

councils. Councils report benefits to the local economy, and the hospitality and retail sectors experienced increased numbers of participants and tourist visitors. There has been a strong focus not only on cross-community events but on cultural diversity events to maximise the involvement of ethnic minorities.

Mr Givan: I thank the Minister for his response. Does he agree that district councils' administering of funding has gone some way to address the underfunding that the Loyal Orders experienced through the previous system, which was administered by the Events Company? Does he further agree that councils in many unionist communities that did not previously get funding are now receiving financial support and that the Loyal Orders are now getting more money than they did under direct rule?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: There was a rather bizarre system under direct rule, whereby, if a group was locked into the system to get funding, it kept getting funding, yet if a group was locked out, it was permanently locked out. It was one of the most discriminatory and inequitable systems that I have ever come across, yet, because it was done under direct rule, virtually nothing could be done about it. That situation has now been remedied, and I agree that many of the festivals that the Loyal Orders organise have accessed funding from local authorities. That has been very successful, and many thousands of people turn up at such events and benefit from them and from the funding that is provided in that way.

Music: Performing Rights Royalties

10. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of whether the current arrangements for the collection and distribution of performing rights royalties provide maximum benefit to the local music industry and what assessment has been made of alternative collection and distribution arrangements. (AQO 1519/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Performing Right Society for Music is a UK-wide royalty collection and distribution agency that provides services for clients in Northern Ireland. I am aware that the Northern Ireland Music Rights Society wishes to act as a royalty collection agency here. My officials have been liaising with the Northern Ireland Music Rights Society to hear its concerns. My Department

and I need to be convinced that there is a clear rationale behind and support for a dedicated local music rights society. I have asked the Northern Ireland Music Rights Society to prepare a feasibility study, and I will consider any submissions carefully.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for his answer. There is concern in the local music industry that there is a serious loss in revenue because it is going into Britain but is not coming back to local artists in Northern Ireland. Could I persuade the Minister to meet the group to advance the feasibility study and to discuss the loss of those rights?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: A number of such submissions on that matter has been made over the years. I said that we need a clearly set out, stable and strengthened feasibility study to support the case. As soon as we receive that, we will consider it fully and very carefully. I do not wish to go beyond that at this stage. It is important that we get something down on paper so that there is a clearly demonstrated case. If that stands up, we will look seriously at it.

Dr Farry: I shall approach the matter from a slightly different angle. The Minister will be aware that, when what is now the Digital Economy Act 2010 was proceeding through Westminster, it did so during what was called the “wash-up” phase. Some people view that Act as being overly punitive on issues regarding music royalties and abuse of the Internet to that end. Given the controversy surrounding it and the Divisions that took place on the Bill — I think that the Minister’s party colleagues may have voted against it — is his Department making any representations to the relevant Department in Whitehall about a review of that legislation?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: A number of aspects of that legislation give cause for concern. We have been in contact with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) about a range of issues. That contact will be ongoing.

Lottery Funding

11. **Lord Browne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of how the lottery funding allocation, recently announced by the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics,

Media and Sport, will help offset forthcoming cuts in the arts and sports sector.

(AQO 1520/10)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

The National Lottery is a reserved matter, and responsibility for it rests with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, Jeremy Hunt, recently announced that the Government wish to restore lottery funding to each of the arts, sports and heritage good causes from 16·7% to 20% of overall lottery proceeds, with a corresponding reduction in funding to the Big Lottery Fund from 50% to 40%. A DCMS consultation exercise is under way to determine the views of all interested parties on the proposal. It is anticipated that, overall, each of those sectors — the arts, sports and heritage — will receive an additional £50 million a year.

In Northern Ireland, that will equate to approximately £1·4 million each to arts and sport, which is to be welcomed. Lottery funding is considered additional to Exchequer funding received by sport and arts. However, although the next CSR period will be difficult, no decision has been made on how cuts will be applied or whether the extra funding will offset them.

3.30 pm

Public Accounts Committee Reports

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly takes note of the Public Accounts Committee Fourth Composite Report (NIA 62/09/10R) and First Thematic Report (NIA 65/09/10R).— [The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (Mr P Maskey).]

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I will speak briefly on transforming emergency care, which is dealt with in the composite report. That section of the report addresses patient flows through the various components of the healthcare system and highlights obstacles that prevent timely access to care.

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

Over the years, hospitals have struggled to reduce the delays in A&E departments that are faced by patients who must wait on trolleys to be admitted or to be treated and discharged. I experienced that personally at Antrim Area Hospital, where we have seen the extent of the problem since the A&E at the Mid-Ulster Hospital was closed. Despite the best efforts of its staff, Antrim A&E has not had the capacity to deal with the influx of patients.

When we addressed the issue earlier in this session, A&E services were costing around £68 million, with annual attendance exceeding 700,000 patients. The Committee report pointed out that Health Service trusts had made considerable progress in ensuring that the vast majority of A&E patients were treated and either discharged or admitted to a ward within the four-hour target. The achievement of those targets is another issue that has arisen at Antrim Area Hospital recently. In general, however, those targets have largely been achieved by improvements in working practices in hospitals. For example, the lack of senior clinical decision-makers in A&E departments had led to patients being admitted who would otherwise not have been. Having a consultant admission vetting system helped to minimise waiting time and to ensure appropriate care.

The Committee also highlighted that A&E departments faced bottlenecks that were outside their control, particularly the lack of inpatient beds, which is one of the most

fundamental causes of waiting in A&E departments. Getting patients home more speedily creates capacity on wards and enables ward staff to place patients from A&E. Information provided to the Public Accounts Committee by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety indicated that trusts appeared to have made substantial headway in the timely discharge of non-complex cases from acute hospitals.

An improvement in discharge rates was achieved where a more proactive approach to bed management was implemented. For example, where discharge-focused treatment plans were established for all patients within 24 hours of admission. Although the report paints a generally upbeat picture of A&E waiting times, it draws attention to risks that needed careful management in order to sustain performances against the Department's challenging four-hour waiting time target. For instance, the Committee pointed out that the high-level attention to performance in A&E departments could diminish in the longer term. Moreover, a focus on such a target could lead to less attention being given to the timely completion of treatment for patients who could be properly managed in a shorter timescale.

I am aware that since we addressed this issue, new data have emerged indicating that waiting times have begun to grow again and the spectre of trolley waits, which I referred to earlier, has once more become a problem. The Department's statistics show that, in October 2009, 87·1% of patients were treated and either discharged or admitted within four hours of their arrival, but, by January 2010, that had fallen to 80·4%. That is disturbing and a big concern for those of us who have attended A&E units with family members or to observe the deteriorating situation. Against the background of continuing high demand for A&E services, we will need to monitor that issue as we move into the 2010-11 Assembly session.

I move now to the issue of system testing. In recent years, the Committee has learned much in the field of project management. One thing that stands out is the importance of subjecting new systems to proper pilot testing. Several high-profile and important projects that the Committee examined suffered adverse cost and performance implications due to the simple failure to undertake such testing. It is important that testing is not undertaken just

as a box-ticking exercise. System testing must be methodical, thorough and carried out in the proper live environment. It is also important that short cuts are not taken with testing, no matter how important the deadline for introducing a system, because the cost of fixing subsequent system flaws can be substantial. We saw that with the Planning Service's e-PIC project, which, as Mr Beggs said, had an overrun of £7.2 million and was four years behind schedule. Representatives from the Planning Service appeared before the Committee, and the major shortcomings by management and project units were quite breathtaking. Apparently, expenditure on the project has yet to stop.

The Committee's 'Report on Statement of Rate Levy and Collection 2006-07' focused on the introduction of a new IT system. Overall, the Committee found that short cuts were taken when implementing that complex and large system. Specifically, the risk assessment that was undertaken for the project was flawed and failed to recognise the risks of inadequate system testing. In the event, the testing of the new system was not fit for purpose. Test data that were used to check whether the system worked properly did not test all potential eventualities and, therefore, failed to identify important errors in the project specification. The upshot was that introducing the project in a live environment resulted in adverse operational performance and increased costs of £3.5 million, which was brought about by the need to properly tailor the system.

In my short time on the Public Accounts Committee, I have lost count of the number of times that I have heard civil servants say that lessons have been learned. Failing to learn lessons seems to be a repetitive mistake. Time and again, they say that lessons have been learned, yet they do not seem to have been, particularly when it comes to introducing IT projects. When an IT project is around the corner, you can automatically say that it will probably be big-time over budget and that it will probably lag behind its completion time.

The significant additional costs that can arise from the need to fix flaws in systems that have not been properly tested —

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

Mr McGlone: OK. Thank you very much.

Mr McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Audit Office and the Committee secretariat for their professionalism, dedication and assistance.

To set the context, I shall begin with a quote from the introduction to the 'First Thematic Report':

"The Committee wished, in light of current economic conditions, to recap on lessons learned in the back catalogue of reports it has covered, with the aim of reaffirming crucial messages to improve Government stewardship of public money."

I cannot say that I am surprised that more Members are not in attendance, but I emphasise that the report and the thematic issues on which it draws are of concern to every Department, scrutiny Committee and Member of the Assembly. Consequently, I hope that they read the report.

The report is based on 10 studies that the Committee undertook in conjunction with the Audit Office and seven key, major spending Departments — Regional Development, Employment and Learning, Education, Finance and Personnel, Health, Environment and Enterprise, Trade and Investment — and their agencies. As I said, the report contains issues for every Member, Committee and Department. In this time of economic recession, cutbacks and pressure on the delivery of essential front line services, it will also be of immense concern for the general public.

Turning to some of the report's content, I shall address first the issue of post-project evaluation, which is a mandatory requirement for all major projects and an important element in the project management process. Therefore, the Committee is very concerned about the number of instances in which post-project evaluations have not been completed or were not of the required quality. Mr McGlone referred to the issue. It is particularly important and relevant to the Committee that the evaluations are done in a professional way and are not done just for the sake of it or to tick a box. The purpose of a proper post-project evaluation must be to provide an open and honest assessment of how the project was handled from start to finish and to identify what lessons have been learned. Perhaps, most importantly, there is a need to ensure that the results of post-project evaluations are disseminated fully across government for future application.

Our work also covered the use of consultants. Some reference has been made to that matter already. We examined it across a very wide spectrum of departmental activity and concluded that post-project evaluation was not being addressed in that context either. That meant that it was impossible for Departments to gauge the performance of consultants before making recurring and future appointments. We also considered that there was no evidence that Departments were using the results of post-project evaluations to share experience or to identify and weed out poorly performing consultants. The importance of taking that action is highlighted by the fact that we were unable to identify a single instance in which the results of a post-project evaluation had been used to recover losses arising from poor consultancy service.

Overall, the Committee wishes to convey the message that post-project evaluations must always be carried out for all significant projects. To help to ensure that that is the case, a specific timetable for completion of those evaluations should be set at the appraisal stage and then adhered to. It is essential that there be formal arrangements to ensure that lessons learnt from post-project evaluations are made available across the public sector.

I also want to speak briefly about the increasing number of legal challenges by unsuccessful bidders against the award of public sector contracts, which we have addressed in our composite report. Since revisions to EU regulations in 2006, companies bidding for contracts have become more aware of the opportunity to challenge decisions, not just at the award stage but at all stages of the procurement process. As a result, there has been a marked increase in demands for debriefings and a corresponding growth in the trend for legal challenge.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has informed us that since April 2007, 12 legal cases have been ongoing against centres of procurement expertise. We followed up on that issue and found that successful challenges had demonstrated weaknesses in the assessment process. Therefore, although EU regulations provide unsuccessful bidders with the opportunity to challenge decisions, proper adherence to procurement procedures should have ensured that the assessment process

was robust enough to prevent a number of challenges.

In two of the cases that we reviewed that involved framework agreements for major capital works projects with an estimated capital value in excess of £500 million, there were delays of over nine months. That is simply unacceptable, especially in the current climate, in which there are work shortages and layoffs in the construction industry. I hope that lessons have been learned from those cases, and I expect DFP to work to eliminate such weakness through the promotion of the strict adherence to procedures in all aspects of the procurement process. Where legal challenges arise, it is important that they are dealt with in an appropriate and expedient manner.

A sub-issue arises from that. In Workplace 2010, for instance, we found that the cost of external legal advice was over £1 million. We deemed that to be excessive, but, when we delved further into the case, we found that despite that expenditure, DFP made an ex gratia payment to the unsuccessful bidder. We were told that although it was convinced that it would win the case, it concluded, on £1 million worth of legal advice, that the balance of advantage and best value for money for the taxpayer would be achieved by seeking to agree a settlement. We should recognise the complex nature of procurement and accept that the EU procurement regime is subject to ongoing legislative interpretation. However, it is vital that DFP ensures that there is compliance with proper procedures at all times and that appropriate in-house legal advice is available and sought to ensure an effective and efficient procurement process in the public sector.

Finally, the context is the economic downturn. However, any time, good or bad, is the right time for government agencies and Departments —

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

Mr McLaughlin: Any time is the right time for government agencies and Departments to demonstrate value for money, accountability and a willingness to act according to lessons learnt. It is time to end the complacency in the government agencies and Departments.

3.45 pm

The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): This is the second Public Accounts Committee debate that I have sat in on, and I am happy to respond to the many worthwhile comments that have been made by Committee members and Members in the Chamber today.

I will start off with a few general points. I recognise the valuable work carried out by the Public Accounts Committee; over the past 12 months it has considered 14 Northern Ireland Audit Office reports. Its subsequent reports have been aimed at learning lessons and improving public services and value for money across the Northern Ireland public sector. During the last PAC debate, I questioned the need for so many recommendations in the Committee's reports. I acknowledge that note has been taken of those points and that the number of recommendations in the various reports has been reduced and they have become more focused, and the Chairman pointed that out. I commend the Committee for responding to that point.

I also commend the Committee for its contribution towards improving financial management across the public sector. The fact that Departments are now spending close to 100% of their budgets is a result of the kind of scrutiny that they expect. It is also a good discipline, especially as we move into tougher financial times.

I acknowledge the role that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman have played in the Committee. I add my comments to those made by the Chairman about the work undertaken by Kieran Donnelly, the Comptroller and Auditor General, and his staff in the Northern Ireland Audit Office in supporting the Committee.

I welcome the publication of the Committee's first thematic report. I want to have time to consider the report in detail, but, from what I have seen, it is a credible piece of work. It is a departure from the Committee's usual style, and it is valuable at that. It brings together a number of the Committee's recommendations that are of general application to the wider public sector in one document, and I commend it for that. Mr McLaughlin made the point that the report was designed to try to get lessons that could be spread across all Departments, and for those lessons to be learned.

Given that gross investment in Northern Ireland was £1.7 billion last year, but that that will not continue, it is important to ensure that we get as much as we can from the spending that we deliver in coming years. As I have said time and time again, the good times are over. Projects that we planned to deliver will not be delivered and, therefore, we must get maximum benefit for the public from the spending that we do have.

Before I turn to the report, I have a couple of general observations for the Committee. First, from correspondence with officials, the Committee will be aware of my increasing concern about its pursuit of matters following the publication of PAC reports and the memoranda of reply. In particular, it appears at times that the Committee considers that it has a role to play in the day-to-day implementation of recommendations. I can understand the Committee's interest and its desire to see that recommendations are actioned, but it should recognise the role that the Comptroller and Auditor General has to play in alerting the Committee to matters that remain unaddressed, rather than pursuing those updates directly with Departments.

Secondly, I am concerned about the way in which many of the Committee's recommendations are focused less on matters of financial control and administration and stray towards issues of policy. I understand that the Committee will need to address, consider and clarify the policy position around matters that are under discussion, but I ask it to restrain itself from making recommendations in a manner that drifts towards policy. Policy is up to Departments and to the Committees that oversee the work of Departments. Otherwise, when assisting Departments to prepare future memoranda of reply, DFP may consider formally rejecting individual recommendations on the basis that they refer to matters of policy, which are matters of ministerial discretion.

Mr Dallat: What the Minister has said is very interesting. I hope that he does not mind if I ask him for some examples of when the Committee has strayed into the area of policy. I am sure that he agrees with me that the independence of the Public Accounts Committee is the most vital thing that we have in this Parliament and that it is something that everyone has confidence and faith in.

The Minister of Finance and Personnel:

That independence is important. However, it must be exercised within the parameters of the Committee's responsibility, which is to look at financial and administration matters. Policy matters are decided by Ministers and scrutinised by Committees. I do not have all the reports in front of me, but the Member will know that the Public Accounts Committee has made recommendations that looked more towards whether the right policy was followed rather than whether money was spent in an appropriate manner. That is the point that I want to make.

Mr Beggs: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: No. I have only 15 minutes and I want to respond to the points that Members made during the debate.

That is an important point about the Department's ability to respond positively to PAC reports and to ensure that the Committee's work is most effective during the period of financial constraint that we face.

The thematic report addresses a number of issues. First, the Committee raised the need to take actions to protect the taxpayer. It is very simple: everything that we do and all our combined actions must have that aim in mind. Taxpayers have provided the Executive and the Assembly with their hard-earned money, and we must demonstrate to them that we are using it in the most effective way possible. PAC's role is to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used in that way in the planning, management and control of capital projects and to examine what we do to put mistakes right. That is why the thematic report and many of its recommendations are important.

The second issue is project planning, and that was raised by the Chairman of the Committee, Mr McLaughlin and Dr Farry during the debate. The report is correct when it states:

"Successful delivery of... projects requires the availability... of the right skills at the right levels."

That is something that the public sector has recognised and developed in the context of the Government's skills agenda. My Department is providing a strong lead in putting in place a foundation for the Northern Ireland Civil Service programme and project management profession. It has appointed a head of

profession and remains fully committed with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) on cross-government developments in the UK. That is supported by a comprehensive learning and development programme. Over the past two years, 500 Northern Ireland Civil Service staff have received training in project management and a further 138 have received training in the Gateway Review process.

Project management is a key element in the successful completion of major projects and, in that context, the Committee's report referred to the Gateway Review process. In 2009, the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) centre of excellence obtained OGC-authorised hub status for the delivery of gateway reviews. That is the highest level of government endorsement available for such actions, and was a major achievement for the Department. In practical terms, it means that accounting officers and senior responsible owners (SROs) in Northern Ireland receive the very highest levels of independent assurance on their programmes and projects.

We must ensure that we have robust project management processes that are understood and applied by all concerned. I recognise that there have been failings in that area in the past, and that comes through in many of the reports that have been discussed today. Key to that is the proper application of a strong appraisal process to ensure that we get the best return from our limited public funds. To support that, my Department published new appraisal guidance in September 2009. It introduced new requirements for the consideration of large capital projects. For example, DFP approval of a strategic outline case is now required for all large projects that cost more than £20 million at their inception.

The appraisal guidance also stresses the importance of following CPD's project management guidance and emphasises the use of project management tools, such as risk registers, benefits management and post-project evaluations. I am in firm agreement with the Committee on the issue of post-project evaluations, the completion of which is a fundamental requirement of all major projects. It is a tool that allows all of us to learn from our mistakes and to share and implement good practice throughout the public sector.

I will try to race through some of the points that were raised. Mr Beggs and Mr McGlone raised the statement of rate levy and collection. My Department has made solid progress against all the recommendations in the Committee's report that fall to the agency to implement. Land and Property Services makes quarterly progress reports to the Finance and Personnel Committee. Current guidance on programme and project management addresses the issues that were raised by the Committee and highlights good practice in project and risk management. Central Procurement Directorate evaluated the use of the Gateway Review process. We took advice from OGC in relation to the project and assessed the lessons learned. Those were incorporated into the comprehensive annual publication of the lessons arising from gateway reviews, which has been circulated and reported to the DFP audit and risk committee.

A number of Members mentioned the Planning Service and, in particular, e-PIC. DOE accepts that certain aspects of the e-PIC project could have been handled more effectively. However, it can confirm that robust programme management arrangements are now in place, including mechanisms to enable the early identification, escalation and resolution of any issues of concern. It is on that basis that additional moneys have been made available to complete the e-PIC project. There is now a dedicated senior manager with experience in information and communication technology and a proven track record of successful project delivery. It is hoped that those measures will ensure the project's successful delivery in 2010.

Mr Beggs also referred to the upgrade of the Belfast to Bangor railway line. I understand that a significant number of welcome improvements have been made to the governance and control arrangements in the transport holding company and in Translink. Since March 2007, Translink has been recognised as a centre of procurement expertise. It has documented programme management procedures, including contract management, contract variation and risk management.

Mr Dallat raised the issue of surplus lands in the PFI and pathfinder projects. The majority of the recommendations emanating from the report were of a general nature and were, therefore, addressed by my Department. Following the publication of the Committee's report and the memorandum of reply, my Department brought a number of the Committee's

recommendations to the attention of every Department, because there are lessons to be learned for all Departments. The key message is that, when public bodies decide to dispose of surplus assets, value for money must be clearly demonstrated in each decision that is taken. That will be a prerequisite to DFP approval, when required. We will want proof of value for money to be incorporated into business cases.

Mr Dallat also raised the issue of consultants. It is an important issue, because we spend £42 million on consultants across all Departments. In 2007-08, DFP reintroduced annual compliance reports from Departments. Those provide us with an overview of the extent and nature of consultancy expenditure throughout Northern Ireland. The Department has issued revised guidelines to reinforce the need to produce business cases, tender competitively and carry out post-project evaluations.

There are a number of other issues, but you will call me to order in a moment, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask the Minister to draw his remarks to a close.

4.00 pm

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: I thank Members for their contributions to what has been an interesting debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call the Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel, Mr Paul Maskey.

The Chairperson of the Public Accounts

Committee: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank all Members who took part in the debate. I am delighted to have produced our first thematic report, which will help to focus Members' thoughts as they prepare for tight budget scrutiny and recession planning in their Committees and in Departments. The Committee anticipates that the Government will reinforce the value of the public audit and scrutiny process, which is central to democratic accountability.

I am sure that the Minister will find merit in the lessons that the report articulates as he looks forward to making difficult decisions in setting the Budget in these hard times. Undoubtedly, he will have in mind areas that could benefit from the improved project management practice that we promote. He will also have in mind ideas for

where he could aim resources that are saved by implementation of the guidance.

I will not go through every word of every Member who spoke, but I will summarise what was said and add some thoughts of my own. The Deputy Chairperson, Mr Roy Beggs, talked about the lessons that can be learned about IT systems. One of the core themes that almost every Member mentioned was that lessons are to be learned. In some cases, lessons have been learned; in others, they have not. Ministers and Departments need to take on board the lessons and move forward with them.

Roy Beggs spoke about the report on the upgrade of the Belfast to Bangor railway line. He said that the speed limit was intended to be 90 miles per hour but there were so many stops on the line that the trains were unable to get up to that speed so the specification that was issued was wrong. Some of the issues that the Committee dealt with were schoolboy errors that should not have been made. The Public Accounts Committee tries to draw out important lessons in its inquiries that Departments must take on board to ensure that mistakes are not made again.

Roy Beggs and Patsy McGlone mentioned e-PIC, which is not yet complete. At the time of our inquiry, it was four years behind schedule and about 130% over budget, yet some senior civil servants in the Department were paid bonuses. We have to ask why that happened. It is completely wrong.

Many Members mentioned value for money, which is one of the core aspects that most of the Committee's inquiries focus on. John Dallat said that the use of consultants usually represents bad value for money for taxpayers. If that is the case, Departments need to look closely at the value of consultants. John also said that the taxpayer benefited not one brass penny from the sale of land that was part of the pathfinder project.

Stephen Farry was impressed by the volume of the Committee's work. It is down to the determination, hard work and commitment of Committee members, which I mentioned in my opening remarks. It is also down to the commitment and hard work of the Committee's secretariat staff, who are sitting to my right. They work very hard, and their work in the Committee's structure keeps us sane and keeps us right. I thank all of them.

David Hilditch and Barry McElduff mentioned DCAL issues, including malpractice and fraud at the Sports Institute NI, where £75,000 was squandered and embezzled. That is taking money away from some important issues and themes that should be taking place there. It is very poor form that £75,000 has been taken away from that programme. However, that was allowed to happen, and, to this day, some of that money, according to Barry McElduff, has not even been returned to the Department. That needs to be examined.

We considered suspected fraud in the Belfast Education and Library Board and produced a report. Throughout the city of Belfast, libraries are being closed. However, money was being paid to contractors even though work had not been done. That had been started but was being carried out in a bad manner. Although some of it was not even passed by the clerk of works, money was paid. That highlights the importance of some of our reports. I hope that those reports can help all Members of the Assembly — Mitchel McLaughlin pointed this out — as well as Ministers and Departments to move forward in more positive way and learn from the mistakes that have been made.

In his opening remarks, Patsy McGlone majored on the transformation of emergency care. He mentioned some personal experiences with Antrim Area Hospital. We all have experience of visits to hospitals and of family members being in hospital, and we see the work and the commitment of hospital staff. However, he mentioned waiting times, and I hope that some of the Committee's recommendations reduced those times. However, in recent times, some waiting times have started to creep up again. That is bad for people who are waiting to go into hospital.

The Minister mentioned a number of issues and said that the Committee had, perhaps, strayed into some Departments' policy arenas. I am willing to sit down with the Minister if he can outline where we strayed into policy. Throughout his 15-minute contribution, he did not once mention where we strayed into policy. If that is the case, say it; if it is not the case, do not say it. I am willing to sit down with the Minister and with secretariat staff at any stage. We met staff from the Department of Finance and Personnel to discuss public relations and press release issues. We managed to resolve some of those issues, and, therefore, I am willing to sit down

with the Minister and with secretariat staff at any stage to address those issues.

Mr Beggs: Does the Chairman agree that, if the Committee sees that public money is not being well spent, it is our duty to raise that issue? If that is a policy matter, it may have to go through another Committee or through a Minister. However, it would be foolish of the Committee to say nothing if it is convinced that money is being wasted.

The Chairperson of the Public Accounts

Committee: I agree wholeheartedly with the Deputy Chairperson. The Committee makes an important contribution and works hard to ensure that we do not stray into policy. We know that the remit of our Committee is to ensure that value for money is achieved. The Minister said that the good times were over and mentioned last year's figure of £1.7 billion gross. That is not necessarily true. Much as our eyes are opened wide by some inquiries, there are areas where we could save money and use it more effectively. If that money is used more effectively, whatever budget is left can, we hope, stretch much further. That is an important aspect.

I am glad that the Minister welcomed and commended the Committee. We have recognised the important work that his Department and all other Departments have taken forward on the basis of some of our recommendations. I welcome the fact that their staff have been trained in project management. Mitchel McLaughlin's comments majored on post-project evaluation, and I hope that there will be some training in that area. Mitchel talked about the lessons learned. In fact, every Member bar one mentioned it. We must never forget that, because it is an important step and it is something that we need to take forward.

The Minister said that the Department has made great progress with the Committee's recommendations. We take our recommendations very seriously, but I appreciate that, since last September's debate, we have reduced the number of recommendations, and we see the benefits of that. Sometimes it takes a challenge during a debate to point that out. Therefore, we have been more effective with regard to the number of recommendations, as well as the thematic report. I welcome the Minister's comments on what can be learned throughout the whole process. I know that he has had only a quick look at the report, but I am sure that he will

take it away with him, and it will be some bedtime reading for him tonight. It might be better than some of his other bedtime reading. Nevertheless, it is an important step forward.

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: It might put me to sleep.

The Chairperson of the Public Accounts

Committee: It might put him out early, but he can have a good read at it anyway. It is important that all Departments take a look at the thematic report and the composite report that we have produced and learn lessons from the Committee's recommendations to ensure that best practice is brought forward. That is what it is all about.

It was mentioned earlier that taxpayers can see the benefit of the Public Accounts Committee acting on their behalf. That is a very important step. We are involved in an important initiative, and all the Committee members and secretariat staff are very committed and dedicated to ensuring that government works and that there is value for money.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Kieran Donnelly, who is the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the team that works for him, because it is a very important piece of work. It would also be remiss of me not to mention the Treasury Officer of Accounts for DFP. We have a good working relationship with him. It is important to explore other ways of working things out, regardless of whether the Minister thinks that we are straying into the policy arena. Let us explore and let us have that conversation, because I think that it can be beneficial not only to our Committee but to all Departments. I look forward to meeting the Minister on that issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker: For those who did not spot the deliberate mistake, I should say that Mr Maskey is Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, not the Finance and Personnel Committee, as I indicated earlier.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly takes note of the Public Accounts Committee Fourth Composite Report (NIA 62/09/10R) and First Thematic Report (NIA 65/09/10R).

Adjourned at 4.13 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Wednesday 30 June 2010

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Resignation of Dr William McCrea

Mr Speaker: I have received a letter from Dr William McCrea, notifying me that he will resign as a Member of the Assembly with effect from Thursday 1 July 2010. I have notified the Chief Electoral Officer.

Ministerial Statement

British-Irish Council Summit: 25 June 2010

Mr Speaker: I have received notice from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister that the First Minister wishes to make a statement.

The First Minister (Mr P Robinson): In accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I wish to report on the fourteenth summit meeting of the British-Irish Council, which was held in Guernsey on 25 June 2010. All Northern Ireland Ministers who attended the summit have agreed that I should make the statement to the Assembly on their behalf.

The States of Guernsey hosted the summit. The heads of delegations were welcomed by the Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Lyndon Trott. The Irish Government were represented by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD, and the United Kingdom Government by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP. The Welsh Assembly Government were represented by the First Minister for Wales, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM. The Scottish Government were represented by the First Minister for Scotland, the Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP. The Government of Jersey were represented by the Chief Minister, Senator Terence Le Sueur, and the Isle of Man Government were represented by the Chief Minister, Tony Brown MHK. In addition to the deputy First Minister and me, the Northern Ireland delegation consisted of Minister Poots, Minister Attwood and junior Minister Newton. A full list of participants is attached to the statement that has been provided to Members.

The British-Irish Council plays a unique and important role in furthering, promoting and developing links between its member

Administrations through positive, practical relationships and providing a forum for consultation and co-operation on east-west issues. Member Administrations consult, discuss and exchange information with each other on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Administrations. The Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Lyndon Trott, chaired the meeting, which focused on economic issues, marine renewable energy, relations with the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, the establishment of a standing secretariat and a report on progress within the various BIC work sectors.

The BIC summit provided a useful forum for the Council to review the current global economic climate and discuss the impact of the downturn in economic activity across our respective Administrations. Ministers briefed the Council on actions being taken in their respective Administrations to stabilise public finances, repair banking systems, cut costs and boost employment. We also discussed the potential impact of the recent Budget announced by the United Kingdom Government. The Council acknowledged that member Administrations continue to face serious challenges and agreed that the sharing of information on their experiences, responses and best practice was essential as they seek to reposition their economies to take advantage of the economic upturn when it comes.

The main theme of the summit was marine renewable energy. BIC Energy Ministers or their representatives updated the Council on the activity under way in the area of marine renewables in their respective Administrations and discussed areas for future co-operation and growth in that sector among member Administrations and with the European Commission.

The Council noted the significant wave and tidal resources of BIC member Administrations and the opportunities for growth and competitiveness in that sector. It noted the benefits of member Administrations working together to share best practice and collectively accelerate the development of the marine renewable energy sector. The Council welcomed and endorsed the progress and future work plan of the marine renewables subgroup of the BIC energy work stream, including the continued exchange of best practice on marine environment and research issues and the

identification of key opportunities for ongoing collaboration across Administrations.

The Council also approved ongoing and constructive engagement between BIC member Administrations and the European Commission in the development of European funding and policy initiatives in the area of marine energy. The Council noted and welcomed the programme of work being taken forward by the electricity grid infrastructure subgroup of the energy work stream.

The Council considered a report prepared by the BIC secretariat on the relationship between the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, as mandated by the Council at its thirteenth summit meeting in Jersey in November 2009. The Council noted that there is scope for further engagement between the bodies and approved a number of recommendations to enhance their relationship. The Council tasked the BIC secretariat with taking forward work on those recommendations in conjunction with the BIPA secretariat.

We discussed progress on arrangements for the establishment of a BIC standing secretariat, which had been commissioned by the Council at the Belfast summit in July 2007. At the previous BIC summit in November 2009, the Council asked the Chief Minister of Guernsey, as host of the following summit, to take further informal soundings from Council members on a location for the secretariat with a view to reaching consensus on a location and to report back to the Council at the Guernsey summit. The Chief Minister of Guernsey reported to the Council that, during his consultations with member Administrations, consensus had emerged on a location for the secretariat: Scotland. The Council endorsed that consensus and tasked the BIC co-ordinating group with taking forward work on the arrangements for establishing the secretariat in Scotland and agreeing a model for sharing the costs associated with the establishment and operation of the secretariat. Co-ordinators have been asked to provide a paper setting out proposed arrangements for the Council to approve at the next summit meeting, with a view to the secretariat being operational as soon as possible thereafter. The Council has requested that the costs associated with the standing secretariat be kept to a minimum.

The Council noted the progress of each of BIC's 11 work sectors based on the reports of their respective working groups. The collaborative spatial planning group brings together officials responsible for regional development strategies, national planning strategies and frameworks in each member Administration, and it met in March 2010 in Cardiff. There, the group had the opportunity to hear from the Welsh Department with responsibility for public services and local government on changes to European Union spatial policy objectives. The group will next meet in Edinburgh in autumn 2010, when it will focus its work on the practical issues for member Administrations arising from the mandatory strategic environmental assessment of spatial frameworks.

The demography work group continues to be committed to the work plan that was endorsed by the ministerial meeting in March 2008. The main focus of the group's work has been on understanding migration and its impact. The work stream's next area of focus will be on understanding the implications of wider student flows among BIC member Administrations.

The digital inclusion work stream held its inaugural meeting in September 2009 in the Isle of Man, where it identified common themes in and shared understandings of digital inclusion. The group decided to focus its work on five main areas: content, outcomes, trust, engagement, and skills and training. The group has since met on three occasions, most recently in Dublin in May 2010, to take forward work in those areas. The theme of the next BIC summit meeting will be digital inclusion.

In February 2009, the BIC Ministers with responsibility for early years provision endorsed four strands of work for the work stream: collaboration between all agencies concerned with health, education and social services, with the aim of providing a joined-up service for children and their parents or carers and making better use of resources; transition arrangements between home and childcare settings and on to school to improve outcomes; the early years workforce; and evaluation and obtaining better value for money. Initially, the work of the group focused on the third strand. Officials from the early years policy work sector met most recently in Jersey in May 2010, and the group will now begin to focus on the fourth area, which is value for money.

At the Council's twelfth summit in Cardiff on 20 February 2009, it agreed to the introduction of a new energy work stream focused on two areas: electricity grid infrastructure and marine renewables. The electricity grid aspect of the work stream is led by the UK, and the marine renewables aspect of the work stream is led by Scotland.

The BIC electricity grid subgroup has met three times in the past 12 months. Grid infrastructure was also the main focus of discussion at the meeting of Energy Ministers in London on 22 March 2010. At that meeting, BIC Ministers agreed that the electricity grid subgroup would focus on exchanging information on and experience of research and development and other studies to promote greater understanding of and co-operation in electricity grid infrastructure; sharing experience of and approaches to regulation; making environmental impact assessments and achieving planning consent for electricity grid infrastructure; and working together to exert greater influence on the direction of emerging EU policy on and funding for grid infrastructure, where applicable to relevant members.

The first meeting of the marine renewables work stream was held on 6 June 2009, and it met subsequently in November 2009 and January 2010. The group continues to share best practice in research and development, policy support and marine environment activities. As Members will have noted, marine renewable energy was the main theme of the BIC summit. The environment work stream continues to examine ways in which Governments, agencies and researchers across BIC member Administrations can work together to improve the collective understanding of impacts on the environment.

The work stream includes two subgroups, which deal with extreme weather events and integrated coastal zone management. It met in February, April and June 2010. BIC Environment Ministers will meet in Newcastle, England, in July 2010, when the main theme will be marine issues. The discussion will focus on potential areas for future co-operation, such as how member Administrations can support each other in working to implement European directives, such as the marine framework strategy.

10.45 am

An initial meeting of BIC officials took place in Belfast in June last year on housing. The following issues were agreed as relevant across the jurisdictions: changing demographics; greening the housing stock; affordable housing; and investment in housing. The inaugural meeting of BIC Housing Ministers took place in Newcastle, County Down, on 4 December last year. The meeting focused on four main areas: changing demographics; the need for more energy-efficient housing; greening the housing stock; affordable housing products; and increasing private investment in housing. The European Investment Bank and the Housing Finance Corporation made presentations at that meeting.

Indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages were the theme of the last BIC summit meeting held in Jersey in November last year. At that summit, the Council endorsed the work of the group and added the economic benefits of bilingualism to the group's remit. A meeting of officials was held in Dublin in December, at which it was agreed that the UK would lead the work on the economic benefits of bilingualism. It was also agreed to establish a subgroup to discuss the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that would look at member Administrations' experiences of the monitoring process and share best practice on monitoring progress and reporting it to the Council of Europe. An inaugural meeting of that subgroup was held in Guernsey in June. In February 2010, a seminar was held in Edinburgh by the legislation subgroup to discuss linguistic legislation. That was organised by the Scottish Government, who have chaired the legislation subgroup since it was established.

The misuse of drugs work stream met in Dublin in January 2010, and officials discussed the policies of Administrations in tackling alcohol misuse. A ministerial meeting of the work sector was hosted by the Isle of Man on 24 February this year. Ministers discussed substance misuse in the prison setting and the responses necessary to address that issue. Ministers also discussed the issue of head shops and the use of psychoactive substances — legal highs, as they are better known — enhancing information on the various measures that are planned and implemented across jurisdictions and the outcomes of those interventions. Work stream officials last met in London in June, where they

discussed new directions for drug and alcohol policy and meeting new challenges. The group will next meet in Jersey in September and will focus its discussion on community action in dealing with drugs, alcohol and antisocial disorder.

At a ministerial meeting on social inclusion in Edinburgh on 25 and 26 March 2010, BIC Ministers reviewed the report on the work carried out by the BIC social inclusion work stream on the contribution of the third sector to social inclusion. Ministers noted that the third sector across all member Administrations is complex and diverse, with significant social and economic potential. They also acknowledged that the third sector has a reach to people and communities that statutory agencies sometimes find more difficult to engage. Ministers commended the excellent examples of investment and good practice across all member Administrations. Ministers agreed that the theme had led to a dynamic process of learning and co-operation, reflecting the original intention of the BIC. The work sector met at official level last week in Northern Ireland.

Work in the transport work stream has focused on the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications, the mutual recognition of driving offences that attract a penalty less than disqualification and research into drugs and driving. Member Administrations are also working together in the area of accessible transport. That work has included examining how to improve information provision for disabled people who wish to travel from one Administration area to another through the development of common web pages, sharing standards of disability training schemes and scoping the current level of concessionary travel across Administrations, while examining the potential for mutual recognition. The next meeting of the accessible transport subgroup will be held in London in December 2010.

Finally — I thank my colleague for the water, but I may need to be fed intravenously because of the length of this statement — Members will wish to note that the Council agreed to hold the next BIC summit in December 2010, when it will be hosted by the Isle of Man Government.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Dr Farry): This is my debut in my new role, and I will endeavour to reflect

what I understand to be the key issues for the Committee, even though I have not yet attended a Committee meeting. I thank the First Minister for his statement, and I welcome the quick turnaround in his delivering it, particularly given the statement's detailed content, which is also welcome.

The First Minister referred to the report that the BIC secretariat prepared on the relationship between the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. Will he give us some flavour of the report's recommendations?

Members will welcome greatly the interest that has been shown in the early years policy, which is a cross-cutting issue. In the light of the emerging conclusions, will the First Minister tell the House whether we can look forward to some of the recommendations being reflected in our thinking on the future Programme for Government and Budget?

Marine renewable energy was a major theme of the discussions. Are we likely to see DETI's strategic energy framework finalised and the outcomes of the discussions reflected in other local policies?

The First Minister: I congratulate the Member on his new role. Given that he managed to ask that number of questions without ever having been to an OFMDFM Committee meeting, I fear for the time when he is fully equipped in his new role and has his legs fully under the table.

I thank my officials for the quick turnaround in preparing the statement. We respect the role of the Assembly, so we thought it vital to deliver the statement today before the Assembly rises for the summer recess. We therefore asked our officials to cancel all their evening engagements over the past number of days.

Perhaps I should say what the relationship between the BIC and the parliamentary Assembly will not be: it will not be the kind of relationship that the Executive have with the Assembly; rather, it will be much more a co-operative relationship. We will obviously share various outcomes, and the parliamentary Assembly will undoubtedly want to look at some of the same issues at which the BIC looks. The two bodies will have lots of possibilities to aid each other, and the BIC will look at some of the reports that the parliamentary Assembly undertakes. I hope that there will be a close working relationship between the two bodies.

The Member asked whether the lessons that other Administrations learn will be reflected in our policies and Budget. Such learning is the very purpose of the BIC setting. At BIC summits, we hear about the experiences of Ministers from other Administrations, and, as a result, we can make some assessment of the value that those Ministers place on work that they have done and determine whether there is a read-across to Northern Ireland's circumstances. There will be some experiences that we do not wish to share, but it will be good to know about them because that will mean that others learn the lesson for us. In other cases, we will want to incorporate good practice that has been developed elsewhere into our Programme for Government and Budget requirements.

Mr Spratt: I, too, thank the Minister for his statement on the British-Irish Council summit meeting. The House will recall the UK Government's obstruction of the location of the BIC standing secretariat at the Jersey summit late last year. I welcome the now unanimous decision of the Council to locate its secretariat in Scotland. Will the Minister tell us what steps will be taken in the near future to establish the secretariat?

The First Minister: As I said in my statement, we tasked officials with taking forward that important issue as far back as at the summit meeting in Belfast in 2007. We have been pressing for the establishment of a standing secretariat for a considerable time. A BIC secretariat completes the various bodies that are located on the periphery of the Assembly at a North/South and an east-west level. We know from North/South experiences that a secretariat gives focus and drive to the work that is being done. We, therefore, hope that that is replicated in the east-west body.

We are delighted that Scotland was successful in its bid to host the secretariat. To put it bluntly, the change in the UK Government assisted in getting that issue resolved. At the Jersey meeting, everybody except the UK Government agreed on the location. Now, it has been endorsed by the new the coalition Government and, therefore, we can move ahead.

We have already agreed the skeleton form of the secretariat and the parameters within which it will work. The Scottish Administration indicated that they have already looked at the cost and have seen areas in which savings could be

made. A paper, which will be provided by our officials, will determine the apportionment of costs between the member Administrations. We will discuss that, not, I hope, in a heated way, at the next meeting.

Ms Anderson: Go raibh míle maith agat. I thank the First Minister for that detailed statement. I assure him that the new Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will have his work cut out trying to ask questions, because we are all a bit lippy in that Committee.

When will the North next host a plenary meeting of the BIC? Will consideration be given to that meeting taking place in Derry?

The First Minister: I should not do what I am about to do because there are dangers in saying something off the top of one's head. However, it surely must be next year that we host the plenary meeting. There is a meeting on the Isle of Man in December, and I can think of no other Administration that have not had their turn, which usually comes round every three years. I am getting nods from the Officials' Box — I am not supposed to mention it — indicating that I have guessed right. We would be happy to welcome all member Administrations to Northern Ireland in 2011.

Mr Elliott: I thank the First Minister for his statement and for bringing it to the House so quickly. There have been rumours of a possible takeover bid of NIE by the Republic of Ireland Government-controlled ESB. Did that form any part of the discussions at the BIC?

The First Minister: That did not come up during the summit. However, if that is a rumour or more than a rumour, it may come up at the ministerial meetings. Therefore, I will draw it to the attention of my colleague to ensure that he gets a reply as to whether the Department is aware of anything.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the First Minister for a comprehensive and thorough report on the BIC summit meeting. Momentarily, I thought that Ms Anderson was going to suggest that the secretariat be situated in Derry. However, she did not come forward with that recommendation.

One area of great interest is marine energy, which we are ideally situated to exploit. There is huge potential for Northern Ireland and, indeed, Ireland as a whole. Will the First Minister expand

on the collaboration that he would envisage among the various Administrations throughout these islands so that we can benefit from that?

The First Minister: I should point out that Northern Ireland made an early bid for the standing secretariat to be based here. However, we are all very content with the placing of the secretariat in Edinburgh, in Scotland. Accessibility to the venue for all Administrations was a key factor, as was cost.

In relation to marine renewables and as the Member indicated, when it comes to wind and waves, Northern Ireland is in the premier league, probably vying with Scotland for the top position.

We have our own experiences in Strangford Lough, where we have probably achieved a world first, in getting a commercial project connected to the grid.

11.00 am

It was indicated during the meeting that 50% of wave stream potential for the whole of Europe comes from the countries that were involved in the BIC summit. Marine renewables has not been a big issue in the European Community. There was, therefore, a collective agreement that we would make it a big issue with regard to funding and other European issues. I suppose the fact that these regions hold 50% of wave stream potential may be the reason why other regions have not been pushing the issue, but that is no reason why we should not.

Obviously, Scotland has a particular knowledge in that area, and the work group is going into great detail so that we can learn from each other. We have to recognise that the technology is reasonably costly at present. As time goes on, however, we will get more for less, and that will be the outcome as we work in collaboration.

Some of my party's theological scholars may be able to tell me on what day God created the wind and waves. *[Laughter.]* We are talking about some of the oldest elements, and if we could put new technology to the oldest elements, we would have something very sustainable in the long term. Although some of my ministerial colleagues may want us to take the fuels from hell, whether oil or coal, I much prefer to take the fuels from heaven, whether the wind or the sun, or somewhere in between; that is, the waves. There is massive potential in marine renewables, which we have to garner.

Lord Browne: Looking at the list of delegates, the Guernsey summit appears to have been well attended. However, I notice the absence of the Prime Minister. Does the First Minister agree that the absence of the Prime Minister does not sit well with his respect agenda towards the devolved Administrations?

The First Minister: We would have welcomed the presence of the Prime Minister, or, indeed, the Deputy Prime Minister. Preparations were going on for the G20 summit in Canada, so we will gracefully give him a bye ball on this occasion, although we obviously think that the BIC summit would have been more important for him to attend. However, the Secretary of State indicated that the Prime Minister is expected at the Isle of Man summit, so we look forward to seeing him there. Of course, the Prime Minister attended the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting and, indeed, invited us to Downing Street for that. I hope that that will be the pattern that he will follow.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh ráiteas an Aire.

I welcome the statement from the First Minister. Like Stephen Farry, I would have liked to have heard more detail about the specific recommendations about the closer future working relationship between the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. Committee D of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly did a very worthwhile report on health inequalities suffered by the Irish community in Britain.

Will the First Minister ensure that a wider range of language expert bodies will be invited to attend future meetings of the languages subgroup? No representative groups from the North were invited to take part in its previous meeting.

Finally, did this Administration bid to host the BIC secretariat, or were we happy to endorse the Scottish bid?

The First Minister: In actual fact, the answer is both. We were one of four Administrations that put in a bid for the secretariat. It seems that, had we been successful, we may have had some issues about where it would be sited in Northern Ireland. As a result of the complex procedures, whether proportional representation or whatever, Scotland ended up being the most favoured choice, and is now the unanimous choice of the Council.

I take on board the Member's reference to minority languages. The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure was present at the Jersey summit and spoke extensively on that. We want to play our full part in any work stream that is under way.

The paper agreed at the summit sets out the distinct roles and functions of the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The Council noted that there is scope for further engagement between the bodies and approved a number of recommendations to enhance their relationship. The Council tasked the BIC secretariat with taking forward work on those recommendations in conjunction with the BIPA secretariat. We welcome the enhanced co-operation between the bodies and the regular exchange of public documents, and we look forward to receiving relevant reports from BIPA. The new BIC standing secretariat is well placed to administer and co-ordinate responses to BIPA committee reports. There may, however, be occasions when an individual response may be appropriate — for example, when a report relates to issues that are specific to an individual member Administration.

Mr Easton: I thank the First Minister for his statement. I note that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has not commenced the child protection work stream. Was the Health Minister in attendance to explain to other member Administrations why there has been inaction on that important issue?

The First Minister: As the attendance list indicates, the Health Minister was not present. Again, I take the risk of working off the top of my head, but I recall that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety previously gave reasons for not contributing to the Baby P case. That case has now gone through the courts, so we will attempt to get some further explanation from the Department and advise the Member accordingly.

Mr Beggs: I, too, thank the First Minister for his prompt report. He said that head shops and so-called legal highs were discussed under the heading of substance misuse. Will the First Minister tell us whether the spot-listing of designer drugs was discussed? We recently suffered an epidemic of mephedrone use in Northern Ireland and found that it took three or four months to have that drug banned. Can we develop this idea so that we can follow the good practice of the USA and New Zealand and

be one step ahead of the international criminal gangs?

The First Minister: The issue came up at the Council only by way of a documentary report on all the work streams, so it was not discussed. There would have been considerable discussion on all those issues during the ministerial meetings on the subjects. I will draw attention to the Member's remarks so that the Minister can respond directly. However, as he outlined, that is precisely why the work streams exist and why the Council meets.

Mr I McCrea: I, too, welcome the First Minister's statement and his swiftness in bringing it to the House. He referred to the fact that the secretariat will be based in Scotland and that a model was agreed for sharing the costs. Does he have any details of what Northern Ireland's contribution will be? Will he advise the House what lessons this Administration can learn from others in responding to the cuts in public expenditure?

The First Minister: To answer the first part of the question on the apportionment of the overall costs of the standing secretariat: officials will draw up a paper and attempt to reconcile every Administration's desire to pay as little as possible. No figures have been set beside any of the Administrations as yet. We will want to ensure that we are asked to contribute a fair and reasonable amount.

As one might expect, we spent a considerable time discussing economic issues, particularly in relation to the three devolved Administrations, with a view to trying to make the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland aware of the difficulties that we face because of the United Kingdom Budget.

At BIC summits, I usually find that much of the best and most valuable work takes place in the evening non-sessions rather than at the Council meetings. The deputy First Minister and I met the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales. We discussed how we would each try to deal with the cuts and whether we could learn lessons from one another. The deputy First Minister and I will speak to ministerial colleagues about those issues, and, along with the Finance Minister, I hope that we will be able to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr McCarthy: Like other Members, I thank the First Minister and acknowledge the speed and

efficiency with which the statement has been brought to the Assembly this morning before we break for the summer recess.

All BIC participants live on islands, some larger than others, so we all have an interest in the protection of our precious coastline. I want to raise the issue of collaborative spatial planning. I am glad that our Environment Minister was at the BIC meeting. Will the First Minister, the deputy First Minister or whoever is responsible do whatever is necessary to ensure that our coastline is protected from unnecessary and unwanted development, and from coastal erosion?

The First Minister: The Member, along with colleagues, has drawn attention to the quick turnaround time and quality of the statement. I take no credit for that, but bounce it on to the people in the Officials' Box who did the hard work.

Northern Ireland's coastline is not extensive, but it is a precious resource. It is precious to the fishing and tourism industries, and, as we will see in the future, it is precious because of its energy potential. There can be conflicts — for example, between tourism and offshore wind energy — so balances will always have to be struck. However, I will pass on the Member's remarks to the Environment Minister. During the summit, there was no discussion on coastline issues other than in the context of energy, but the Minister will deal with that subject at the ministerial meetings.

Mr Givan: I thank the First Minister for his statement, which touched on the marine renewables sector. Will he join me in commending Queen's University, which is at the cutting edge of research on wave power and is working with the Scottish Government in developing that technology off the Orkney Islands? With Scotland, Northern Ireland can drive the agenda on marine renewables. If we can harness the technology, Northern Ireland has enough power off its north coast to generate the same amount of energy as two existing power stations. There is a great opportunity to develop new green jobs — in the sense of wind energy jobs.

The First Minister: I am happy to concur with the issues that the Member identified, including the contribution of Queen's University and its collaboration with the Scottish Government. If we are going to pat local resources on the back, Harland and Wolff should be included because of its involvement in the Strangford scheme. Yet

again, that demonstrates that local expertise can be utilised.

11.15 am

Of course, we want to develop our marine renewables potential quickly and as best we can. It is an emerging industry that will create what the Member described as “green jobs”. I hope that green and orange jobs will flow from it, but it is vital that we openly communicate what is and is not working so that all Administrations benefit. The Scottish Administration have considerable experience in that area. They lead the work group and are probably ahead of the field in the context of marine renewables, so we can learn much from them.

Lord Morrow: The First Minister said:

“Work in the Transport work stream has focused on the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications; the mutual recognition of driving offences that attract a penalty less than disqualification”.

Will the First Minister elaborate on that? Is that work concerned with trying to have some cohesion with other regions of the United Kingdom and with the Republic of Ireland, whereby those who are banned from driving here will have that ban reflected in the Republic of Ireland and vice versa?

The First Minister: I am not sure whether the Member wishes to declare an interest in that subject, but the work stream will deal with that issue and with penalty points. The matter was not discussed during the meeting, but it was in a written report. Our own Minister will take that matter forward with the work stream at a ministerial level.

Executive Committee Business

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill: Second Stage

The Minister of the Environment (Mr Poots): I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill [NIA 31/09] be agreed.

I say with some confidence that this is a Bill that is to be welcomed by all Members, despite the fact that quite a few of them are leaving the Chamber. The Bill signals the start of work on a clean neighbourhoods legislative programme that is designed to improve the quality of local environments right across Northern Ireland. That includes those in our local neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities and those in rural and coastal areas. The Bill will have an impact on all of Northern Ireland and its people and on all those who visit Northern Ireland. I will focus on why we need the Bill, what it will do, and how, through it, we can make a real difference to the lives of everyone in Northern Ireland.

First, why do we need the Bill? Its main purpose is to contribute to everyone’s quality of life by encouraging clean and tidy neighbourhoods and by helping to engender a sense of pride among residents. People feel safer in such neighbourhoods and feel more at ease in their local surroundings. When looked at in isolation, many of the issues that the Bill seeks to address may seem trivial to some, but individually and collectively, they are real problems for those who must endure their impact.

The Bill deals with a wide range of low-level environmental crime, such as littering, dog fouling, graffiti and fly-posting. It also deals with the nuisance that is caused by noise, poorly directed artificial lighting, abandoned vehicles and irresponsible parking, abandoned shopping trolleys, and even unwanted behaviour in back alleys. It aims to address directly many day-to-day problems that, left untouched, are the forerunner to a downward spiral that degrades local neighbourhoods, leads to increased levels of antisocial behaviour and serves to cause local residents only misery. None of us wants to live in an area that is blighted by low-level environmental crime. We want to live in areas that are clean and safe. The number-one priority

for many people is to have streets that are clean and free from antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime. Good-quality, clean and tidy local environments attract more investment and have a positive impact on our health, well-being, confidence and civic pride.

The Bill will help to bring about positive benefits for tourism by reducing antisocial behaviour and by making all of us think more about the environment in which we live. It should also help to reduce the massive street-cleaning costs that district councils face. For those reasons, I believe that the Bill is a very important piece of legislation. For example, it will show that the Assembly intends, through the introduction of stronger legislation and higher fines, to get tough with those who continue to litter and deface our streets and public spaces.

As I said, the Bill signals the start of work on the agenda for our clean neighbourhoods legislative programme. In consulting on the draft Bill earlier this year, stakeholders called for the Bill to do more. Full details of the comments that were received during that consultation exercise, as well as my Department's responses, are set out in the consultation summary document, which is available on the Department's website.

Although I am sympathetic to calls for the Bill to do more, it should be viewed as an important starting point. It is based on well-established legislation, namely, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, which is in force in other parts of the United Kingdom. The powers that it provides to local authorities are proving to be a key tool in their efforts to further improve the quality of their local environment. The proposed Bill will give broadly similar powers to district councils in Northern Ireland, which have been calling for them since the 2005 Act came into force in England and Wales. The Bill will be supported by extensive subordinate legislation and a clean neighbourhoods guidance programme. Furthermore, the implementation of the measures in the Bill by district councils will have to be monitored to assess their effectiveness and to allow consideration of the need for any significant additional measures to be introduced in the future.

Despite the excellent efforts of district councils in tackling low-level environmental crime and the ongoing campaigns designed to encourage society to change its ways, Northern Ireland district councils still needlessly

spend millions of pounds on cleaning up their local neighbourhoods. Last year, a staggering £34 million was spent on street cleansing in Northern Ireland. That amounts to almost £100,000 every day. That is not only a burden on ratepayers, but a sheer waste of a significant sum of money that could be used to much better effect on other important council services. Therefore, most people should accept that the Bill, which is designed to improve the appearance and cleanliness of public spaces and local neighbourhoods, is necessary.

The scale of the litter problem beggars belief. Some Members may be aware of the efforts made by the 'Belfast Telegraph' and Tidy Northern Ireland through the Big Spring Clean campaign. Earlier this year, I joined the campaign on a visit, with a group of dedicated conservation volunteers, to help to clear up litter in outer Belfast. What should have been a beautiful and scenic open space to be enjoyed by the local community, young and old alike, was ruined by unacceptable levels of litter, including plastic bags, paper bags, broken glass, empty bottles, used nappies and crisp packets, all of which were clearly visible. In a short space of time, we collected more than 30 black bin bags full of litter.

We all know the sorts of issues that I am targeting; we see the problems all too easily and all too often. Chewing gum, cigarette ends and confectionary litter are significant problems that blight the appearance of footpaths in towns and cities. Illegal fly-posting and graffiti are eyesores that seem to appear on every piece of street furniture and even on the walls of private property. Irresponsible dog ownership gives rise to dog fouling, which, at best, is unpleasant and, at worst, represents a health hazard.

As I said, those issues also cost the councils money. In the UK, it is estimated that it costs £150 million a year to clean up chewing gum. Belfast City Council estimated that, in 2008-09, it spent approximately £500,000 on the removal of chewing gum, graffiti and fly-posters. However, the Bill deals with more than litter, graffiti and dog fouling. Other, equally important issues, such as noise nuisance and the problems that are caused by poorly directed domestic artificial lighting, affect the quality of people's lives in local neighbourhoods.

I have established why the Bill is important, and I shall now outline what it will do. The Bill

will give district councils the power to deal with issues much more effectively. As interested Members will appreciate, it is a sizeable and complex Bill, which will, in many instances, make detailed amendments to existing legislation, such as the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.

I will outline the key provisions. Litter continues to be a major concern for many people in Northern Ireland, as it reduces their quality of life by degrading public spaces and local neighbourhoods. The Bill will strengthen the existing law to enable district councils to deal more effectively with a range of litter problems. It will give councils strong new powers, such as litter clearing notices, which will require businesses and individuals to clear litter from their land. It will strengthen the councils' existing powers to require local businesses, through the issue of street litter control notices, to help to clear up the litter that they generate. It will strengthen the provisions to deal with people who fail to provide their name and address. It will amend the offence of dropping litter in a lake, pond or watercourse, and it will enable councils to restrict the distribution of flyers, handouts and pamphlets, which can end up as litter.

Fly-posting and graffiti are visual signs of neglect and degradation in a local environment, particularly in our inner cities and towns. The Bill will strengthen the existing law to enable district councils to deal more effectively with fly-posting and graffiti. It will give councils the ability to issue fixed penalty notices to graffiti and fly-posting offenders, and it will enable councils to serve defacement removal notices in respect of graffiti and fly-posting. It will also make it an offence to sell spray paints to children, and it will strengthen the legislation to make it harder for beneficiaries of fly-posting to evade prosecution.

Irresponsible dog ownership continues to be a problem in Northern Ireland. The Bill will introduce new arrangements for controlling dogs by replacing the local by-laws system with a more streamlined and straightforward system that is easier for district councils to operate. The new simplified system of dog control orders will enable councils to deal with fouling by dogs, to ban dogs from designated areas, to require dogs to be kept on a lead and to restrict the number of dogs that can be walked by one person.

Excessive noise is still regarded as a major problem by members of the public. In 2008-09, there were over 11,000 complaints about noise, over 80% of which related to domestic noise. Noise from music, television and parties, and animal noise, such as barking dogs, remain the major reasons for complaints in the domestic category. Although there was a small reduction in the overall number of domestic noise complaints compared with 2007-08, there was a 26% increase in the number of complaints about house alarms. The Bill will give district councils new powers to deal with audible intruder alarms and the noise nuisance that is caused by false alarms when a keyholder is away. The 2008-09 period also saw a 30% increase in the level of complaints in respect of noise from entertainment premises over those that were received in 2007-08. The Bill will amend the Noise Act 1996 in relation to noise from private premises by extending its provisions to noise from licensed premises. That change is designed to deal with licensed premises that ignore warnings to reduce excessive noise.

The existing statutory noise law is over 130 years old. Despite having been amended from time to time, the definition of what can be considered a statutory nuisance and the enforcement powers that are available to district councils have not kept pace with developments in statutory nuisance legislation that applies outside Northern Ireland. The Bill will introduce provisions that apply in England and Wales as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. One outcome will be that district councils will, for the first time, be able to take action to deal with complaints concerning problems caused by poorly directed artificial lighting, which is sometimes referred to as light pollution.

Fixed penalty notices or on-the-spot fines are a simple and visible way of dealing with environmental offences. If used properly, they provide an effective deterrent and avoid the cost of court action. At present, fixed penalty notices can be issued for littering and dog fouling offences and some noise violation offences. The Bill will make greater use of fixed penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and will give district councils the flexibility, subject to upper and lower limits, to set their own fixed penalty rates. The provisions in the Bill will extend the use of fixed penalty notices for offences relating to nuisance vehicles, litter controls, other dog controls, additional

noise controls, and graffiti and fly-posting. The Bill also makes a provision that will enable district councils to use the money received from the fixed penalty notices that they issue in connection with their functions to improve local environmental quality.

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

It is interesting to note that after the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 was introduced in England, the number of fixed penalty notices that were issued for litter offences increased significantly from 7,565 in 2003-04 to 43,624 in 2006-07, which is a five-fold increase. That not only acted as a deterrent but the value of the fixed penalties that were issued could have returned over £2 million of funding to further support councils' efforts to improve their neighbourhoods.

Back alleys or entries can attract a range of antisocial and environmental problems that reduce the quality of life in our local neighbourhoods. They can be magnets for litter, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and graffiti offenders. They can also attract other problems, such as domestic burglary and drug dealing, and can make the lives of local residents a misery. The Bill contains provisions to make more effective the existing procedure for the closing of nuisance back alleys.

11.30 am

The Bill contains amendments to the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 to give effect to gating order provisions. That will give district councils new powers to make, with the approval of the Department for Regional Development, gating orders to deal with problem alleyways. The Minister for Regional Development has policy responsibility for that legislation and has agreed those provisions in the Bill.

District councils will also be given new powers to deal with nuisance parking for businesses that sell or repair cars on a road. Such vehicles can be a nuisance: they can reduce parking opportunities and cause pollution — for example, where oil is spilled or leaked. Two new offences will be created: offering for sale two or more vehicles or repairing a vehicle on the road as part of a business. Abandoned cars can degrade streets, are linked to criminal activity and can become targets for antisocial behaviour and arson. The Bill will give district councils

the power to remove abandoned cars from the streets immediately.

I am sure that we have all come across abandoned shopping trolleys, which are an all-too-visible problem that affects the quality of our streets and public spaces. They can also be a hazard. When they are dumped in watercourses, they can form an obstruction and create particular problems for drainage, which may cause flooding or harm to wildlife. The Bill will give district councils the power to recover the costs of dealing with abandoned shopping trolleys from their owners.

The Bill increases the maximum fine from £30,000 to £50,000 on summary conviction that may be provided for in regulations made under pollution prevention and control provisions in the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. That will enable maximum fines on summary conviction in the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 — that could concern, for example, contravention of the requirement for a permit to operate an installation or mobile plant, failure to comply with or contravene a condition of a permit and failure to comply with the requirements of an enforcement notice or a suspension notice — to be brought into line with the equivalent maximum fines for illegal waste activity set out in the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. To ensure consistency in that area of regulation, the increase to £50,000 also brings the level of fine into line with that applying in England and Wales.

We have established why we need the Bill and what it will do, so we must ask ourselves how it can make a difference. As I said at the start of my speech, the Bill is sizeable and complex, and its purpose is, quite simply, to make Northern Ireland a better place in which to live. For many people, the Bill will help to ensure that the day-to-day local and environmental problems that they face will be dealt with more effectively than previously, thereby bringing about real improvements in their quality of life. However, legislation is not the only answer. If the Bill is to make a difference, it must form a platform for leadership. We need leadership from people and communities, local politicians, businesses and government in all their forms. I already mentioned the good work carried out by the 'Belfast Telegraph' and Tidy Northern Ireland.

I will conclude with a comment that was reported in the 'Belfast Telegraph' made by a primary-school pupil who took part in the big spring clean event. He spoke about the litter and graffiti around the streets and how it was not a nice place in which to live. However, he added that, after the children had completed their clean-up, he felt happy. In my view, that says it all and encapsulates what the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill is all about. The Bill can and will help to tackle the wide range of local and environmental problems that spoil the appearance of our neighbourhoods and, in doing so, will improve the quality of life for all the people in Northern Ireland. However, it will need the support of the people of Northern Ireland and of the Assembly to do that. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment (Mr Boylan): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mar Chathaoirleach an Choiste Comhshaoil, cuirim fáilte roimh an Bhille um comharsanachtaí glana agus an comhshaol.

I welcome the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill, which is comprehensive, with 76 clauses and four schedules. It has been introduced to reflect the growing calls from elected representatives, district councils, environmental groups and individuals for the introduction of similar legislation to that in England and Wales. The main objective of the Bill is to improve the local environment by giving district councils additional powers to deal with litter, nuisance alleys, graffiti and fly-posting, abandoned and nuisance vehicles, dogs, noise and statutory nuisance. Such issues are important to people in their everyday life and, as such, are brought to the attention of elected representatives almost daily. I am glad that the Minister decided to introduce the legislation, although the Committee noted its disappointment that the Department had taken so long to do so and insisted that a lack of resources was not an acceptable reason for the delay. Although most of the issues that the legislation covers are of a relatively minor nature when considered in isolation, the cumulative cost of addressing them through current provisions is significant.

Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the policy proposals on 11 February 2010. Members generally welcomed the proposals, as they will address the cumulative impact of many

smaller issues and significantly improve many citizens' quality of life. However, some concerns were raised. Members noted that there might be difficulties in enforcing the new powers at council level, especially if enforcers are on their own at night, without backup. Verbal and physical abuse could become more prevalent, especially once fixed penalties are introduced. Enforcement is crucial for any legislation to be effective, and, although I am well aware of the huge financial constraints on all public bodies at the moment, adequate resources must be given to councils to ensure effective enforcement.

The Committee welcomes the need to increase powers to address problems with stray dogs but feels that councils should be encouraged to persuade animal welfare groups to intervene, where possible, so that the new powers do not lead to an increase in the number of dogs that are destroyed. There is also a feeling that the Department needs to work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) on measures to reduce problems with stray dogs.

Everyone is well aware of the scourge of advertising leaflets, which are either foisted on people as they walk through towns or stuck under their windscreen wiper. Members welcome the proposals in the Bill to allow local authorities to put in place controls that limit where advertising leaflets can be distributed. We particularly welcome the inclusion of car parks as one such location. Anybody who looks around a car park when returning to his or her vehicle will see many discarded advertising leaflets. The Bill should go some way to stopping the practice.

The Committee was told that the Department considers the Bill to be cost-neutral and that the revenue from fixed penalty notices will return to local authorities. In the current economic climate, that is welcome. Members were also pleased to learn that the Bill is designed to give councils powers that they can adopt as necessary. That should provide the necessary flexibility to put in place measures that are tailored to local areas, including, where necessary, powers to address problems that are unique to rural areas. As an elected representative who serves a rural constituency, I welcome that development.

I will now make some remarks as a private Member. I welcome the provisions on dogs

offences in the Bill. However, DARD also has a role to play. Stray dogs still affect many council areas. That is totally unacceptable, and I hope that regulations will go some way to addressing the problem.

Many tourists complain about the amount of litter that is dropped, especially in rural areas. I hope that fixed penalties will address the problem. Does the Minister intend to consider giving some resources to local residents' groups so that they might help tackle the problem in their area?

I welcome the proposed introduction of gating orders. A major issue arises with them, however. Although the measure is welcome, it will certainly restrict people's movement. In my area, some alley-gating has been done. However, alley-gating leads to antisocial behaviour and dumping, which the Minister mentioned. If the legislation is to work, conclusive consultation must take place among residents, local groups and utility providers to get it right.

Abandoned cars are another problem. Will the Minister look into the nuisance that cars and lorries parked on the footpath cause? I know that that falls under DRD's remit, but there may be an opportunity for the Minister to consider the issue.

As soon as the House commends the Bill to the Committee, we will call for written submissions from interested organisations and individuals. Committee members will be extremely interested to hear their views. I look forward to having a good ongoing working relationship with departmental officials to ensure that the Committee is able to scrutinise the legislation properly. Thar ceann an Choiste, tacaím le prionsabail an Bhille. On behalf of the Committee, I support the Bill's principles.

Mr Ross: I am glad to speak to the Bill, which has been brought forward by a DUP Minister. There is an awful lot in the Bill for us to get our teeth into in Committee.

Many local communities in Northern Ireland are plagued by litter, noise, fly-tipping, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and all the issues that the Minister and the Chairperson of the Committee mentioned. Indeed, at the end of the Chairperson's speech, he said that tourists noticed that there is a lot of litter here. We have discussed that issue in Committee and in the Assembly, during the debate on the Ulster

Unionist Party motion on Tidy Northern Ireland Day. Much discussion took place on the cultural and attitudinal changes that need to take place among individuals here. It is hard not to think about personal responsibility when discussing the issue.

I do not think that any Members will not have dealt with such issues in their constituency. I have dealt with a number of issues and been frustrated by the lack of powers that councils have and the lack of action that they can take. Therefore, the Bill, which gives local councils the powers that they need, is welcome. I support the Bill in principle, which is what we are asked to do at Second Stage. In our initial discussions, the Committee gave a general welcome to the Bill and looked forward to considering it in more detail.

The outcome that we all want for communities and local areas is healthier and cleaner communities and, ultimately, happier neighbourhoods. The littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping that we have discussed impacts on the quality of life of many residents. It impacts on the quality of life of neighbours throughout the country and of people who live in misery because of dumping by a few. The actions of a few really are impacting on the many.

The Minister talked about the huge costs of street cleaning and of getting shopping trolleys out of rivers and lakes. We want to ensure that ratepayers get value for money, because the costs that councils currently pay to clean up litter and abandoned cars and trolleys is passed on to the ratepayer. Ultimately, it is innocent people who pay for councils to clean up, and that must be addressed. As a general rule, I support the polluter pays principle, whether that applies to individuals or businesses. People have to take personal responsibility, and they have to take on the costs for clearing up the mess that they have made. That is an important principle.

The Minister talked about the increased use of fixed penalty notices. A number of weeks ago, the Committee for Justice discussed a move towards having more fixed penalty notices, and that is a beneficial direction to take. It saves many minor offences from clogging up the courts. As long as enforcement is carried out properly and people pay their fines, fixed penalty notices are the way to go. My one warning is that, because the councils are able to keep much of the revenue from the fines and that they give out,

some overzealous council officials might use that as a way of generating income for councils. When looking at the Bill's detail, we will need to ensure that strict upper and lower limits are placed on the fines and that it contains details on how councils can collect the fines.

The Chairman talked about advertising being placed under window wipers in many car parks across the Province and the mess that that creates. That absolutely needs to be addressed, but, at the same time, we need to ensure that businesses are able to advertise and use leaflets, albeit with restrictions. The use of leaflets at car parks could be a restriction that is put in place. We need to ensure that we are not overzealous in looking to restrict that practice.

The same could be said about shopping trolleys. In many cases, people take shopping trolleys off supermarket premises, wheel them up the road and abandon them. During my time at university, it was common practice for many students to wheel shopping trolleys into the halls of residence or leave them outside the door. It is important that —

Lord Morrow: That is students for you.

Mr Ross: Absolutely. Now that I am not a student, I can speak from the moral high ground. It is important that the supermarkets do not have to pay unnecessarily for the irresponsible actions of individuals and that those who carry out such actions pay for them.

11.45 am

The Minister spoke about dog fouling and nuisance dogs. I welcome the fact that we will make restrictions by ensuring that dogs are kept on a lead in certain areas, for example. We need to examine in more detail the practicalities of restricting how many dogs can be walked at one time. We need to look at how easy it would be to enforce that sort of regulation and, indeed, at whether that would be a practical step. There are also issues to do with noise, with many people and their neighbours living in misery because of car alarms, house alarms, loud parties and so on. Again, it is difficult for councils to stamp down on such matters. Any measures that can be included in the Bill to help councils to deal with those issues are to be welcomed.

The Chairperson mentioned gating orders, which have been very successful. In many built-

up areas, including some in my constituency, alleyways are a magnet to young people and those who want to engage in antisocial behaviour or to drink, create graffiti, fly-tip and dump and so forth. Successful steps have been taken elsewhere in the country to address that. Alleyways are also used as an easy getaway in incidents of low-level crime. Therefore, it would be useful to make it easier for councils to have gating orders.

The Bill contains a lot of positive aspects and an awful lot of measures. There is a lot of work for the Committee to do, and I look forward to that. I support the principles of the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I hope that the Member feels better for having got his student misdemeanours off his chest.

Mr Kinahan: Perhaps I should also declare an interest, given that I enjoyed races in trolleys when I was at university.

I am incredibly keen on the Bill. It covers all the issues about which those of us who have been councillors and Members are constantly harried by the public. A hell of a lot — I am not allowed to say that — a lot of support needs to be given to a great deal of what is in the Bill. The Bill has been long awaited, and I think that Members will find that all councils are very nearly ecstatic that they will, at last, have controls and powers to deal with many of the matters that we are discussing today.

Earlier in the week, I said that there are sometimes too many rules. However, we need a great deal of regulation in this area. We also need action. As has been touched on, that action comes from our leadership in government, community groups and from every member of the public. We need to deal with matters quickly and within a time limit. Indeed, that theme will run through some of what I say today. One thing that we are really asking for is courage. We are asking people to be really bothered to tackle what is in the Bill. Councils need to be brave enough to get out there to deal with matters quickly. We need to get tough, and everyone, including the public, needs to help.

Part 1 of the Bill deals with gating orders. I fully support the measures on that. I look forward to councils being able to close the areas in which youths gather, litter is thrown on the ground, substances are used and noise occurs. People and their neighbours are cursed by what

goes on around and about them. On the news yesterday, we saw that a car park has been closed in Comber to give some peace to those who live near it. However, I must make the point that gating orders will not resolve the problems with youths. We need more police on the ground and more action. We also need parents to know where their children are, and they need to get involved. All those points are tied in together, but I welcome the Bill's measures on gating orders.

Part 2 deals with vehicles. I also very much welcome the provisions on that matter. When I first started knocking on doors in areas that I had not been in before, I was horrified by some of the vehicles, including caravans, that were sitting in people's driveways. Those vehicles were often sitting halfway out of driveways, with plants crawling up the sides, and there were rats and whatever else. Councils had no ability to deal with such situations, but I hope that the Bill will now allow us to do so. I welcome the fact that people will not be able to sell loads of vehicles outside their house and that councils will be able to serve fixed penalty notices.

The Committee needs to discuss whether a fixed penalty of £100 is enough and whether there should be a broad spectrum that we can work within. We probably need to think about linking the issue to the scrappage scheme in England, which is a good way of getting rid of vehicles. That would lead to more room for parking, neighbours getting on better with one another and, at the same time, the whole neighbourhood being cleaned up. I have a concern, though: we must ensure that people do not remove antique or classic cars without knowing what they are doing. Such vehicles have a high value.

Litter is dealt with in part 3 of the Bill. It is the scourge of Northern Ireland. This country is the most beautiful part of the United Kingdom and one of the worst for litter. We need to tackle that problem, and I praise the Minister and the Department for many of the measures in the Bill. Councils will now be able to serve fixed penalty notices and litter-clearing notices. At times, I think that a litter-clearing notice should be served on the whole of south Antrim to allow us to deal with the issue in one go. It is good that we will be able to impose a charge for all the work that has to be done to deal with litter.

Plastic bags are another concern, and I look forward to seeing a private Member's Bill on

plastic bags. Perhaps if we ensured that every plastic bag carried a company name, we would know which company to go to with the bags that we clear up.

Most Members can think of many areas in their constituency that have litter problems. I find the litter problem in South Antrim, one of the gateways to Northern Ireland, appallingly embarrassing. On the drive in from the International Airport, people often see rubbish all the way down the main road. That is just one example, and I am sure that Members have many others. I want strong time limits to apply to how long councils have to take action and how long people who have been served notices have to respond and get things done. By setting tight time limits, we will ensure that things get done.

I welcome the control on the distribution of free literature, and I look forward to seeing it come into effect. At any big event nowadays, there is always someone advertising something. I am also aware that politicians are sometimes slightly to blame when it comes to putting up election posters. We must get better at removing our posters and notices at the end of the specified time period.

Along with all those penalties and all that work comes the need for councils to take action, and with that comes cost. The councils must take comfort in the fact that they can get some of that money back and will save money in the long term. The Committee needs to think hard about how it can help councils to deal with issues such as chewing gum and litter on the road. I go back to a point that I have often raised in the Chamber, which is that councils need to know who owns every bit of land so that they can tackle littering. Often, councils cannot trace the owners of land in which rubbish is dumped. I look forward to seeing the Bill give the council the power to go straight onto such land to remove rubbish. If the owner cannot be found, a time limit should be set, and the council should be able to go in and remove the rubbish after that period. As I said earlier, councils need to be brave.

The most frustrating thing about graffiti is the length of time that it takes to deal with it. Councils should be able to deal with racist or personal graffiti the day after it appears. It should be possible to use this legislation to turn the situation around so that graffiti can be dealt with quickly and the cost of removing it recovered. Too often in my patch, if people go

to the Northern Ireland Office to complain about graffiti, they are told that it is not the Northern Ireland Office that they should contact; yet, when they go to the council, they are told that it is not the council that they should contact. We have to find a way to deal with the issue, and the Bill opens the door to a means of tackling it head-on.

I am not sure where the issue of advertising at roundabouts would sit in the Bill. Is it litter or graffiti? We need to think about that in Committee. There is a massive amount of illegal advertising. Again, if people drive around roundabouts in Northern Ireland, they will see illegal advertisements and vehicles parked on the roadside advertising people's wares. We need to regulate that much more, and the Bill offers an opening to do so.

I very much welcome not only the measures to control noise from car alarms, music and the neighbour who throws parties too often but the fact that councils will be able to issue fines and that licensed premises may face increased fines of up to £500. Although the Bill focuses on noise at night, we must think also of shift workers who come home during the day. Excess noise does not occur only at night; it occurs during the day, simply as a result of people being bad neighbours. We need to learn how to be good neighbours to one another.

Part 7 of the Bill covers nuisance. If we use the nuisance provisions carefully, they will help us to deal with matters at Nutts Corner. Clause 60(1) (i) specifies noise that is:

"prejudicial to health or a nuisance;"

and Clause 60(1)(j) specifies:

"noise that is prejudicial to health or a nuisance and is emitted from or caused by a vehicle, machinery or equipment".

However, it goes on to say "in a street". I would like to open up that provision to include rural as well as urban environments. The Committee will have to consider how to deal with that. Maybe it should suggest an amendment to add that there should be no noise from vehicles until planning permission has been granted.

As a dog lover, I very much welcome more control over dogs and the fact that councils will be able to issue fixed penalty notices. Again, I ask councils to be brave. They must tackle matters relating to dogs, whether those concern

fouling or noise. In one case, my council debated for about half an hour whether it should spend £800 to take someone to court to get £75. I praise the Bill in that it allows councils to issue fixed penalty fines, but councils need to be brave and to tackle the issue.

I very much welcome the proposed increase to the fine for major pollution from £30,000 to £50,000. I am pleased that the Minister mentioned at the beginning of the debate that the legislation will be reviewed as time goes on and that maybe we should raise the top level of fines for those who really pollute not only the land but rivers.

I welcome almost everything in the Bill. I raise a few other matters that should be discussed, such as gardens. When one is canvassing, one sees some gardens that are almost health hazards. There may not be caravans or abandoned cars in them, but there must be a way in which we can deal with them. The High Hedges Bill touches on the issue, but it is also a matter for this Bill.

We need every member of the public to get involved. As I have said already, I congratulate the Minister and his Department, and I look forward to supporting the Bill in Committee.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the Bill that the Minister has introduced. Having moved to the Environment Committee only recently, I wish to thank its members for their deliberations and, especially, the Committee Clerk for her support in bringing me up to speed with the Bill.

The Bill gives the potential to clean up areas and to make safer, cleaner and — we hope — less noisy environments. I am sure that Members who have dealt with dog noise, statutory nuisances, graffiti and fly-posting or, on occasion, antisocial behaviour will know how extremely frustrating that can be, importantly, for the residents concerned but not least for the officials who have to deal with the councils' environmental health services and, potentially, operational services and the police or some other agency, as they try to pick up all the pieces and determine where the responsibility actually lies. In that regard the Bill is welcome.

Clause 1 deals with gating orders, and that rings a loud bell with me, as I dealt with one such issue that adversely affected local residents. Some children's organisations have raised

concerns about the potential adverse impact on children's movements, and that is an issue.

However, the test of reasonableness will always be drawn in when a council takes reasonable action to address nuisance that is being suffered late into the night and early morning. Such nuisance is often, although not exclusively, caused by younger people as they engage in certain activities, which involve more than the shopping trolleys that were mentioned earlier. The more heavy-duty goings-on include drug and alcohol abuse, underage drinking, general bad manners and causing nuisance to people. Therefore, I welcome that proposal.

12.00 noon

A little concern emanated from local government about the liability for the total cost of the proposal and whether the money will come from fines. The Department said that the intention is for those proposals to be cost-neutral. However, their outworkings would depend on a council's area. When it comes to whether the outworkings will be cost-neutral in areas of high-intensity antisocial behaviour, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

The new offence of parking more than one vehicle for sale on a road is clearly aimed at people who try to make a living from selling vehicles. Planning implications probably apply to those who run a business from home, but that is an aside. I am intrigued by the potential ability of councils to issue fixed penalty notices for vehicles that have been abandoned in public places and to remove and destroy them immediately when deemed necessary. I have been involved in a number of such cases, and I am sure that other Members share my experience.

The big question is to whom the fixed penalty should be issued. Often, when a council tries to identify the owner of a vehicle, which is probably a runaround, its ownership cannot be determined. After a while, the paper trail seems to go dead, even when the matter is pursued with the police. I am not sure whether that is an issue for DVA, which is within the Department's remit, the police, or both. As I know from personal experience, when the person to whom the fixed penalty should be issued cannot without great difficulty be identified, a great deal of bother and expense could be incurred in disposing of a vehicle.

I welcome the fact that the Bill makes it an offence to throw away litter. Again, the power to charge owners of abandoned shopping trolleys for their removal, storage and disposal begs the question of ownership. I have not seen many trolleys, which had been disposed of, that were labelled with the name of the company to which they belonged. Usually, the larger multinational stores, whose names are printed on their trolleys, employ people on site to look after them and to ensure that they do not travel too far. Therefore, I am intrigued by that proposal. At present, any discussion of its outworkings is probably more academic than practical.

The Bill will introduce powers to enable councils to serve defacement removal notices on owners of properties that have been defaced by graffiti or fly-posters and to recover the cost from people who are responsible for those properties that have been cleaned. A major and persistent issue is that fly-posting and defacement are often carried out without the approval of the building's owner. Often, quite the opposite is true.

At one level, people should be held liable for what happens on their property. However, Mr Kinahan referred to racist and other types of graffiti, much of which is motivated by spite. It would be extremely perverse if, as a consequence of the legislation, people could be held liable for the removal of graffiti that was designed to be deliberately antagonistic towards them. They could even be penalised for not removing it. That is one aspect that immediately springs to mind as I read through the Bill.

I welcome the part of the Bill that deals with the control of dogs. We had a nasty incident concerning the control of dogs outside Cookstown a fortnight ago. Anything that could lead to additional control over dogs is to be welcomed.

I certainly welcome the part of the legislation that deals with noise. The noise associated with alarms going off is a big issue. Mr Kinahan rightly said that a vehicle alarm is one of the worst things to go off during the day or night. The noise sends those in residential areas bananas. The owner of the vehicle might not be about or the vehicle might be a runabout that has been dumped. If it is a dumped runabout, it is hoped that the alarm would have been neutralised by that stage, but that is another matter. It is important that more work is done on the practical outworkings of how to deal with vehicle alarms going off. There are alarm

notification areas and keyholders can provide councils with contact details for their properties, but dealing with vehicles can be a wee bit more problematic. I am not sure what sort of thought has gone into that. Such noise can prove to be one of the most difficult issues in an estate or an area of high density.

In conclusion, I would like some expansion and more detail on those points, and I am sure that the Minister, true to form, will provide that in his response. I welcome the Bill as a good piece of work to take forward and to try to address those problems in our society. It will make our environment a healthier, cleaner and more welcoming place. Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

Dr Farry: I declare an interest as a member of North Down Borough Council. This may well be an occasion on which it is an advantage for someone to have a mandate in a council and the Assembly, because he or she will have viewed the issue at both ends and will understand the points of view of regional government and local government.

Mr Beggs: Does the Member accept that the dual mandate is not what is important in that regard, but individuals having gained experience as public representatives at local government level at some stage?

Dr Farry: I am grateful for that intervention, but I am cautious of incurring the wrath of the Deputy Speaker by moving too far off the topic. To respond briefly, benefit can be gained from separate experience or from an overlap; it can work both ways.

I join other Members in welcoming the legislation. Rather than going through the Bill clause by clause, given that we are talking about its general principles, I will make broader comments about how it sits and works. There is a reflection and understanding in the philosophy behind the Bill that the issues do not sit in neat silos for particular Departments at a central level or for local government in isolation. There is also a sense that when we are dealing with quality of life issues at a local level, we are not talking simply about policing matters and the responsibility of the police and the criminal justice system. We are talking about something broader, which involves tackling antisocial behaviour and anti-neighbourhood behaviour in which, regrettably, some people may wish to engage.

There is an understanding that councils are, perhaps, the most effective bodies and level at which those powers can be best exercised. Rather than taking a top-down approach, we are talking about a bottom-up approach and about people making the decisions and enforcing the law with a clear understanding of their local areas. That said, there has to be partnership and collaboration between councils and other bodies. Although I pay tribute to the sheer volume of legislation that is coming forward, from the Department of the Environment in particular, I stress again that this issue will sit well in a community planning framework, when it eventually comes forward as part of RPA or whatever we end up doing. However, I do not want to go off on that particular tangent.

I want to make a point about the resource implications. I take it from the Minister that it is expected that the income from penalties may cover the costs that will be incurred by councils. That may be the case, and if it is, we will welcome it. However, it is important to recognise the fact that that assumption is entirely speculative and that it may not work that way in practice. Broadly speaking, there is a danger in being sucked into a notion that we expect any new policy initiative to cut its cloth and raise revenue through enforcement or other methods. That would be welcome, but we need to be realistic in our expectations.

Earlier, Mr Ross made a point about fixed penalty notices that were being considered by the Department of Justice. My understanding is that the primary objective of those fixed penalties is to speed up disposals and free up bureaucracy. The income generation from that is welcome, but, in the criminal justice system as a whole, the notion that the cost of the system would ever be entirely covered through fines and recovery costs is a bit far-fetched, to put it mildly. It is important that we recognise the fact that, sometimes, there can be wider public policy objectives as a result of doing the right thing, which will have to be borne from general expenditure. We should take our decision based on that expectation. Ultimately, that is how it should be, and whatever can be raised from fines should be seen as a bonus to the system. The costs borne in delivering many of the desired outcomes can, at times, be considerable. The income may not be that much, and, as Mr McGlone suggested, it may vary from area to area.

I make that point because an underlying tension could arise between central government and local government over the issue. Local government will welcome the additional powers because there is a desire among council officers and councillors to respond better to their constituents' problems. However, there is a sense that they are going to be lumped with the additional costs of doing that. That points to a wider level of suspicion between central government and local government, which, perhaps, we should not have. If there are additional costs, it does not matter whether, ultimately, those costs are to be borne by taxpayers through the tax system or by ratepayers through rates. One way or another, an increased level of household income will go to government. The expectation is that, in return, people will get a better level of service.

That kind of tension is not particular to Northern Ireland. It exists across these islands, and it is almost as if there is buck-passing or finger-pointing between central and local government about who is more efficient in delivering services. In the current climate of budgetary cuts, the danger of that tension emerging is quite strong. We see that already in the wider debate, with expectations from the coalition Government that local government will control costs, and there is talk of capping rates and freezing council tax in the UK. Indeed, locally, the Minister of the Environment has spoken about the potential for councils capping rates. Some councils point out that they manage their resources efficiently; some are more efficient than central Government would be, and I would like to think that my council, North Down Borough Council, would be one of those. There is a danger that more responsibilities will be passed on to councils. If the councils end up with the increased costs and, consequently, the rates go up, all of a sudden central government will point the finger at the councils for inappropriate management of resources rather than the cost of central government increasing.

12.15 pm

I make a plea to the Minister to focus on this as a collaborative exercise between central and local government, and avoid the temptation for it to end up as a further area where confrontation between the two sectors can emerge. Ultimately, we are all acting as public servants in the public interest.

I will comment briefly on the issue of alley-gating and the alley-gaters. Obviously, what we are doing is tackling the symptoms of problems, but we need to be conscious that that is all we are doing when antisocial behaviour occurs. Sometimes there is no choice for government but to intervene with measures that simply try to manage situations that have emerged. I would make a similar point in relation to ASBOs, for example. They are only one option as part of a wider menu of options for dealing with problems. Ultimately there has to be a focus on dealing with the causes of problems emerging in particular areas that lead to suggestions of alley gates being erected as a way of containing the problem. We need to look beyond what can happen through the Department of the Environment to other aspects of government in relation to how we can better deal with the causes of antisocial behaviour in the first place.

I also want to make a point about something that is not in the legislation — my colleague Mr McCarthy is particularly keen that we stress this point. When we are talking about clean neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland, we cannot avoid the issue of the use or misuse of flags and we cannot avoid talking about bonfires. I fully appreciate that those types of issues have traditionally been viewed as good relations issues or cultural issues. Perhaps we will see them discussed in more detail through the forthcoming cohesion, sharing and integration (CSI) strategy.

It is also worth stressing that there are also environmental issues; we cannot run away from that fact. In relation to bonfires, why do we consider the dumping of wood — and potentially other, more dangerous and sometimes lethal substances — at a particular time of the year as a cultural phenomenon, but, at another time of the year, as littering? That is something to be considered through the legislation. Similarly, we are happy for the Bill to deal with fly-posting and the antisocial aspects of the misuse of posters, but people also take a view about how flags impact on their neighbourhoods and how that affects their quality of life.

I fully appreciate that I am delving into extremely complex issues, particularly in a divided society such as Northern Ireland. We will have to have some agreed way forward on how we manage the different cultural demands that we have as a society. I fully respect people's right to celebrate their culture. I think that we also need to have

some agreed understanding of what is meant by shared space in this society. Again, I make the point that shared space need not mean neutral, sanitised space. There can be circumstances in which people wish to put up flags or bunting to celebrate their culture; the issue is how we manage, respect and acknowledge the fact that space is shared and is for all the community.

There will be different dynamics in different communities. There may well be quite strong, overt support for flags and bonfires in some areas, but there are other areas where residents have objections to what is happening. We need to acknowledge and manage those particular tensions. Indeed, there can be circumstances where people do not feel secure in expressing their real opinion about what is happening in their areas.

Mr Givan: Does the Member not realise that, although he claims to want to deal with it, raising that issue at this time of year, when it does not even relate to the Bill, actually heightens tensions? Members on this side of the House proactively engage with local communities to try to manage the issue in a positive manner, but his efforts today to politicise the issue only makes the matter worse.

Dr Farry: I hesitate to say that I am grateful to the Member for making that intervention, because I am certainly not making an attempt to politicise the matter today. If anything, I am trying to make my comments in very measured tones.

I work with groups in my area on those difficult issues, and I have been doing so in quite some depth over the past number of months. The timing of the Bill is the timing of the Bill, and certain points have to be made about it. We are not discussing only the principles of Bill but its wider context and the areas that could be considered to be part of the Bill.

I wish to reiterate, particularly for Mr Givan's benefit, that I am acknowledging that those issues cannot be looked at solely from an environmental point of view and through a Bill such as this one and that wider good relations and cultural dimensions must be taken into consideration, even though we have traditionally viewed those issues through other prisms. When discussing the Bill, it is important that we do not run away from acknowledging that there are environmental considerations and that the Department of the Environment, the Department for Regional Development, through

Roads Service, and the Department for Social Development, through the Housing Executive, are fully aware of them.

Clearly, there are sensitivities around the issue. However, we, as a society, do ourselves no favours by simply running away from discussing difficult issues. Yet, we stand to gain from being capable of discussing them in a mature manner. That is what I am attempting to do today. It is worth MLAs' recognising that constituents will wish to raise their concerns about the issue with them over the coming summer months. I certainly hope that this summer is a peaceful and constructive one. We, as an Assembly, must grapple with the wider policy issues. I had better leave my comments there. I look forward to seeing how the Bill proceeds through its various stages.

Mr Givan: I welcome the Bill, which is wide-ranging. It would be wrong to lose sight of the extent to which it will help to provide clean neighbourhoods. Some people may think that the Bill is about only litter, but it actually covers a wide range of issues and will go a long way towards ensuring that councils have the tools and powers that they need to improve the quality of the environment.

A lot of us get annoyed when we see people dropping rubbish in a park, local village, street or on the beach. When I take my daughter, who will be three in August, out for a walk, and she sees a piece of rubbish, she points to it and says, "Daddy, daddy. Rubbish." She usually follows that up by saying, "Naughty boy", because she seems to think that only naughty boys drop rubbish. If she, at her age, can recognise that rubbish should not be dropped on the ground — she usually wants to pick up the rubbish and put it in the bin — why can young people and adults not recognise that they should not drop litter and that it costs the taxpayer a huge amount of money and councils a huge amount of effort to clean up?

I challenged some young people about why they drop rubbish, and they made the idiotic comment that it keeps somebody in a job, which is absolute nonsense. Such individuals would continue to be in a job but councils could use them in a much better fashion. Therefore, the issue of litter is an important one.

I welcome the provision on fixed penalties. People who cannot be taught that dropping rubbish is wrong should be punished and should

be given an appropriate fine to discourage them from doing so again. The Bill will increase the powers that councils have, but it is up to them to then use those powers effectively. Stephen Farry talked about there being tension because central government is passing the buck. I am sorry that the Member thinks that central government is in the best position to try to deliver that function, because it is not, the councils are. Therefore, there is no buck-passing exercise.

The Member talks about not wanting to create tension. However, by his comments, rather than recognising the good work that the Minister has been doing, he is creating suspicion.

Dr Farry: I am not sure whether the Member is a member of local government, but I think that he is. Therefore, he should be aware, from his discussions with councillors, that the powers are welcome. However, at the same time, there is nervousness in local government about the cost implications and the potential for powers to be introduced without resources being made available. The point that I was making was that, ultimately, the function should be delivered through local government. Whether it is all paid for through rates or through taxation does not matter that much, because the money would still be coming out of the same households. Issues arise over the management of the tension that may emerge, so it is important that, if local government costs go up as a result, central government does not point the finger and accuse local government of increasing rates and being inefficient, particularly at a time when cuts are putting cost pressures on government across the board.

Mr Givan: The end result must be a cleaner environment, and councils are best placed to deliver that. It is for councils to manage how they carry out their functions, and the Bill indicates that those will be cost-neutral. I do not know how North Down Borough Council manages its finances, but Lisburn City Council, of which I am a member, manages its finances very well, which is why its rates are the second lowest of any council in Northern Ireland. Therefore, I am quite sure that our council will be able to take on this function and deliver an efficient and effective service to the ratepayers of Lisburn.

I particularly welcome the proposal to introduce gating orders. In my constituency, there are

alleyways in which a huge amount of antisocial behaviour, which causes concern for businesses and nearby homeowners, takes place. Clause 1 will enable councils to deal with antisocial behaviour effectively. It will help not only the local community but the police, who, when contacted by the local community about antisocial behaviour, come out but are unable to catch people because the alleyways are used as escape routes. Therefore, gating orders will also help the police to catch the people involved.

I also welcome the controls that are being suggested to limit the distribution of free literature. I particularly welcome the exemptions for charities and religious organisations. Some Church organisations raised the issue, and I am pleased that there will be exemptions for those organisations to distribute their literature.

The Bill is wide-ranging in its measures and is one that the Minister, when he came into post, was determined to put through the House. His officials have done an excellent job in producing the Bill, and, once the powers are in place and begin to be implemented by local councils, people will see tangible benefits. I support the Bill.

Lord Morrow: I declare an interest as a member of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council. Perhaps I should also say that it was the only council that did not increase its rates last year. If Members want to know how that is done, they can come up to Dungannon, and we will show them. However, that is not really relevant to today's debate.

It is not often that the House sits on a Wednesday. However, if it is sitting for no other reason than to take the Bill to its next stage, it will have been worthwhile and time well spent. However, we are debating a matter of such magnitude that I express some disappointment at Members' attendance. Many of us serve on local councils and, therefore, have first-hand knowledge of the litter problem. Litter is something that grieves us all. A considerable portion of the rates bill is spent on gathering and cleaning up litter that has been deposited by those who sometimes do not give much thought to dropping it.

12.30 pm

I warmly congratulate the Minister, his Department and officials for getting the Bill into the House and bringing it to this stage. If it does pass — having listened to Members' comments, I suspect

that it will pass unanimously — Northern Ireland will be a different place as a result.

However, there are one or two matters on which I would like the Minister to comment in his winding-up speech. There are issues in the Bill that need a little bit more clarification, and I would like to hear his views on those. I have concern about the implementation and enforcement of the legislation. It is all very well to have a Bill and to tell people what they should and should not do; it is quite another thing to get them to do it, as is what the aftermath will be if they do not do it. There is, therefore, the issue of enforcement.

At present, we have powers to issue what are called ASBOs — anti-social behaviour orders. In the past year, 39 ASBOs were applied for and granted. As everyone in the House will be aware, the agencies that can apply for an ASBO are, of course, the PSNI, the Housing Executive, and local councils. In the police division in which I reside, which takes in Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh and Omagh, not a single ASBO was issued. I cannot believe for a moment that no antisocial behaviour goes on in those areas. As one who lives in Dungannon, I have to say, unfortunately, that there is.

That, of course, takes us to the field of litter louts. People going into any town or street in Northern Ireland will find litter in one form or another, whether cigarette butts, or chewing gum, which has been much referred to in the debate. There is no more obnoxious piece of litter being deposited on our streets than chewing gum. It is the scourge of all council areas. It is not an easy one to tackle and is not one that can be dealt with at low cost. Therefore, I wonder whether the proposed legislation will be effective, sturdy and robust enough to deal with an issue such as that.

A number of Members mentioned dog fouling. That issue has to be tackled in a big way, because it is becoming a real problem, certainly in the Dungannon area. I hope that the Bill will enable it to be dealt with effectively. Although dog fouling is an offence, I do not read in my papers or get reports from my council that another one, two, three, four or five people have been dealt with in relation to dog fouling.

I warmly congratulate the Minister for taking the Bill to this Stage. As I said, if implemented and enforced, the legislation will change the face of this country. However, I have concerns about the

enforcement. I ask the Minister whether there are any incentives in the Bill, because a carrot can sometimes be as constructive as a stick?

I declared that I am a member of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council. In the past, we have entered competitions such as Ulster in Bloom and Britain in Bloom. We have done exceptionally well, and if Members want to come up they will see why. To see all those things that are happening there is another reason why tourists should be coming to Dungannon. However, that is for another day and, perhaps, another place.

If the Bill is light on anything, it is light on incentives. Councils may wish to go into new aspects of tackling litter, antisocial behaviour and all the things that relate to that. What incentives will the Minister's Department give them to ensure that that happens? When my council enters competitions, the town is spick and span. There are those who visit the town to see it, and I am sure that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, have come to Dungannon just to see it on many an occasion. In the run-up to the competition, there is not so much as a leaf on the ground. Once the competition is over, there is a tendency to slip back a little and allow a leaf to fall before it is picked up.

We want a Bill that encourages activity all year round from the local community. Can community groups avail themselves of any provision in the Bill that provides an incentive for them to express an interest in their town, village, street, neighbourhood or housing development? When we get it right down to that level, we will make a big impression. Not only should councils be involved, but every one of us has a part to play. There is a big onus on us to do that.

There is potential for lines to get a bit blurred around the role of the Environment Agency in all of this. I have been critical of the NIEA in private and in public; it does not react quickly enough sometimes, and, when I speak to them, it tells me that it does not have the resources. There is a gap between the responsibilities of the council and those of the NIEA in dealing with a form of litter, be it lorry-loads of rubble or whatever it is.

In my town, we had a situation recently whereby a local farmer became a victim of some lout who deposited material on his land, yet the farmer was held responsible and he had to go through a very costly exercise of cleaning the whole thing up. Not only that, he was taken to

court through no fault of his own. We all have to be responsible for our properties and for what is on them or not on them. However, sometimes there is an unfairness that has to be looked at too. I know the individual involved; he is a highly responsible citizen of Dungannon, and I think he was dealt a very hard blow.

The area that this Bill can make most impression on is by encouraging something that, in Northern Ireland, has in the main been lost: civic pride. If we can get back to the day when everyone, all the citizens of Northern Ireland, take a keener interest in the towns, villages, streets and housing developments in which they live, that will be a big achievement. This Bill can go some way in doing that. I look to the Minister to see whether, in the future, he can inject some incentives for community groups and councils.

We recognise that society is strapped for cash at present; there is an economic downturn and there may be worse news ahead. In such times, these things get secondary treatment, and I do not think that that should be the case. It is imperative that this sort of stuff that the Minister is trying to get through here today should be given top priority, and it is a pity that there are not more MLAs in the House to take part in the debate. We all have a part to play here. This is not an issue where the Minister comes through with a Bill and tells the councils to get on with the job. That is a part of it; but there is much, much more to it. There is an education programme here, and that has to be taken seriously.

My colleague referred to a stroll in the park with his young daughter. We could all draw the parallel. It is dreadful to follow a car and see litter being deposited from each window. I had that unfortunate experience quite recently, when a Mars bar wrapper was thrown from one window of a car in front of me, and a Bounty bar wrapper came out of the other side. Those folk must have been having a picnic in the car. I do not know what was going on.

Dungannon park is another very scenic area and another reason why MLAs should visit Dungannon. I once saw a person deposit an empty can there, and I told him that I thought that he had dropped something. He replied that he did not think that he had. It is that sort of unthinking behaviour that brings big bills to our local council areas, as well as bringing shame. There will be costs around the implementation

and enforcement of the Bill. How does the Minister see those costs being met? Will councils have to take on extra resources or will it be done with existing resources?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Your attempted promotion of Dungannon was commendable.

Mr Beggs: I declare an interest as a member of Carrickfergus Borough Council. The Bill will increase the enforcement powers of councils over a wide range of areas.

The Bill is long overdue. This Assembly has been sitting for over three years and, in welcoming the Bill, I have to say that it is regrettable that it did not come at an earlier stage. England and Wales have had the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act since 2005, and I am aware from my constituency work of how this Bill could enhance the lives of many of our citizens.

The additional powers that will be introduced by the Bill must be welcomed by all. They will significantly update Northern Ireland's legislative position. The Bill will give district councils additional powers to address litter, nuisance alleys, graffiti, illegal fly-posting and abandoned and nuisance vehicles. It will also improve legislation governing dogs, noise and statutory nuisance issues. Such issues are not effectively covered by the existing provisions in Northern Ireland, but they are being addressed by local authorities in England and Wales through different legislation.

The powers in the Bill are to be welcomed as a means of addressing local environmental issues. The lives of many of our citizens will be enhanced when councils and other statutory agencies use enforcement powers against the misdemeanours that are taking place, such as fly-tipping. I am thinking of the dams and reservoir around Carrickfergus, the Woodburn and the Lough Mourne dams, where fly-tipping has occurred on a number of occasions. Anything that increases the powers of our agencies and councils to ensure that the environment is kept in pristine condition must be supported.

The Bill will also make it very clear who will be responsible. There has been wrangling over whether NI Water, the Forest Service or the councils are responsible. There will be an obligation to sort that out at a much earlier stage and improve the environment, because, of

course, rubbish collects rubbish, and the sooner that it is tidied up, the better.

A key aspect of the Bill is that it allows for fixed penalty notices for a range of offences and the retention of those fixed penalty receipts by councils, which may make some contribution to the cost associated with the additional work that will come with the legislation. A wide range of additional areas will come under the remit of local authorities, which they will be able to pursue in order to improve the lives of citizens. However, at the same time, it will allow council officers to act in a manner that will be much more speedy and that will require considerably less resources than other forms of legislation; for instance, taking ASBOs to court level. Some of the new provisions for dealing with noise in the street, car and house alarms will result in councils having to carry out additional work, but they will also enhance local neighbourhoods and our citizens' lives.

12.45 pm

The Minister indicated previously that planning powers would have been devolved to the 11 super-councils. He subsequently indicated a wish for planning powers to be devolved to the current 26 councils. In addition, it was indicated that Housing Executive powers would be progressively passed to local councils. It would be helpful of the Minister to clarify that whole area to provide an understanding of the context in which the new laws will operate in terms of any complementary budgets that may or may not be coming to local councils.

I turn to the proposed gating orders. In my constituency work, I have come across situations in which these would be a useful tool to improve the lives of local residents. Concern was raised relatively recently about some of the access points to Greenisland railway station — I am thinking of antisocial behaviour and underage drinking. Outside railway operating hours, when there are no trains, gating will be a useful option to consider as a way to improve the lives of pensioners who are being plagued at present — that is, if other measures prove unsuccessful.

I am also aware of locations where considerable antisocial behaviour has occurred in the past, including dumping in the middle of housing areas. In one area, families had to be rehoused after it reached the stage of a couple of arson attacks. As some Members have said, there

are areas in which drug dealing goes on. A key aspect in my mind was that there were multiple escape routes in that area. Anybody wanting to get up to antisocial behaviour had numerous means of getting away from the law or others who might have been trying to apprehend them for their criminal actions. I view the gating orders as useful.

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment:

Does the Member recognise that the other element to gating orders is that parts of some developments are used as walkways? Does he accept that, if we are to introduce alley-gating, proper consultation with all the people in an area is needed?

Mr Beggs: Consultation will be a key aspect of alley-gating that restricts movement. I suspect that councils will not proceed with gating without clear support from local people. I am thinking of areas that service the back entries to houses and to back gardens, which would be used by a small number of residents living in that area.

The entry that I am thinking of was attracting people from outside the area; it was not a route to or from anywhere, it was merely a service area for those houses. I understand the point made by the Member: if there was a right-of-way issue, there might be difficulties in closing it down. However, if it could be seen to be of service only to local residents, I would fully support their wish to take back ownership of that area. They would have keys to enter as freely as they wish, but the movements of those from outside the area would be restricted. As I said, in some areas I have seen dumping occurring, fires being started and drug dealing going on. Anything that would return such an area to local ownership must be supported unambiguously — I would support local residents in their wish to improve their area. I have also said that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had an alley-gating budget: will that be passed to councils?

I turn now to part 2 of the Bill, which refers to vehicles and nuisance parking offences. I intend to concentrate on this area, because my constituency work has given me some experience here. Some Members may think that the number of clauses dealing with that area make the Bill over-elaborate and burdensome, but I welcome those details. My sense is that those details come from experience, and if the Assembly is to enhance any of the powers in the

Bill, we have to take account of what people say. In my experience, those who have been involved in nuisance parking, and so forth, look for every available loophole to abuse the system, which results in antisocial behaviour that greatly disturbs ordinary neighbours.

I warmly welcome the Bill, which environmental health officers suggest will enhance their ability to improve local environments. At present, they work closely with the Housing Executive and the police to deal with antisocial behaviour. I can think of an individual from my constituency who caused misery to his neighbours in the Taylors Avenue area of Carrickfergus by collecting and dismantling abandoned vehicles. In court, the police linked that individual with 90 vehicles that had been abandoned on a small number of streets over several years, causing huge disruption, leaving the area looking unsightly and making it difficult for residents to park. Indeed, one disabled resident was unable to park close to his home.

In that case, although an ASBO was issued, existing legislation clearly did not work. The matter rolled on for six or seven years, involving numerous agencies and, in the past two to three years, a number of statutory agencies met monthly to discuss it and other issues. Dealing with such cases using ASBO legislation involves considerable cost. As a public representative, I gave evidence in court because people were fearful and suspected that houses had been damaged in relation to the case. Abandoned vehicles can also be used as runarounds for petty, or even more serious, crime, so removing them from our streets can play an important part in preventing further crime.

My ASBO experience required numerous court sittings; I have to admit to a level of frustration with the court system. An interim ASBO was issued, followed by the actual ASBO case. There was then an appeal, but the individual involved dismissed his legal representation, so we had to come back for a second appeal. As we scrutinise the Bill, we should bear in mind that, using the present system, the cost of dealing with abandoned vehicles is horrendous. In the court case that I attended, the following were also present: eight police officers and two environmental health officers; and the prosecution counsel and a defence barrister and solicitor, who were paid for by legal aid. There were also the usual court costs. When all the costs are added up, I reckon that the whole

case cost a minimum of £10,000 or perhaps even £20,000.

The new legislation must be welcomed, because issuing a fixed penalty notice at an early stage will allow situations to be dealt with more speedily and efficiently. Instead of having to spend years gathering information, during which time residents may be tortured, the Bill will provide a speedier and more efficient method with which to address the issue, so I welcome it. I hope that no other residents have to undergo the experience that those on Taylors Avenue had to face. I might add that the situation has improved considerably since the ASBO was issued.

As I said, some Members may consider the powers to dispose of vehicles to be too detailed and over the top. For instance, people will be prevented from selling vehicles on a public road. When too many vehicles for sale or repair are parked on a public road, they cause road safety issues and prevent other people from parking their vehicles. If a business regularly works on cars on the public road, it causes problems for neighbours. It also gives rise to road safety issues: how can appropriate health and safety checks be carried out, and how can the public be protected from all the tools, and so on, that are left lying around? However, it is important to strike a balance so that the legislation does not apply to people who work on their own cars outside their homes.

I told Members about my experience of dealing with the power to require names and addresses. The activity in question happened at night, which made the situation more difficult, and the vehicles concerned were registered in multiple names. Some people were not even aware that vehicles had been registered in their names. Anything that increases the statutory powers to gather information must be welcomed.

The Bill contains more detail about the notice of and procedures for the removal of such vehicles. My experience was that, on a number of occasions, when it became known that the statutory authorities were about to lift a car, it was deliberately set on fire in the middle of a residential area. Therefore, there are good reasons for increasing the councils' powers to enable them to lift vehicles speedily and, if necessary, dispose of them.

Storage costs are involved when cars are taken to a compound. We do not want to incur

unnecessary costs, particularly for vehicles that are at the end of their life. It is appropriate that their speedy disposal should be possible after attempts have been made to contact the rightful owner. In the past, some individuals attempted to use the complex existing legislation to claim compensation for their vehicles. They did so by making themselves difficult to contact and then trying to claim compensation after their vehicle had been lifted. As there is a clear need for improvement in that area, I see good reason for the detail in the Bill.

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

I welcome the increased powers for litter control, the additional protection for the waterways from littering and the use of fixed penalty notices in early and efficient enforcement. Our waterways were almost omitted from the Bill, because it was unclear who controlled or owned them, and, therefore, it was not clear how action could be taken.

Litter-clearing notices will facilitate the enhancement of neighbourhoods. As I said, rubbish collects rubbish, and, therefore, litter problems must be addressed as early as possible. I accept that difficulties arise when someone illegally drops material on private property. In practice, who will tidy up that material, other than the owner? If the quantities of litter are excessive, statutory intervention is required. At present, however, it is largely down to the owner to clear the material. The legislation makes that clearer at a much earlier stage.

We have all had advertising flyers placed on our windscreens. Frequently, they blow away and litter an area. The legislation needs to be improved. I welcome the provision that requires businesses to take greater care to prevent their shopping trolleys from going astray. Members would be surprised by the costs that businesses incur from trolleys going astray. They will, therefore, benefit from having to manage their trolleys more carefully. Over the years, numerous trolleys have turned up in the Inver river in Larne. They endanger wildlife, and the local angling club has undertaken a number of clean-up operations to clear trolleys and other debris from the river.

1.00 pm

The Bill also covers graffiti and other defacements. It is important to improve the regulations so that our town centres are not

defaced by fly-posting and graffiti and that there are more speedy routes to tidy that up. Fly-posting is an interesting area. We do not want to be hitting the owners of the walls that have been posted on; many of them have not have indicated their willingness for the fly-posting, and I suspect that most of the pasting takes place in the dark. Who benefits from the posting? That is an area that we may well have to look at. Frequently, the leaflets do not say who printed or published them. However, if they are advertising a particular event, it is clear who will benefit from that event. If those who do the illegal fly-posting cannot be traced, then some degree of accountability should be brought home on those who promote or benefit from the event, as they will have paid for the posters to be printed and erected. Therefore, we must introduce accountability and look at the enforcement powers that are there so that responsibility does not fall on the homeowner or the owner of the business where the items have been pasted.

I agree that we need new regulations restricting the sale of aerosols to children. Why do children need aerosol cans? If there is a particular art exercise for school work, I am sure that their parents will be more than willing to purchase the cans and let their children use them appropriately in their own home. We do not want our town centres disfigured and full of graffiti. We need to improve our environment and make it more attractive to visitors and tourists. This is an increasingly important area.

There are also powers to make dog control orders, and we will need to look into the detail of that. Most people in local government agree that there are problems with dog fouling and how dogs are regulated. We must ensure that there is improvement there, and we must also ensure that responsible owners are not unduly burdened. We need to check that the balance is there.

Intruder alarms are set off frequently and can run for hours and hours. Therefore, I welcome the increased scrutiny in that area and the fact that local government will have a role in ensuring that businesses control their intruder alarms. Many people live in residential accommodation in town centres, and we must remember that people are going back to living over the shop. Therefore, it is important that we not allow their home life to be disrupted by faulty alarms.

If enacted appropriately, the regulations will generally improve the quality of life for our citizens. I welcome the extensive use of the fixed penalty notice throughout a whole range of areas. It will allow for a speedy and efficient method of bringing about improvement and address things earlier at a lower level, which will enable that speedy improvement to come about. The Bill can help to empower local people. With the support of local councils and other agencies, it will be possible to enhance the lives of many. Generally, I support the Bill and look forward to discussing it in more detail in Committee.

Mr B Wilson: I declare an interest as a member of North Down Borough Council.

Like other Members, I welcome the Bill as it addresses many of the problems that face councillors on a day-to-day basis. It will increase the powers of councillors and bring them into line with district councils in Great Britain. The additional powers introduced in the Bill are overdue and significantly update the existing legislative position. It will give district councils powers to address problems that are not covered by current legislation but that can be addressed by local councils in GB. In recent years, I grew increasingly frustrated because the council did not have adequate powers to resolve many of the problems that my constituents raised. The new powers provide a means of resolving existing problems, and I have no doubt that they will assist in improving the quality of life and health of many residents.

To many, issues such as abandoned vehicles, litter, graffiti, fly-posting, dog controls and noise may not seem particularly important. However, they can cause considerable distress and have a significant impact on many residents' quality of life. For example, an abandoned vehicle often causes concern for neighbours. At present, a council officer must put a notice on the vehicle but cannot move it for a week. During that time, it attracts vandals who wreck it or set it on fire, and that causes considerable distress to local residents. The new proposals give the council the power to issue fixed penalty notices for the offence of abandoning a vehicle and the power to move the vehicle. Therefore, it does not have to sit there annoying the residents. The Bill is welcome because it streamlines the process for dealing with abandoned vehicles. However, north Down has a major problem with abandoned caravans that is not addressed under current

legislation, and I am not sure whether the Bill addresses that. It should be extended to deal with caravans.

As many Members said, litter is a major problem that raises much public anger. In fact, it costs ratepayers in north Down almost £1 million a year. As a society, we are a filthy lot, particularly compared with our continental neighbours. The present legislation is not effective in dealing with that problem, and the council needs greater powers. I hope that the powers in the Bill will resolve that matter. Therefore, I welcome the Bill's proposal to make it an offence for a person to give a false name and address when they are questioned by an authorised officer about a litter offence. In addition, in light of the courts' failure to deal adequately with litter louts, it is more appropriate for such an offence to be punishable by a fixed penalty notice. I welcome the introduction of the fixed penalty notice in the legislation.

I welcome the litter clearing notices, which can be served on an occupier or owner of land. Those are long overdue, because many serious neighbourhood disputes have arisen because householders allow rubbish to accumulate in their gardens and the council cannot do anything to resolve that problem. I hope that those notices, which require land to be cleared of litter within a specified time frame, will reduce that problem. However, I believe that the 28-day compliance period may be too long. That should be reconsidered.

The Bill contains provisions on fly-posting. However, I am concerned that the Bill provides powers to councils to target only the people who post the information as opposed to the beneficiaries. The power to target the beneficiaries lies with the Planning Service. Although it is more effective to target those groups, the Planning Service in Northern Ireland does not see that as a high priority. If fly-posting is to be properly addressed, councils must have full powers of prosecution.

Although the Green Party welcomes the new proposals to create dog control orders and the measures to resolve noise problems, we are concerned that they will create an additional workload for councils and, perhaps, be a strain on their resources. I cannot accept the Department's view that the financial effects of the Bill on local councils will be cost-neutral. Although the proposals are welcome, it is

unlikely that they will lead to full cost recovery by councils through the income generated by fixed penalty notices. The time spent by officers and on administration that is required to investigate and enforce many of those issues adequately will still be significant and, therefore, will still carry a cost to the council. The Department should reconsider the proposed levels of fine and consider whether they adequately reflect the polluter pays principle.

The Bill allows for fixed penalty notices for a range of offences and the retention of fixed penalty fines by councils, but that will not meet the costs associated with the additional work. Furthermore, the successful resolution of many such problems is often best achieved without recourse to formal action. We will not need to go to the courts. If we have the power of the courts behind us, situations can be resolved in an informal manner. Such an approach will not attract fees and, hence, income. Moneys obtained from the provisions are likely to be relatively small compared with the level of work associated with such complaints. Notwithstanding those comments, the use of fixed penalties, with the amount set by councils, and the retention of fees for use in qualifying functions is welcome.

In view of those matters, I ask the Department to consider what additional resources could be made available to councils to successfully undertake the new and enhanced powers and, therefore, improve environmental conditions in our area.

We welcome the introduction of the Bill and the increased powers that it gives to the tackling of environmental crime. The new powers will provide a new foundation to change antisocial behaviour, which impacts directly on the quality of individuals' lives, health and standards of living. The legislation introduces excellent opportunities to begin tackling a broader range of local environment quality issues, and I hope that we can develop those at Committee Stage. I support the Bill.

The Minister of the Environment: I welcome the general support for the Bill that Members have expressed. Mr Boylan, on behalf of the Committee, indicated the Committee's broad support for the issues that were raised and asked questions about helping local communities. Much of what we are doing through the Bill is enabling local authorities to

make local areas and neighbourhoods better and cleaner places. The Bill will largely be implemented through local authorities.

A number of Members, including Lord Morrow and Mr McGlone, raised the issue of the cost of implementing the Bill's provisions. Our advice is that it should be close to cost-neutral. There may well be an expense — that remains to be seen — but it will not be hugely expensive. Most people who own their own homes know that it may cost a bit of money and hard work to make their place look better. There may be a small cost and additional work for local government, but the benefit, reward and incentive will come in their sense of place and the civic pride that Lord Morrow referred to. They will have a considerably better community for the small cost associated with the implementation of the Bill. Indeed, it will lead to considerably less cost because there will be less waste to be collected.

I would like local authorities to work with others. It is up to each local authority to decide how to do it, but I look at the effectiveness of the officers who implement car parking restrictions in our towns and cities. Is there any reason why those officers are not brought in to assist in observing people who drop litter and ensuring that they are brought to book? There are six or eight such officers in full-time operation in the city in which I live. Why bring in additional officers if those who are already there can be employed for a small sum?

People ask how it will work, but it will work by doing it. I know of local councils that employed litter officers in the past. Lisburn City Council employed a litter officer, perhaps 20 years ago, and I think that, after about 12 weeks, one person was done for dropping litter.

The news needs to be that somebody — perhaps more than one person — was done on Monday, somebody was done on Tuesday and somebody was done on Wednesday. I guarantee that, once the local community gets the message that people are regularly receiving on-the-spot fines for spitting out chewing gum, dropping litter and despoiling our streets, we will see an improvement in behaviour within weeks or months. People do not want to get caught and have to pay a fine. They do not want anyone to look at them and say, "There's yer man from our estate. He was one of the ones who got caught."

1.15 pm

I guarantee that that approach would make a difference, and quickly. Effective early implementation of the measures would drive home the message that such behaviour is no longer tolerable. The public should not have to put their hands in their pockets to pull out not litter but pound notes to pay for others who drop litter out of their pockets rather than put it in a bin or take it home with them. We need to be very strong on the issue.

Mr Boylan mentioned cars on footpaths, and that is a matter for the Department for Regional Development (DRD) alone. He also mentioned alley-gating, which is a problem. DRD addressed the issue in Belfast, and the scheme that was put in place there has been of considerable help.

A number of Members, including Mr Beggs, who talked at length, talked about problems associated with certain areas. Graffiti, drugs being sold and young people with plastic bags for glue-sniffing are all common sights in those areas. The ability to clamp down on those activities is very limited at present. The system for putting alley gates in place is so convoluted and cumbersome that it is not effective. The Bill will allow us to deal effectively with issues through the local authorities and in a way in which the community wants us to. A community may want an alley to stay open until 7.00 pm or 8.00 pm in the winter or until 10.00 pm in the summer. I do not know, for that is a decision for the community to make in conjunction with its local authority. However, the community should get what the community wants. If the community does not want an alley gate, it should not have one. If the community wants one, let it work out with the local authority at what times the individual who is given the keys to the gate should lock it each and every day. People will get used to alley gates, and they will welcome them. They will assist policing, particularly in clamping down on low-level crime.

Mr Ross told us about what students get up to, and then Mr Kinahan elaborated on that when he confessed that he had engaged in shopping-trolley racing. We see people walk out of supermarkets with trolleys full of drink. It costs them £1 to wheel a trolley full of drink back to their destination, but those trolleys are inevitably not returned. Those people do not care about getting their pound back, and the trolley ends up being dumped. As I cycled to work last week by the River Lagan — I recommend that all

Members try that, as it will help to keep them all looking fit and well, particularly over the summer — I saw shopping trolleys in the water. That is completely wrong, and such a sight spoils an area of natural beauty.

Supermarkets need to get the message that they must think about what they are doing to secure the investment that they have made. Supermarkets have spent a considerable amount on buying the trolleys, so could they not chip them to prevent them from being taken beyond a certain area? What is happening at the moment is theft. If I were to walk out of a supermarket with £100 of goods that I have not paid for, I suspect that the security guard would stop me fairly quickly. However, I can walk out of a supermarket with a shopping trolley, which I expect is worth £100 or more, and take it away with me. Many people are doing that with impunity. Why can shopping trolleys not be chipped so that an alarm goes off when people try to take them away? Security guards could then deal with the problem there and then. That would tackle two problems at once. That area needs to be addressed. Hopefully, this legislation will create an impetus for the supermarkets to act. Not only will they lose the shopping trolleys, they will be charged for their removal from the waterways or wherever they are dumped. Perhaps the message will then get through to them.

Mr Kinahan also mentioned rural noise. I would express caution to the Committee on that point. Some very fine people move into rural areas, and they are not there for very long before they start to complain about the smell of slurry and about farmers who are ploughing until midnight, making silage, mowing grass, cutting barley and so forth. They fail to understand that, on occasion, country people have limited time frames in which to carry out their work. Although some people might want to lie in bed at 6.00 am, others want to get on with their work. I do not want to introduce some sort of legislation to benefit people who have moved from towns to rural areas and who just do not understand that, although there are many positive aspects to living in a rural area, there are also some negatives. I caution the Committee against going down the route that Mr Kinahan suggested.

Lord Morrow: I am interested in the Minister's point about farmers who want to get on with their work at 6.00 am, and I understand that. However, will he take it from me that some

urban dwellers start work at 6.00 am, and some start even before then?

The Minister of the Environment: Absolutely. Nothing should be taken out of what I said that implies otherwise. Many urban dwellers are very hard-working people. It is just that some urban dwellers who move to rural areas have a little difficulty in coming to terms with how things are done.

Mr Kinahan also mentioned cost recovery, as did Dr Farry. Dr Farry said that recovered costs are just a bonus. I do not see it that way at all. It is something that my colleague Mr Ford, the Minister of Justice, will need to address. The amounts that can be recovered were set down in an Order in 1981. A council can recover only £75 for something that might cost it £500, £1,000 or more. That figure might not have been unreasonable in 1981, but now, 30 years later, it might be appropriate to revisit it. I do not see why we, the ratepayers, should pay huge amounts to ensure that things are done right. I encourage my colleague Mr Ford to address that in due course. I am aware that he has a very heavy workload. Members have only to listen to the radio to hear mention of the Department of Justice every morning in relation to other issues. I am, therefore, aware that he has considerable work to do, but I will support him if he addresses that matter.

Mr McGlone referred to the cost-neutral issue, which I have sought to deal with. I recognise that there is an issue about abandoned vehicles. At present, the Driver and Vehicle Agency database has some difficulties in identifying all abandoned vehicles. Considerable work has been done on that, and Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) declarations have helped to ensure that many more vehicles are easily identifiable. I should add that many scrap vehicles have value. People make businesses out of collecting and processing them for further use. Therefore, the proposed actions can be taken at a fairly low cost to local government. Councils can set up arrangements with legitimate companies that engage in processing scrap metal for further use, and I think that that can be done reasonably, without putting a huge burden of cost on the ratepayers. At the same time, the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) will continue to try to deal with the identification issue that was mentioned.

Mr McGlone also raised the issue of alarms. Car alarms can be dealt with under the new

statutory nuisance measures in Part 7 of the Bill, which makes provision for:

"noise that is prejudicial to health or a nuisance and is emitted from or caused by a vehicle, machinery or equipment in a street".

District councils must issue abatement notices when they are satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists, may occur or may recur. In the case of car alarms, a notice is served on the responsible person, or on the vehicle if that person cannot be found. If the abatement notice is not complied with, the district council is empowered to enter or open a vehicle — by force, if necessary — to silence a car alarm and to remove the vehicle from the street to a secure place if that is necessary to abate the nuisance. Therefore, powers to deal with that issue are relatively extensive.

Mr Farry raised the issue of buck-passing between councils and central government. The Bill is not about buck-passing. Responsibilities for clean neighbourhoods already exist within local government. As it stands, almost all of the issues that we are debating are local government responsibilities. What we are doing is creating the opportunity for local government to deal with them much more efficiently and effectively. It is enabling legislation for local government, not a method of passing councils further responsibilities that will cost them more money.

Mr Farry also mentioned flags and bonfires. Let me say this: flags and bonfires do have an environmental impact. However, Northern Ireland is somewhat peculiar. That peculiarity is demonstrated by the fact that there is no Opposition in this place at this time. Because of those peculiarities and difficulties, flags and bonfires will not be dealt with as part of the normal environmental process. They are a matter of community relations, which is headed up by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. In Northern Ireland, there are many challenges in dealing with problems that have existed in the Province for generations. They will not be dealt with through this particular Bill. Therefore, although I appreciate the Member's comments, they will not be dealt with under this particular legislation.

Mr Givan mentioned exemptions that relate to literature that can be given out. I can assure him that literature that is associated with church organisations will not be affected. Mr Morrow referred to implementation and

enforcement. It is important that councils who have requested this legislation and who desire it wholeheartedly take it, endorse it and carry out its implementation. Early and quick implementation will mean more cost-effective implementation. Any cost that could potentially be associated with implementation will actually be retrieved quickly.

Mr Morrow also referred to incentives. A council's incentive is to have a quality neighbourhood and environment in its area. He also indicated that Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council did not raise its rates in 2010. I commend it for that. Other councils seem to have imposed hefty rate rises, not all of which were necessary. Having just resigned from a council, I am glad to say that the council that I left is in good condition. It has the second-lowest rates in Northern Ireland and, I believe, the seventh-lowest debt per head of the population, and it has excellent services. It demonstrates that quality services can be provided without always having a high rate base. I encourage councils to look at how they can do their jobs better in that respect.

Mr Beggs commenced with a whinge about the Bill's timing. I could not have brought it forward any sooner. I am happy to bring the legislation forward; I think that it is the right legislation. Mr Beggs also mentioned fly-tipping. The Bill does not deal with illegal waste activities, such as fly-tipping. That will be dealt with under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill. Illegal waste activities involving illegal dumping of waste, or fly-tipping, can have a detrimental impact on the local amenity. One of the main objectives of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill is to ensure that Departments and councils have sufficient statutory powers to deal effectively with illegal waste activity. It is intended to give councils the same powers as the Department to prosecute offenders.

1.30 pm

We also recognise that legislative change alone will not provide a solution to illegal waste activity, so we are working with local government to develop a fly-tipping protocol, which will clearly set out the respective roles and responsibilities of the Department and councils in dealing with illegal fly-tipping activities. I sympathise often with councils and private landowners who find that people have dumped goods on their property and they are left with the responsibility. I know that people have dumped on other

people's property highly toxic materials that have been used for laundering diesel, and the property owner has been left with the clean-up costs. That is wrong, and it is something that we in government need to address.

In other instances, councils have had to collect dead animals from rivers, and that is wrong. We need to look at how we can address those issues and seek to challenge them. Let us be honest: it is wrong that individuals carry out such dumping in the first instance. Traditionally, a lot of people in Northern Ireland have turned a blind eye to a lot of those activities, but, in fact, the individuals who are engaging in such activities are destroying the neighbourhood for everyone. We need to encourage the public to move away from taking a blind-eye approach to activities that we know are going on in our neighbourhoods. Such activities are damaging to our neighbourhoods and our country, and it costs all of us. Let us rise to the challenge.

Mr Morrow referred to the individuals who dropped the Bounty bar and Mars bar wrappers. They are fairly low-level offences, but I encourage people to take the registration numbers of cars from which rubbish is thrown, report the individuals and allow the councils to follow it up. Unless we do that and provide the information, we cannot expect to reap the dividends. Let us rise to the challenge of those who contaminate our neighbourhoods and despoil and destroy our country, and let us, the good people, take them on and tell them that we are not going to tolerate their activities any more and that we are going to report offences. That will not make us touts or bad people. Doing so will ensure that we are keeping a better, cleaner and healthier Northern Ireland and a place to which tourists will be attracted to visit and others will be attracted to invest and live in.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill [NIA 31/09] be agreed.

Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill: Second Stage

The Minister for Social Development (Mr Attwood): I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill [NIA 32/09] be agreed.

It might be helpful if, in the first instance, I give some background to this legislation because, as the House and, certainly, the Committee, will be aware, in December 2009, my predecessor Margaret Ritchie published proposals for new housing legislation to support the delivery of the private rented sector strategy and to make new provision in respect of homelessness, fuel poverty and community safety. I will comment on a number of those matters during my speech.

The Department received more than 40 responses, which were broadly supportive of most of the proposals. Time constraints mean that it is not possible at this time to take forward all the proposals outlined in the consultation paper. It is only fair to the House that I explain why that is the case. It is due to the demands on the parliamentary draftsman, which were made more acute by the fact that there were six separate pieces of legislation relating to the possible local government reorganisation. In view of the urgency around that matter and given the potential for reorganisation by 2011 and the short time frame between then and now, the parliamentary draftsman was overloaded. Consequently, other legislation would not have had the full due diligence of the parliamentary draftsman in ensuring that the legislation coming before the House was all that it should be. Consequently, opportunities to include other matters in the Bill were frustrated because of the time available to the parliamentary draftsman's office.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge the work of the parliamentary draftsman. Executive approval had been given to the Bill only at the end of April 2010. The Department and the parliamentary draftsman have done good work to ensure that we have legislation before the House at Second Stage. The turnaround time, from the end of April to the introduction of the Bill in the middle of June, was very short.

As I said, the Department received 40 responses to the consultation. The Bill has been drafted on the basis of the consultation, focusing on key areas where there is a

particular need for early action. The Bill will help to support the housing agenda by enabling better regulation of the private rented sector, providing new tools to tackle fuel poverty, promoting effective housing management and clarifying existing laws. I want to touch on some of those matters.

The main focus of the Bill is on improving the management of the private rented sector, which has grown significantly in recent years and now represents almost one fifth of the total housing stock in Northern Ireland. Building Sound Foundations, the Department's strategy for the private rented sector, was launched in March 2010 and set out a range of proposals to improve regulation of the sector and provide increased protection for tenants. The Bill addresses some of the strategy's core recommendations and will enable my Department to make subordinate legislation to create schemes for the mandatory registration of landlords and the safeguarding of deposits paid by tenants.

The Bill will improve the effectiveness of existing measures for regulating the private rented sector by amending the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. That Order introduced two measures into law and into practice in the North. The first ensured that properties in the private rented sector are fit for human habitation, and the second required landlords to provide proper documentation about the management of their tenancies, such as a rent book. The Bill builds on those provisions and protections and, therefore, enables us to go somewhat further.

Mr F McCann: The Minister makes an interesting point about the Private Tenancies Order 2006. Although it improved existing legislation, many council environmental health officers felt that it did not go far enough. It did not give them the teeth to deal with some of the more serious problems in the private rented sector, including HMOs.

The Minister for Social Development: I concur with the Member. The Bill addresses the councils' contention that they did not have the teeth to deal with various matters. For example, there is a responsibility under the 2006 Order to ensure that properties are fit for human habitation. However, the ability of councils to pursue the issue of whether properties are fit for human habitation was frustrated by the

fact that there was no mandatory registration scheme for private landlords. Such a scheme creates a better opportunity for councils to do their business. The Bill will ensure that, once mandatory registration of private landlords is established, that information can be shared with local councils. In turn, local councils can go about the business of ensuring that fitness standards are fulfilled. Therefore, I agree completely with what the Member said. The Bill gives councils the evidence base from which they can do what they were meant to do under the unfitness provisions and ensures that the private tenant is better protected.

The second area that the Bill deals with is houses in multiple occupation. The Bill improves protections for houses in multiple occupation by ensuring that the current system of regulating such accommodation operates effectively. Quite properly, the Housing (Amendment) Act 2010 amended the definition of the term “family” for the purpose of identifying houses in multiple occupation to ensure that accommodation occupied by members of a single extended family is not subject to the regulatory regime. The Bill will place an obligation on the landlord, owner or operator of a house in multiple occupation to provide documentary evidence of such a family relationship where it is being used to seek exemption from HMO regulation. Failure to provide satisfactory evidence would mean that the property would be subject to regulation as a house in multiple occupation. There are instances across Members’ constituencies — this is certainly the case in the constituency that Mr McCann and I represent — where the issue of multiple occupancy has arisen. In so far as the DSD responsibility is concerned, the Bill will create a mechanism to regulate that better.

It is clear that that measure alone will not address the issue of multiple occupancy and, in particular, the change in character of areas where more and more properties go into multiple occupancy. However, without anticipating what may or may not develop, I hope that, in the near future, another ministerial colleague of mine may be in a position to begin to address that issue and the experience of places in West Belfast and many other constituencies.

The third element of the Bill relates to community safety. The Bill will improve the sharing between landlords of information about antisocial behaviour and will allow the Housing

Executive and registered housing associations to withhold consent to an exchange of tenancies where an applicant has been guilty of such behaviour. The proposals are in response to issues that the Committee for Social Development and social housing landlords raised. I know that the matter preoccupied the Committee, and I may comment on it further in my winding-up speech.

Mr Easton: Does the Minister still think that there is a possibility that people who are removed from Housing Executive housing could be housed in hostels? Will he let us know whether that will cover hostels, as well as other sectors?

The Minister for Social Development: I thank the Member for his intervention. I will respond to that matter in my winding-up speech, because I wish to scope out a number of matters on antisocial activity in the housing sector and how we may manage that in the future. A lot of those issues have some equality consequences, and I want to make sure that we measure our response appropriately in any future addressing of antisocial activity across the public sector and the private sector. Therefore, I will deal with that particular matter in my response.

A small measure in the Bill deals with homelessness. The Bill will also improve the operation of the homelessness legislation by bringing the Housing Executive’s statutory duty to an end in cases where a person ceases to be eligible for assistance. That is a technical change that will affect a small number of people, and it is designed to ensure that homelessness legislation recognises the reality of situations where the Housing Executive cannot legally provide accommodation. Given the common concern that parties and Members have about homelessness, I stress that that technical change will affect a small number of people. I enquired about that this morning, and my information is that, currently and in any one year, that change will affect no more and perhaps somewhat fewer than 10 people and that, in the context of changes arising from transitional provisions with European enlargement over a number of years, that figure will actually come down to even fewer than 10 people.

The fourth element of the Bill deals with fuel poverty. The Bill will allow the Housing Executive to broker energy at a discounted price. That measure, which is recommended by the fuel poverty task force, has the potential to alleviate

fuel poverty among tenants of social housing and could benefit other energy consumers by encouraging new entrants to the domestic energy market in Northern Ireland. In addition, the Bill will provide district councils with powers to promote energy efficiency in residential accommodation in their district. That will complement the work that is being undertaken by my Department and the Housing Executive, which runs the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland.

1.45 pm

I wish to stress the importance of that issue because, although fuel brokering is in its early days here, there have been some dramatic examples in other jurisdictions of how that can work. Although the scale is very different and the market is more open in America, there have been some good examples there of how fuel brokering or the bulk purchasing of fuel can work to help disadvantaged people in particular. Joe Kennedy and his Citizens Energy Corporation in Boston is an example of how interventions in fuel brokering can work to the advantage of people in need. Although this matter is technically difficult to address, I hope that the provision will be taken forward by the Housing Executive, which has 90,000 units on its books.

With the entry of Airtricity, there is now an open market in the North, and I believe that, especially at this time of further financial stress, our Government, given the number of buildings that they have and their energy consumption, should consider how to broker electricity costs and maximise the advantage to the public purse.

There is a clear need for the Bill, which, I openly concede, has useful provisions that are somewhat more moderate than might otherwise have been the case had we had sufficient time to legislate more fully. Nonetheless, the Bill will improve the lives of people in the private rented sector and in social housing in particular. I am confident that the Bill will be well received by key stakeholders in the public and voluntary sectors. On that basis, I hope that all parties fully support the Bill.

Mr Craig: It has been agreed that I shall speak initially on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development, who tenders his apologies. The Committee for Social Development spends the greater part of its time considering, scrutinising and debating housing

issues. Members will, therefore, not be at all surprised to learn that the provisions of the Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill have been reviewed in great detail by the Committee at the pre-legislative stage. Now that the Bill is at Second Stage, those provisions will continue to be of great interest to all Committee members.

I will now set out the Committee's views on the principles of the Bill. I will first mention what is, unfortunately, not in the Bill. When the Committee reviewed the relevant departmental consultations, there were a number of proposals in which members were particularly interested. They included increases in the notice-to-quit period for longer-term tenants in the private rented sector; a number of antisocial behaviour measures, including linkages between eligibility for social tenure and the behaviour of a tenant; a requirement for private rented tenures to comply with the decent homes standard; and the introduction of safeguards for homeless people where the Housing Executive has secured accommodation for them in the private rented sector. In the Minister's response today, I hope that he will further set out why those proposals have not been included — he has already alluded to some of the issues — and whether he will consider amendments to deal with some of those excluded measures.

I now make some comments on behalf of the Committee. Some Committee members have previously expressed concerns about variations in statements of tenancy conditions and in the nature of rent books across the housing sector. The Bill introduces what is intended to be some consistency in respect of the provision of statements of tenancy terms and the content of rent books. The Committee welcomes that and will, therefore, wish to further consider the aspects of the Bill that apply solely to the private rented sector.

The majority of Committee members will welcome the introduction of the rent deposit scheme. Members have questions about the cost and bureaucracy associated with similar schemes in other jurisdictions that we looked at. Some Members also voiced concerns that the rent deposit scheme will not stop wrongdoing by those who might be termed bad landlords. It is argued that, although the measures are aimed at landlords who wrongfully withhold deposits from tenants, it will be the good law-abiding landlords who will have regard to the new provisions and have to manage the

additional administrative burden. Bad landlords will tend to ignore the provisions. Therefore, it will be interesting to see what enforcement issues there are around that. The Committee will want to be sure that there is appropriate, targeted and commensurate enforcement to ensure compliance. That will be the secret to dealing with bad landlords on that issue.

A perhaps more contentious aspect of the Bill will always be the mandatory landlord registration system. On the one hand, some Committee members argued that the recent growth of the private rented sector and the large number of private tenants who are on benefits are good reasons to require landlords to be registered. Those Members hope that registration will be the beginning of a regulation process for the private rented sector, similar to that which is already employed in the social housing sector. On the other hand, as I said previously, some Committee members and stakeholders, such as the Landlords Association, contend that registration will be an undeserved additional burden for good landlords, while landlords involved in bad practice — the ones with overcrowding difficulties and those who offer unfit accommodation — will simply ignore the regulations. All Members will view with great interest the relevant provisions of the Bill and will be keen to ensure that the associated regulation-making powers are appropriate. I have no doubt that some members of the Committee may have a great deal more to say on those issues, and I look forward to hearing those comments.

The Committee is pleased to see measures in the Bill that are designed to curb antisocial behaviour. Anything that tries to tackle that issue will be warmly welcomed by all Members. The Committee lobbied for better information sharing between social landlords and for restrictions on exchanges for tenants who inflict antisocial behaviour on their neighbourhood. The Committee warmly welcomes the fact that that information will now be shared between housing associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Antisocial behaviour is always a serious issue. Many Members, myself included, frequently have to deal with a wide range of related problems in their constituency. Therefore, some members of the Committee would welcome further discussions with the Department and the Minister in respect of amendments to the Bill to further enhance antisocial behaviour measures.

The Bill includes a change to the Housing Executive's responsibility in respect of what are termed "ineligible homeless individuals". It is understood that that is merely a technical change that seeks to remove the legal anomaly whereby the Housing Executive has a duty to certain homeless people but, owing to other legislation, is unable to fulfil that duty. It is understood that the migrants in question can come from the A8 countries. The Committee received evidence from the Welcome Organisation that, in some cases, it was forced to use its funds to help small numbers of homeless people who were ineligible for assistance. During a departmental briefing on the homelessness strategy, the Committee also learned that DEL and OFMDFM were to produce a policy on those homeless and ineligible migrants. Given the potentially tragic consequences of withdrawing support from homeless people, the Committee will want clarification on the treatment of those homeless and ineligible migrants in this and neighbouring jurisdictions to be sure that what is proposed is fair and consistent.

The Committee welcomes the clauses on energy brokering for NIHE tenants and on the promotion of energy efficiency. The Committee spent a great deal of time considering fuel poverty. Therefore, it is pleased by the promotion of practical measures that exploit economies of scale by the Housing Executive and the local knowledge of organisations, such as district councils.

I would now like to say a few words as an MLA, as opposed to speaking on behalf of the Committee. I congratulate the Minister on moving to improve the exchange of information between housing associations and the Housing Executive. I have strong feelings about that. I raised the matter in Committee and was pleased to receive its backing. I know of cases in which the Housing Executive and, I must add, housing associations, ended up getting its fingers badly burned by some of the tenants who had been passed on to it. The situation led to all sorts of antisocial behaviour and to tenants having to be moved out and rehoused, but it was not always the guilty party who had to move. However, that was down to an anomaly whereby the information that the Housing Executive had on tenants could not be handed over to housing associations and vice versa. It is good that the Minister is tackling that serious

issue, and I hope that his action will stop those unfortunate situations arising again.

I share the Committee's disappointment that some other issues were not dealt with. The Minister explained why we are running into timescale difficulties, and I must accept that. However, that disappointment remains, and I hope that there may be an opportunity to deal with the outstanding issues in future.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development, I advise the House that, notwithstanding my earlier comments on provisions that seem to be missing and issues that require clarification, the Committee is generally content with the principles incorporated in the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill.

Mr F McCann: I welcome the Minister's speech. Whether Members stand here or sit round a Committee table discussing housing, we always speak about those who are most in need and how we can try to create better conditions for them.

I want to comment on the passage of the Bill. I share Jonathan's disappointment, as I feel that we have been let down by the Department and by the former Minister with regard to its content.

During the passage of the first Housing (Amendment) Bill, Members from my party argued for a number of amendments to be made but were convinced not to do so by departmental officials who assured the Committee that that Bill was not the one to tamper with. They explained that a further housing Bill was in preparation that would address many of the issues that we had brought up.

I was disappointed to hear at the briefing last week that much of what was promised has been removed from the Bill and that the Bill will be categorised as an enabling Bill that will allow some of those issues to be legislated for down the line. The excuse given is that otherwise there would not be time for the Bill to complete its passage before the end of this mandate. Had my party been informed of that during the passage of the previous Bill, we would have then attempted to make some of the amendments that we had in mind. The new Minister has inherited this situation, and we await its outcome.

2.00 pm

Among the measures removed from the Bill is none other than the strengthening of antisocial legislation, which is something that

our communities are crying out for. Out on the hustings in the run-up to the last election, antisocial behaviour loomed large in people's minds. Having spoken to people from all parties, I know that they came up against the same demands. Community safety and the economy are the biggest problems for people. I spoke to the Minister earlier in the week, and we agreed that there are serious problems out there. Unless we get to grips with those problems, we are achieving nothing. If we can work together, we can achieve something. We in this Chamber have an obligation to ensure that our community is protected from those who would destroy it from within. Contrary to the belief held by some that antisocial behaviour is strictly a policing matter, we all need to realise that this is a societal issue that must be tackled by us all.

I am unsure whether provisions for the sharing of information will be added through enabling legislation that will come some way down the line or whether that matter will be effectively dealt with by the Bill. Over the past couple of weeks, I have had occasion to speak to some senior representatives from housing associations. They have said that, even at this late stage, after we had brought up the issue and assurances were given in the Committee, there is still no sharing of information across housing associations and between them and the Housing Executive. Most of the housing associations do not inform one another, because what they want to do is move problems elsewhere and out of their jurisdiction. That is one of the difficulties.

We raised the possibility of stronger legislation to deal with those who wreck their communities through acts of vandalism. We want to ensure that such people will be forced to pay for the damage that they cause. We also wished to address the role of residents' associations and look at how they are resourced in other jurisdictions. It is common practice for housing associations to include in their budget a community funding package which includes the funding of local residents' groups. I am a great believer in good, strong residents' associations. Properly trained and resourced, they can provide the front line in the battle against anticomunity behaviour. The resourcing of residents' associations is virtually non-existent in housing legislation in the North and, unless legislated for, will not be acted on by housing associations. Also, gone should be the days when housing authorities just see themselves as housing

providers. They need to be community builders and work with other statutory organisations in the community to deliver mixed-tenure, sustainable communities and a safe place to live for all the residents.

I have also raised the issue of the common selection scheme and the adverse impact that that allocation scheme has in areas of high demand. I first raised that many years ago with the direct rule Ministers with responsibility for social development. I have been continuously advised that it will be reviewed to take on board the issues that we raised. Again, we wanted to amend the first Bill to address that but were advised against it on the grounds that the new Bill would deal with the issue and such consideration would prolong the first Bill's passage through Committee.

The other issue that we wanted to deal with was the question of the private rented sector. During this mandate, Sinn Féin has been to the fore in speaking about the need for action to be taken to ensure that the private rented sector is legislated for by way of a mandatory registration scheme, with strong powers to ensure compliance. That suggestion was met with strong resistance from the former Minister for Social Development and her Department, which seemed to favour non-regulation at the time. We wanted to table amendments on mandatory registration but were advised that this new Bill would be the mechanism to deal with it. We have now been informed that a committee has been set up to advise on a mandatory registration scheme and that enabling legislation will mean that the issue can be dealt with somewhere down the road.

What more information does the Department need? The consultation that it carried out showed that almost everyone who took part was calling for mandatory registration and for strong powers to ensure compliance. That unregulated sector, which is in receipt of more than £90 million of housing benefit, is a sector in which many operate seriously bad tenancy practices. Those include illegal evictions; intimidation of tenants; poor-quality stock; withholding of deposits for the flimsiest of excuses; overcharging of tenants; and ignoring antisocial tenants. The list goes on. It is a sector that has more than doubled its stock in the past seven years and can operate without worry about being brought to book for its practices. We have been informed that a mandatory registration

scheme will take a while longer. We will again ask Members to support action to ensure that strong powers on compliance and not just mandatory registration are included in the Bill.

The Department seems to suggest that a lightweight scheme should be considered. Some time ago, landlord representatives from LANI gave evidence to our Committee. From their comments, I believe that LANI would have supported the mandatory registration of the sector. Many of its members provide quality housing for the rented market and are interested in getting rid of the bad apples. We have an obligation to ensure that tenants are protected, while protecting landlords from bad tenants.

Management companies that offer poor service for the money that they are paid are not included in the Bill either. Again, strong legislation is required to ensure that homeowners are protected. My understanding is that that sector is regulated in other jurisdictions.

I attended a consultation event in February 2010 which the Housing Rights Service and the Council for the Homeless organised. The people who attended were representative of a wide range of opinion across Belfast and the rest of the North. Those people called, almost to a person, for a strong mandatory registration scheme, with strong powers on compliance. They also discussed antisocial behaviour and recognised that that is an issue that needs to be tackled.

Concerns were raised about people's rights. We all share those concerns, but we must also ensure that those involved in the destruction of their communities are brought to book. The Bill is not the stuff that will bring about change and bring relief to tenants or communities; rather, it puts much on the long finger or refuses to deal with serious issues. I hope that the Committee and the Assembly will not allow this opportunity to pass by and will instead use the Bill to deal with the serious issues that we seem to be bypassing.

I have no doubt that all parties in the Chamber are crying out for some type of action to be taken against antisocial activity. As I said, that is one of the big issues. However, since I came to the Assembly, an issue that I have pursued is the mandatory registration of the private rented sector. That is crucial. I noticed that the

Minister rightly said that there were provisions in the Bill to deal with mandatory registration as part of enabling legislation. However, he forgot to include what sort of compliance rules will be brought in to ensure that landlords abide by the terms.

You can talk to the Housing Executive about its scheme relating to HMOs. However, in Dungannon, for example, the owners of HMOs get up and move overnight if they are challenged, or they go to court and receive a £100 fine, only to place people back in the same conditions. We need to achieve a meeting of minds. If issues are put back until the next mandate, it may be another four or five years before we are able to deal with some of them.

The Minister and I share a constituency that has been wracked by cases of antisocial activity. However, in the past couple of years, parts of the area have been opened to the unrestricted development of HMOs. That decision must be revisited.

Mr Armstrong: The Bill has four main objectives: to enable the better regulation of the private rented sector; to provide new tools to tackle fuel poverty; to promote effective housing management; and to clarify the existing law in respect of homelessness. Those are all praiseworthy aims, and I am sure that, even if there is some difference of opinion about how to achieve such goals, the intention to tackle those problems will be supported by all sides of the House.

Official statistics indicate a growing homelessness problem in Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive records the level of homelessness in Northern Ireland in 2008-09 as more than 18,000 households. It is tragic that homelessness is a growing problem, which may be partly due to the current economic climate. Collectively, we must do more to tackle it.

I support the proposal to move towards the registration of landlords in the private sector. That would be good for the entire housing sector and should help to ensure that tenants have a good standard of accommodation, to safeguard their deposits and to encourage landlords to be more responsible to their tenants. It would also help to protect legitimate landlords from less honest ones, making it good for business. However, I caution against the emergence of overly restrictive regulations that would impact negatively on business, which is an issue that

we will examine in Committee. I am pleased that housing management has been included in the Bill and look forward to examining those provisions in greater detail.

Constituents have come to me with their experience of problems with other social housing tenants. Such problems can be deeply distressing and affect them and their children daily. Our neighbourhoods must be made more secure places where individuals and families can flourish and where antisocial behaviour is challenged, not tolerated. I strongly believe that rights come with responsibilities. If some tenants are not prepared to live up to the responsibilities that come with being provided with housing and if their behaviour towards fellow tenants and citizens is antisocial, they should face sanctions.

I am particularly pleased to see that addressing fuel poverty is more extensively provided for in the Bill. It should be noted that there was almost unanimous support from stakeholders for the Bill's proposals on fuel poverty. It has been said that one in two households here are affected by fuel poverty. Northern Ireland is the region with the lowest levels of income in the United Kingdom, yet it spends more on energy than any other. That combination has been even more devastating during the past five years with significant increases in energy prices.

The 'People Power' report launched this month showed that energy brokering could reduce electricity, gas and oil prices for Northern Ireland consumers. Energy brokering is the co-ordinated bulk purchasing of energy on behalf of multiple users. I look forward to examining such ideas in greater detail in Committee. The proposal to provide councils with powers to promote domestic energy efficiency in their district has the potential to provide great benefit to those on low incomes and at greatest risk of living in fuel poverty by increasing their awareness of the importance of being energy-efficient. Raising that awareness is critical in a strategic approach to tackling fuel poverty and eradicating it in the long term.

I look forward to examining the Bill in greater detail in Committee and to the debate that will ensue in the House.

Mrs M Bradley: I welcome the Bill. Its main focus is to improve the regulation of the private rented sector, which will, in turn, provide a means to protect tenants' deposits and to

resolve disputes as quickly as possible. I support and welcome the proposed regulation of the private rented sector.

My constituency experience tells me that the eradication of fuel poverty is vital to eliminating social exclusion and to achieving a sustainable future for all. There is a power here for the Housing Executive to broker energy for tenants at a discounted price, and I hope that it will do that. That is to be welcomed.

The Bill will also provide the means to combat antisocial behaviour in communities. It will provide for increased co-operation and information sharing on antisocial behaviour in housing allocation eligibility decisions, homelessness exchanges and house sales. The provision for the Housing Executive and housing associations to withhold their consent to the exchange of tenancies on the basis of antisocial behaviour is another measure that protects against such behaviour. All those things will go a long way towards helping to eliminate antisocial behaviour by residents. I welcome the Bill.

2.15 pm

Ms Lo: The Alliance Party supports the principles of the Bill, although I must add my disappointment to that expressed by other Members over the exclusion of a number of proposals that were consulted on. It is wrong of us to consult our stakeholders and then not include them. I hope that the next Government will revisit those issues quickly and that the proposals will appear in forthcoming legislation.

I warmly welcome the mandatory registration scheme, which is long overdue. Although there are a lot of good landlords, there are also some irresponsible ones. They receive a large proportion of housing benefits, so it is only right that the sector be held accountable. Although some private landlords have expressed reservations about the administrative burden, on the whole they see the regulation of this growing sector as a step in the right direction.

I very much welcome the introduction of rent deposit schemes. In my South Belfast constituency, I have dealt with cases where local and foreign students have been treated unfairly, with unfair deductions being made from their deposit. Some of them had to go to England or other places to take up employment, and others had to return to their country of origin because their visa had run out at the end of their degree

course. They could not wait to see the outcome of negotiations with landlords, so they lost out on retrieving their deposit. Not only is that unfair, it gives us a bad name when students go back to Malaysia, China or wherever saying that they have been badly treated by landlords here. I also welcome the introduction of dispute resolution mechanisms, which are a good way to provide arbitration for both sides and to produce a fair settlement.

In relation to antisocial behaviour, I welcome the power for social landlords to withhold consent to the exchange of tenancies, and I welcome the mechanisms for the better exchange of information between the Housing Executive and social housing providers. Better communication is better for everybody.

With respect to the removal of the so-called legal anomaly concerning individuals who are ineligible to be registered as homeless, I dispute the Minister's assertion about it being only a very small number of people. I deal with a number of those cases in my constituency. Very often, Housing Executive staff tell us immediately that the migrant workers are not eligible and they refuse to deal with them. The Minister said that there were only 10 cases, but those were only the cases that some of the staff took into consideration. Often, there is a flat refusal to deal with them. That results in the Belfast Welcome Centre and the voluntary sector having to deal with a lot of the cases. Those people are not eligible to be registered as homeless, so the voluntary organisations do not receive any housing benefit. The people are without recourse to public funds.

Mr F McCann: Recently, the Minister spoke at a Belfast Welcome Centre exhibition in the Waterfront Hall. Does the Member believe that the vast experience of the Belfast Welcome Centre and other groups should be tapped into before any judgement is made on how to move forward?

Ms Lo: Absolutely. So far, the burden has been on the voluntary sector, which operates on a shoestring.

I very much welcome the Housing Executive having the power to negotiate energy brokering schemes. We have very high fuel prices in Northern Ireland. Economies of scale are involved, and the Housing Executive deals with many housing units. If it can negotiate

better deals for its tenants, that is a very good measure.

Mr Easton: I support the Bill. In particular, I welcome clause 2, which will enable the Department to make regulations providing for schemes to safeguard deposits paid by tenants in the private rented sector. It will also place certain obligations on landlords with regard to the scheme.

Many private tenants have, for far too long, been the subject of abuse when trying to get their deposit back. Usually, the landlord's word is gospel. The Bill will enable the Department to bring in a similar scheme to that in England and Wales, which allows for an insurance-based deposit scheme that will include a dispute resolution mechanism and a mandatory requirement for landlord participation, with fines for failure to comply. I welcome the scheme, which will protect tenants who are at the hands of unfair and greedy landlords looking to take their deposits.

I welcome clause 3, which permits entry of persons authorised by district councils to carry out fitness for human habitation inspections of private properties. No one should be forced to live in properties that are not up to standard. I wholeheartedly welcome clause 5, which enables the Department to make regulations that provide for the registration of private landlords. That is long overdue and, along with clauses 1 to 3, will see private landlords made much more accountable. I urge the Department to ensure that landlords — those who own the property rather than manage it — are on the register so that they can no longer escape accountability or responsibility, as many of them did. The name of the owner on the deeds of the house should match the name on the register. That is very important for the regulation of the private rented sector.

I welcome clause 8, which places an emphasis on the occupant, not the Housing Executive, to provide evidence of a family relationship to avoid being listed as a house in multiple occupation. I also welcome clauses 9 and 10, which relate to the disclosure of information about anti-social behaviour orders. Those clauses enable a landlord, with all of the information about the tenant available, to decide whether to withhold consent in accepting a tenant, should they hold an anti-social behaviour order. I am disappointed that all the other elements of the Bill that deal

with antisocial behaviour matters have been withdrawn. I hope that the Minister will bring those back at a later stage. The clause also helps to make a decision on whether the tenant has a right to buy the property in the disclosure of information.

I especially welcome clauses 12 and 13. Clause 12 enables the Housing Executive to submit for departmental approval a scheme for making arrangements with energy providers for the supply of electricity, gas or oil to Housing Executive tenants. Tenants would receive discounted prices, which would make sense, given the fact that the Housing Executive has a large stock of homes and it would be within its power to negotiate a bulk discount, thereby saving tenants money.

Clause 13 provides district councils with powers to promote energy efficiencies in residential accommodation in their district. Money would also be saved through the efficient use of energy; for example, through the proper insulation of homes. I welcome the Bill and support its Second Stage.

The Minister for Social Development: I thank Members for their contributions. Specific matters were raised, and I will try to deal with all of them, although I will have to come back to some Members on certain issues.

As I have said in respect of other legislation that I have been responsible for since I became Minister for Social Development, I do not look at any piece of legislation with a closed mind. Therefore, in responding to the debate, I may indicate areas in which I would welcome amendments. There may be other areas where, even if I do not see the need for amendments, I might encourage them. Although we have a small window of opportunity, nonetheless we should use that window as far as possible. That is the mindset that I bring to this legislation, as I do to other legislation.

I am not impressed by Members who refer to being let down by the Department and let down by the previous Minister.

Mr F McCann: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister for Social Development: I will give way in a second. There is a collective sense of being let down over the course of this mandate. I do not intend to detain Members or rehearse what transpired over the course of this mandate

in respect of the blockages that arose in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the fact that there was a suspension of the Executive for 150 days or the fact that a lot of policy initiatives have been bogged down in one way or another. Therefore, when it comes to feeling let down by a Department or a Minister, Members should face up to their wider responsibilities and the individual and collective failures that have brought about a situation in which we are faced with the consequences of legislation being bogged down and faced with the need to try to legislate quickly. We are also faced with a situation in which the parliamentary draftsman's office is already overburdened. Legislation has been pending in respect of the RPA that has come to nought, creating further blockages for the parliamentary draftsman's office. I share that feeling of being let down, and I do not think that there is any Member in the Chamber who does not share it.

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

Mr F McCann: That is all well and good. However, last year, we talked about new legislation for the private rented sector, which was to come into effect in March this year, and there was to be follow-on legislation. Therefore, there was no delay in respect of that. I am talking about issues that I have raised here over the past number of years, whether it was dealing with antisocial behaviour or the private rented sector. During a debate on the Housing (Amendment) Bill, I said that I wanted to propose amendments. However, I was encouraged to delay those amendments until this Bill was introduced. The issues that I raised and wanted included in this Bill are being delayed again. The Minister cannot say that I should not be annoyed or surprised. Of course I am annoyed and surprised; I thought that those important issues were ones that we should deal with, regardless of how long it takes us.

The Minister for Social Development: I appreciate what the Member says, but the last piece of legislation was drafted and was passed by the Assembly in the political context of that time.

In the interim, this legislature has not worked as effectively as it should have, and the Executive have not worked as effectively as they should have. In the run-up to the Hillsborough negotiations, no party in the Chamber, including the Member's party, denied that devolution

had not lived up to the ambitions and hopes of people in Northern Ireland.

2.30 pm

If the Member wants a proper discussion about why legislation is not as fully fledged as might have been anticipated a couple of years ago, he should look at the context of the intervening two years and at the upsets, doubts, delays and difficulties that held up the progress of legislation. When it came to a critical moment for this legislation, disproportionate demands on the parliamentary draftsman's office meant that six other pieces of legislation will, in all likelihood, not see the light of day in this mandate. That is the context in which the previous Minister, the Department and every other Minister and Department worked, and all that is a contributory factor to the situation that we face today.

I have said that I am not hostile to amendments. I will look at amendments that are forthcoming and determine whether it is appropriate to consider, if not agree, them, and I will look independently at potential amendments of my own. In doing so, however, I will not deny or diminish the context that gave rise to the situation today where the Bill is more limited than we would like it to be. However, that is a consequence of political circumstances that were certainly beyond the control and command of the previous Minister for Social Development and her Department. If the Member wants to berate people, as he is entitled to, let us put on record the political context that arose over the past couple of years and that led —

Mr F McCann: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister for Social Development: I will give way in a second. That context led to some of the frustrations, which I agree with, that Members expressed today.

Mr F McCann: Again, that is all well and good and is, obviously, part of the process that Ministers go through. However, the fact of life remains that, over two years ago, I proposed a motion, which everyone in the Chamber supported, that called for the mandatory registration of landlords and all that goes with it. The motion directed the previous Minister to do something about that, but nothing was done. The Minister cannot say that that was held up because of the passage of other Bills through the Executive. The will to deal with it needed to be there.

The Minister for Social Development: If the Member is going to concentrate on any issue, I suggest that that is not the one. The Bill not only brings about the mandatory registration of landlords but does so in double quick time. Under the provisions of the Bill, if it is passed, the Department will be able to introduce regulations that establish the registry of private landlords on a mandatory basis. By doing it that way, rather than by putting it in other pieces of legislation further down the tracks, the Bill can, essentially, fast-forward the mandatory registration of landlords.

Forgive me if I do not recall the debate, but if it was the case that, a couple of years ago, there was unanimity in this Chamber for the mandatory registration of landlords, rather than feel let down by the Department, the Member should applaud and congratulate the Department because it has fulfilled his and the Assembly's ambitions.

Mr F McCann: The Minister said that she was opposed to it.

The Minister for Social Development: If the Minister said that she was opposed to it, that is a different matter. I will check the Hansard report on that. The eloquence of Mr McCann's argument must have prevailed upon the previous Minister, because, despite the failure of other people to govern this place properly and diligently, despite the fact that others held up government for 150 days, as they did a couple of years ago, and despite the failures and fault lines in government, the previous Minister heard what the Member and others said and included that provision in the Bill. Therefore, I suggest that the Member acknowledge, congratulate and applaud Margaret Ritchie, because, if he is right, she, despite herself, concurred with him. In fact, she went further, as I will outline when I discuss later all the matters that were raised in the debate. During the debate, I will undertake to consider carefully further amendments to the Bill.

As a Minister, I have a very simple attitude. I am here for 10 months, and, as I hope some of my officials can testify, I intend to try to get 30 months of business done in the next 10 months. That would mean that, when I walk out of the Department not a long time from now, a legacy will be left that demonstrates that I built on what Margaret Ritchie did in three years. If I can graft onto this legislation and, indeed, the Caravans Bill, although the opportunities there are more limited, I make the commitment that it

is my ambition to try to do more rather than to try to stop more.

It is only appropriate that I respond first to the first intervention of the day, which was made by Mr Easton. For the record, my officials tell me that he intervened at 1.40 pm. Mr Easton asked whether persons evicted by the Housing Executive can be rehoused in hostels, and the matter is clearly at the forefront of his mind. The advice that I am being given is that persons who have been evicted by the Housing Executive for antisocial behaviour are not normally eligible to be rehoused by the Housing Executive or a registered housing association but that there is no reason why they should not be accommodated in a hostel that is operated by the voluntary sector. To answer the Member's specific query: although there may be limitations to what those people get from the housing association and the Housing Executive, that does not extend to hostels. If further clarification is needed, I will come back to the Member.

Mr Craig, Mr McCann and other Members asked legitimate questions about why matters that were covered by the consultation paper are not included in the Bill. I do not want to go back over the political history, but we are now in a very tight legislative time frame. I spoke to Mr Hamilton this morning at the launch of the master plan for the town centre in Newtownards, and he told me about his Committee's heavy legislative duties. As Mr Craig said, Mr Hamilton sends his apologies for being unable to be here today because of constituency business.

Unless legislation goes through all stages of the process by Christmas or the very early part of the new year, we will run out of time, because legislation falls if it is not passed within the lifetime of the mandate. Therefore, for historic reasons that are now coming home to roost, every Minister has a limited window of opportunity. Given that there will be an election next May, if legislation does not receive Royal Assent in the very early part of 2011 — by February, let us say — we will run out of time. There is always a concern about parties bartering in the last week or two of a mandate to try to get legislation over the line. Indeed, we saw that in the Westminster Parliament in the wash-up before the election. That can lead to bad legislation or bad policy being put on the statute book. If we are to be wise and measured and fulfil our obligations as legislatures, we have between now and February 2011 to legislate.

By my reckoning, we have less than 20 weeks of Assembly time to legislate. This morning, Mr Hamilton remarked that four pieces of legislation will be going through the Committee for Social Development. The narrow window of opportunity, the need to get legislation right, the history of this legislature and the restrictions on the parliamentary draftsmen all set the context for what some Members consider to be useful but nonetheless moderate legislation; I do not disagree with them.

Nonetheless, it is important to put on record that a range of other matters was in the consultation paper but is not now in the Bill. To go back to a point made by Mr Easton and Mr Craig, those issues may, if I have my way, be included in a future Bill. One such issue is work on raising the fitness standard for the private rented sector. However, I am mindful of our budgetary position, and such a measure could have significant regulatory and cost implications. Therefore, it has to be managed and drafted carefully.

The proposal to extend the notice of quit period for tenants in the private rented sector was welcomed. There seems to be a consensus on the proposal, which does not appear to be controversial. Given that and the fact that it only seems appropriate to give tenants of long standing a longer notice of quit period, it seems that that area of the Bill might be open to amendment. I look forward to amendments coming forward, and I will share in that conversation. Given that the issue seems to have been consulted on, has no specific equality implications and stacks up against all political and legislative standards, it could be one that we take further.

A number of Members raised the issue of community safety. Mr McCann will confirm that only this week we had a conversation and meeting about houses in the lower Falls; namely, the Ross Street flats and cottages. I think that Mr McCann and I are on the same page on that. Over and above the issues about that accommodation — I have said before that I do not rule anything in or out — I believe that making decisions on housing without being able to make decisions on community safety, the roads and the environment in that area may mean that good work will be done in the short term but that, in the longer term, the community will be short-changed. Dealing with housing issues without dealing with community safety issues, although not necessarily self-defeating,

could mean that we may not achieve all that we can reasonably achieve.

Therefore, I have some sympathy with the views on the fact that the consultation document tested a number of proposals on community safety. I do not intend to go through all those proposals. However, there is some early possibility of amendment to enable the Housing Executive to participate in crime prevention initiatives. It so happens that it does already. My Department funds the Housing Executive to fund community restorative justice schemes in Belfast. I think that the Housing Executive funds six separate schemes in respect of alternative measures and a number of other schemes involving Restorative Justice Ireland.

It may be appropriate to confirm that the Housing Executive is so entitled to fund by putting on a statutory basis the Housing Executive's ability to make contributions to community safety initiatives. That would require a more technical amendment of confirmation than one that would move things further along. However, I am certainly prepared to look at that.

Five or six other measures to deal with community safety were outlined in the consultation document. I do not intend to rehearse all those, but I will speak with officials, whom I see looking coyly at me. If there are one or two other areas in which we can enhance the Bill without creating further undue delay or fallout, I will look at them.

2.45 pm

Mr Craig and Mr McCann asked why the Bill is not tougher on landlords, and they asked about the proper enforcement of good practice on bad landlords; they also mentioned minimising the cost and bureaucracy of regulation in the private-rented sector. The Bill represents a light-touch approach to landlord registration; however, a light-touch approach does not mean that the proposals are lightweight. It is a matter of striking a balance between an appropriate scheme that works and one that does not become unwieldy and burdensome on the taxpayer. The scheme that is outlined in the Bill, in our view, strikes the appropriate balance. I say that because the process for future mandatory landlord registration will be as straightforward and inexpensive as possible and will not, therefore, put an undue burden on the good landlord — a point that was raised, I think, by Mr Craig. Nonetheless, new systems should

ensure better standards across the sector, particularly for landlords who are on the wrong side of the argument.

Mr F McCann: The crux of the issue of landlord registration is that mandatory registration, in itself, will do nothing to deal with the bigger problem of poor and bad landlords. All Members will admit that the private-rented sector plays an essential part in the provision of housing across the board. However, the sector has grown at an amazing rate in recent years, and, unless we have strong restrictions — perhaps that is the wrong word — or certain levels of compliance to ensure that those people abide by the rules and regulations, the registration scheme will go nowhere.

The Minister for Social Development: I concur with the Member's view, which goes back to his first intervention during my opening speech. The register should be a comprehensive record of landlords in Northern Ireland. As a consequence, as I have said, given the provisions that will exist, for example, between the registry and local councils to share information so that they will know who owns property, appropriate enforcement action can be taken. If a tenant has issues about the fitness of his or her property, and there is an evidence trail from the registry to the local council on issues of unfitness, he or she will have the opportunity to take action against the named landlord. Therefore, having the registry will answer the question that the Member asked. A circle will be created from the tenant to the registry, through the council and the landlord and back to the tenant. That will create a vice, for want of a better word, around those who offend against fitness standards and act as a shield to protect the good landlord and as a sword to be used against the bad landlord.

As we speak, conversations are going on between the relevant organisations, the Department, landlords' and tenants' representatives, and other stakeholders to work through the detail of the registration scheme. Therefore, especially given that there is tenant input into that conversation, that will have an outcome, and the outcome will mean that within a short period of months we will have the ability to issue the regulations leading to the registration scheme's going live. In the context of that conversation, I hope that the matters that the Member has, rightly, raised in respect not just of registration but of enforcement will be dealt with.

In my view there is one single lesson to be learned from legislation in the North, and it can be seen throughout its history. I do not mean to delve into controversial issues. However, if one looks at equality provisions that exist here, it was not simply the case that good law was created at various phases of recent history, but that there was effective enforcement of that law. That created new standards and disciplines for both private and public employers that were subject to employment legislation one way or another, sometimes through exposure, the courts or regulations. In the fullness of all that, new disciplines and standards were created. Although that is a particular piece of history and current practice, nonetheless there are good lessons and precedents that can be applied to other matters.

Mr F McCann: Although I understand and appreciate what the Minister is saying, it does not add up in many ways. I have had quite a bit of experience of dealing with private landlords, some of whom were pretty poor. There is no mechanism to allow the council, when it is contacted, to deal with issues. Again, that goes back to the legislation's having no teeth. Although councils will send letters and threaten to take landlords to court, they will say honestly that, over and above that, there is nothing that they can do, effectively, to make landlords deal with problems. There are many problems throughout the system.

As I said earlier, when LANI came before the Committee, I got the impression that many landlords are not opposed to registration. We talked about controls in general. They also recognise that there are serious problems in the sector that must be dealt with. Along with all of that, there is intimidation of tenants by landlords, which makes it almost impossible for them to report many of the issues. Overcharging must also be dealt with.

The Minister for Social Development: I thank the Member for his intervention. I concur with him about the behaviour of some private landlords. Of course, it is not just private landlords. I know of a case where I very much questioned the conduct of an estate agent in respect of their management responsibility. As Members will be aware, many landlords pass that on to estate agents. There have been some acute cases. One, in particular, preoccupies me. The estate agent behaved in a way that, if not illegal, was certainly irregular when it came to

the treatment of a tenant of decades' standing. Therefore, I very much understand what the Member is saying.

There are alternatives. Either there is licence, where landlords can do whatever they want, or we try to create new disciplines in the private rented sector. Registration in itself will create some new disciplines. It will enable best practice to be shared with landlords so that good ones can be better educated and bad ones can be better informed about rights and responsibilities. In parallel with the enforcement mechanisms that exist at the moment, particularly court powers, which I will talk about shortly, that fabric will have potential. Significant powers have been laid down with regard to penalties to the courts in respect of some of those matters. Yes, there will be cases where landlords try to buck the regulations and the courts and not fulfil their responsibilities.

Therefore, unless those in the Department and in councils who are responsible for regulation measure up, a situation may arise in which bad landlords continue to act badly. By creating a new architecture in which new laws and systems are created and in which central and local government join in governing private landlords, the disciplines for people to behave properly and the opportunities to enforce against those who do not behave properly will be created. That is the lesson of Northern Ireland. When one looks at our history, one will see that behaviour has changed when we have had the right laws and when the proper enforcement has been administered centrally and locally.

If we were to take Fra McCann's view, it would have been fair to ask what was the point in legislating, regulating or enforcing over the past 40 years, because there was always going to be a minority of people who would not accept best practice and who would not live up to their rights and responsibilities. The lesson of Northern Ireland and other democracies is that when regulation, best laws and enforcement mechanisms are created, and when everyone does what they are supposed to do within that architecture, in time, those who are in error will be exposed and will have to be held to account, and those who are on the right side of the law will be held up as models of best practice and as good examples. The same applies here. The same ethic, or the same system, is informing this piece of legislation.

The legislation is not the be-all and end-all. That is why I have said that I am open to certain amendments and that I will look at others. In any case, if we get to a time when we have not only a stable Parliament but one that fulfils all its legislative functions, there will be a third housing Bill, which will deal with some of the issues that I am about to talk about.

Jonathan Craig made a valid point in the context of the financial environment that we may be facing over the next while. He spoke about the costs and bureaucracy associated with tenancy deposit schemes and landlord registration schemes. As I indicated earlier, the Department is working with landlords, councils, the Housing Executive and organisations that represent tenants to develop the landlord registration scheme and the tenancy deposit scheme. That is a work in progress. I was speaking to officials about it this morning, and I hope that that work will be concluded in a short number of months. The details of what may emerge will have to be considered by the Committee, and, through Mr Craig to the Committee Chairperson, I will come back with the fine details on the cost and bureaucracy of the deposit scheme and the registration scheme.

I am not in a position to answer Mr Craig's question about the treatment of migrants who are not eligible for social housing, so I will write to the Committee on that issue. Anna Lo raised the same issue. I will have briefings, and that is a matter that I want to consider further. I do not want to return to a previous debate on parity; immigration is not a devolved matter but a reserved matter. Therefore, the policies and practices that govern housing and benefit entitlement are strictly beyond our capacity. I will get back to the Committee and other Members on that issue, as well as on the issue of whether the technical matter that is mentioned in the Bill, and to which Ms Lo referred, will impact on a small number of less than 10. I would be grateful to the Member for South Belfast Ms Lo, if, given her experience of working with the migrant and immigrant community, she has further information on whether the scale is greater than officials have said, she would let me know.

3.00 pm

I give the same reassurance that the former Minister gave. When acute situations occur, as they often have, there is an obligation on

the Government to stretch themselves. When the acute situation arose involving the Roma population, my Department, other Departments and Members demonstrated that, whatever the ostensible limits of our responsibility in law, there will be critical moments when one goes further.

That echoes the point that Fra McCann rightly made that one of my first duties as a Minister was to open the Welcome Organisation's Waterfront Hall exhibition of photographs of homeless people. Although that exhibition has ended, the pictures tell the story. Ms Lo asked that we consult the Welcome Organisation about relevant provisions of the Bill. I assure her that I will ask officials to do that.

Mr Craig raised the issue of penalties for landlords who do not abide by tenancy deposit schemes, and asked how we will ensure that bad landlords comply. Fra McCann also mentioned that issue. The Bill provides for persons who require deposits consisting of property other than money to be:

"liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale."

Other contraventions will be punishable:

"on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £20,000."

There is also provision in the Bill for persons who appear to have contravened a tenancy deposit scheme to be penalised by paying a fixed penalty. The enforcement powers will lie with district councils, but the Bill makes provision for a scheme administrator to share information with councils to support their proper enforcement of the Bill.

On reflection, it might be useful, as the Bill is currently drafted, to create a matrix or flow chart that details visually how the new systems will work, where enforcement powers lie and what the consequences of those enforcement powers being used would give rise to. If people saw that picture or that matrix, it might go some way to mitigate Members' concerns about whether enforcement will measure up.

Ms Lo also raised the issue of items that were not included in the next housing Bill. As I said earlier, I want to give a commitment that those items that could not be included for the reasons that I have outlined will be considered for inclusion or included in the next housing Bill, which, unfortunately, will not be introduced until

the next mandate. That is over and above the reassurance that I gave the House in relation to one or two particular matters that have arisen.

Mr Easton asked whether the landlord's name rather than that of the agent would be on the landlord register. That is an important point, because people may be seen to be slipping and sliding, for want of a better phrase, in that regard. I note that point. The details of the registration scheme are being discussed with a wide range of stakeholders. However, it is certainly within the gift of the Department, when it comes to regulation, to define those matters, as I understand it, in a way that may satisfy the Member's concerns and those of other Members. I am not prejudging the matter: it seems, at face value, that the landlord should be accountable and that there should be no safe refuge, for want of a better term. In the real world, it may not mean that much in many instances, because, if the agent can be reached, so can the landlord. However, it seems a rather circuitous way of going about things. I will raise that issue with the stakeholders who are discussing that matter.

If there are any other matters that I failed to address — I am sure that there are, because Mr McCann alone raised a baker's dozen — I will come back to Members, and we can have a further discussion about all of those matters at Committee. I am grateful to all Members who contributed to a helpful debate. It certainly helped to inform me, and I intend to have some concentrated conversations with my officials in the near future. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Bill to you for the House's approval.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill [NIA 32/09] be agreed.

Welfare Reform Bill: Final Stage

The Minister for Social Development

(Mr Attwood): I beg to move

That the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill (NIA 13/09) do now pass.

The Welfare Reform Bill makes provisions corresponding to Westminster's Welfare Reform Act 2009. During the debate, I will touch on some of the matters that were rehearsed at Committee and Consideration Stages, add something in one or two areas and update the House on developments since Further Consideration Stage.

I advise the House that, following Iain Duncan Smith's speech on welfare reform, which he made shortly after the new coalition Government was formed, I wrote to the Secretary of State for welfare. I requested an early meeting with him or other senior Ministers to discuss their intentions. Much water has flowed under the bridge since then. The Chancellor has made various comments, and other announcements have been made on the British Government's position on the welfare reform agenda.

As time had moved on, I pressed for a meeting to be organised sooner rather than later. Consequently, a meeting with Lord Freud, the Minister with particular responsibility for welfare reform, is now scheduled for Thursday 22 July. That will be an opportunity for me, on behalf, I trust, of the Assembly, to scope out to Lord Freud my position and that of many other Members. Mindful of the issue of parity, we consider that, when it comes to welfare issues, there should be due regard given to the circumstances and conditions in the North and to the wider nature of our politics.

It is the case, for example, that take-up levels of disability living allowance are higher in the North than in Britain. In Northern Ireland, the take-up rate is 20% higher than in Wales. However, I sense that there are good reasons why that is the case. I have tasked officials in the Department to develop a matrix to explain why disability living allowance (DLA) take-up levels might be higher in the North. I asked them to outline, based on our history, health profile and multiple levels of deprivation, the grounds on which those figures can be explained and understood. The London authorities must have an appreciation of those factors.

That was only an example of the conversation that I intend to have with Lord Freud. I intend to make clear to him the circumstances that exist in the North. There has been much talk about welfare reform coming across the Irish Sea. I will outline the consequences of that to him.

I confirm my intention to push operational flexibility in Northern Ireland, without breaching parity, as is appropriate. In that way, I will try to mitigate some of the consequences and impact of current and previous welfare legislation on the communities and citizens in the North.

I would welcome a debate on the issue of parity among political parties in the Assembly and the wider devolved institutions. When I was at the British-Irish Council summit in Guernsey last week, I took the opportunity to discuss that issue with representatives and Ministers from the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly in respect of how to frame it, how to take it forward, and how to consider it in a wise and rounded way without rushing in and causing further difficulties for citizens and communities in the North.

At one time or another, it falls to a Minister to concede to the House that he or she got something totally wrong, badly wrong or slightly wrong. On this occasion, I must concede to the House that I got something slightly wrong. I, therefore, wish to clarify a statement that I made during the Bill's Consideration Stage on a report received from the Scottish Government, which was quite moderate in its ambition, on the possibility of devolving responsibility for the social fund and the circumstances in which it might be appropriate to devolve responsibility for social security. I should have made it clear at that time that responsibility for the policy and administration of the social fund has already been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, which is not the case with the Scottish Government. I, therefore, wish to confirm that fact now. I always knew it; I just tripped up.

I will now comment briefly on some issues. The Bill introduces powers for the "work for your benefit" programme. The programme will be designed to assist jobseekers to move closer to the labour market, to help them to find sustained work and to provide them with the experiences and training to move out of welfare. As I said at Consideration Stage, that programme is being piloted in four areas of Britain, and its introduction in Northern Ireland

will only be considered after a full evaluation of them. I wish to confirm that point, because there was some misunderstanding about it previously.

The programme is being piloted in four areas in Britain, and only when those pilots are finished and have been evaluated in Britain will there be any consideration of piloting such a scheme in Northern Ireland. Therefore, that is at least a couple of years, if not more, down the track. Even then, it will fall to the Department for Employment and Learning to determine — no doubt in consultation with the Committee, if not the House — whether or not to go down the road of running a pilot here and what the terms of that might be. In any case, other events may overtake that, and the responsibility for welfare reform may move to a different place, should Iain Duncan Smith, the Chancellor and the British Government get their way. As I said, the Department for Employment and Learning will decide those matters.

I am sure that Members are aware that following the recent emergency Budget, the coalition Government are reviewing all employment and training programmes, including “work for your benefit” and progression to work pilots, for which provision is made in clause 2. Wise men might choose to speculate about what will happen in the future. However, given that I have been a Minister for only six weeks, I fail the test of wisdom and will, therefore, not speculate on such matters.

The work-related activity provision in clause 2 will also initially be piloted in Britain, and only after the evaluation of that pilot will its introduction in Northern Ireland be considered. During the Bill’s Consideration Stage, I gave assurances that vulnerable people, such as lone parents, those with physical and mental health conditions and those with caring responsibilities, will not be penalised should they not be able to participate in the “work for your benefit” programme or work-related activity because of their circumstances. I repeat that assurance; namely, that the safeguards and flexibilities in current legislation and the Bill, for instance the good cause safeguards, will ensure that no one will be penalised or sanctioned, except in particular circumstances where that is deemed to be necessary, appropriate and proportionate.

I also assure the House that the guidance will ensure that decision-makers make full use of

their discretion and consider the well-being of a child when considering good cause in their decision-making process.

3.15 pm

Clause 3 contains important safeguards for lone parents on income support, jobseeker’s allowance and employment and support allowance. Those additional safeguards will form part of the wider framework of flexibilities that is already in place to help parents to balance family life and work. I stress that, at the heart of clause 3, is the saving provision that people will not be required to go down certain roads unless they have in place adequate, affordable and appropriate childcare.

Yesterday, I read figures confirming that, in Northern Ireland, about 22% or 23% of the population — I was not able to check the reference before I came into the Chamber — has access to appropriate and affordable childcare; the comparable figure in England is about 80%. That demonstrates the scale of the childcare issue in the North and the urgency with which it must be resolved. Yesterday, there was a further meeting of the relevant ministerial subgroup, and I hope that its work will mature quickly and in time for the budgetary negotiations that will take place over the next couple of months. Those figures also demonstrate the provisions in the North in respect of what people may be required to do subject, for example, to affordable and appropriate childcare, to which 80% of the population does not have access. Those figures are off the top of my head; if they are slightly wrong, I will come back to the House and apologise again. However, in the round, that conveys the sense of the childcare provision.

The Bill contains powers to ensure that those on employment and support allowance in the work-related activity group undertake activity that is most appropriate to addressing their individual barriers to work. The reforms will deliver better, more flexible and more appropriate support to people across the spectrum of out-of-work benefits. I emphasise that only those who can do so will be expected to participate in “work for your benefit” programmes or any work-related activity. I assure Members again that factors, such as a lack of childcare, care responsibilities, the well-being of a child, learning difficulties, and physical or mental disabilities and conditions, will be taken into

account. Decisions, for example, on health conditions and learning difficulties will be based on the expertise of healthcare professionals. As I said during the Bill's previous Stage, we will also involve voluntary disability organisations when providing the necessary guidance and training to decision-makers.

People moving from income support to a modified form of jobseeker's allowance will retain the same amount of benefit and be subject to the same conditionality. I assure Members that we will not move carers from income support until there is a clear plan setting out how the benefits system will be reformed over the longer term.

Powers are being provided to improve the delivery of community care grants to allow us to contract with third-party providers to provide items such as white goods at a much lower cost. I repeat my assurances that the Social Development Committee will be consulted during the proposed procurement process.

At Consideration Stage, I gave assurances that, when a person fails to attend a mandatory appointment, sanctions will be applied only where absolutely necessary. Personal advisers and decisions-makers will consider whether a person had good cause before considering sanctions. All factors of a case will be taken into account. Hardship payments will help to ensure that the basic needs of vulnerable claimants or their families continue to be met while underlying entitlements to passport benefits, housing benefit and free school meals will remain unchanged.

Part 2 of the Bill increases parental responsibility by including further changes to child maintenance legislation. The Bill is designed to work with people to help to lift them out of poverty; it is designed to be flexible enough that the requirements placed on people are aligned to their circumstances. It is designed to ensure that the expectations of any claimant are realistic and achievable.

The Bill is about ensuring that the welfare system provides people with the opportunities that they need to improve their skills, and it is about supporting and preparing them for work and for the move off benefits and into employment where that is appropriate. It is also about helping people out of disadvantage and poverty. As I said, I am aware that Members have concerns about some of the

Bill's provisions. Indeed, I also said that I have reservations myself. However, I assure Members that all operational flexibilities and those flexibilities that are in the legislation will be considered.

During Consideration Stage, I said that I would meet with Les Allamby, the director of the Law Centre, before Further Consideration Stage to discuss a number of issues in the Bill, including parity and flexibilities. I met him on 16 June, and we had a useful conversation about how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) viewed the parity issue and how that created constraints on this Department. However, we also discussed how we were, nonetheless, trying to maximise operational flexibility. I have attempted to have a further conversation with Les Allamby since, and if he is listening, or if he reads the Hansard report, I apologise to him for not returning his phone calls. However, I will get back to him.

I intend to meet Lord Freud on 22 July, when we will scope out my and the Department's views on welfare reform. No doubt, he will outline his and his Government's ambitions. I will consult with stakeholders on any new provisions.

I am grateful to the Chairperson, members of the Committee for Social Development and Members of the Assembly for the positive way that they worked with me and my officials to move the Bill forward. I thank Members for all their contributions. I hope that, in taking forward any provisions on welfare reform, we can have the same useful conversation.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Jonathan Craig, who is speaking on behalf of the Committee for Social Development.

Mr Craig: Again, I start by apologising for the Committee Chairperson's absence. The Committee for Social Development spent a great deal of time and devoted a lot of energy to the consideration of the Welfare Reform Bill. As the House is aware, the Committee produced a report that sets out members' work during the pre-legislative consultation phase, the Second Stage, and, particularly, the Committee Stage of the Bill. The length and detail of the report reflect members' interest in and concern about social security issues in the Bill.

On behalf of the Chairperson, I thank members of the Committee for Social Development for their contributions. I also want to place on the

record the Committee's thanks to the many witnesses who, at various times, provided such useful written and oral submissions. On behalf of the Committee, I thank the Minister for the assurances that he provided at Consideration Stage. I also thank the departmental officials, who provided a fast turnaround on Committee queries. Finally, I thank the Committee staff, who produced the report in a very limited time.

Before dealing with the content of the Bill, I want to make a brief reference to the timing of the stages of the Bill in the Assembly. The Committee noted with disappointment the gap between its consideration of the equality impact assessment (EQIA) and the Department's introduction of the Bill. Had the Department secured agreement to introduce the Bill shortly after the EQIA was completed, or at least before the Easter recess, the burden on witnesses, members and staff would have been considerably reduced and scrutiny of the Bill would have been enhanced.

Faced with delays and to ensure the minimum possible disbenefit to social security claimants in Northern Ireland, members diligently undertook additional meetings and scrupulously considered a significant volume of evidence in a very short time. It is hoped that, as we enter a very busy period of Assembly legislation, the Department will in future arrange in a more timely manner those stages for which it has responsibility.

I wish, simply and briefly, to address the content of the Welfare Reform Bill. As the House is well aware, the majority of Committee members and MLAs support the principle of maintaining parity with the rest of the United Kingdom in respect of social security, pensions and child maintenance matters. As a consequence, and following debate and division, the majority of members of the Social Development Committee agreed that there was no opportunity to amend the Bill without endangering the generally beneficial access to social security that is afforded to claimants in Northern Ireland. A minority of members disagreed on that point. Notwithstanding the majority of members' concerns in respect of breaking parity, the Committee nevertheless critically reviewed and earnestly debated the clauses of the Bill, and sought to secure important assurances in areas where most members felt that amendment did not appear possible.

Chief among the members' anxieties was the possible impact of the Bill on vulnerable claimants, particularly those with childcare problems, mental illness, learning disabilities, caring responsibilities, or victims of domestic violence. Members were pleased to receive ministerial assurances that guidance to benefits advisers would be set out and that additional and appropriate consideration would be given to such claimants.

In respect of mandatory work-for-benefit schemes, the majority of Committee members believe that those provisions are a part of the parity package and, therefore, have to be accepted. Members also realise that, like a number of provisions in the Bill, those schemes may be subject to further and possibly much more radical Westminster legislation.

The House held a very useful Consideration Stage debate on the additional conditionality provision for lone-parent claimants, which is included in the Bill. Although everyone understood the sentiments of those who proposed related amendments and even, in all honesty, shared some of their concerns, the majority of Members accepted the Minister's assurances in relation to the interpretation of the "good cause" provisions and, therefore, agreed to support that aspect of the Bill, albeit with a number of reservations. Members also welcomed ministerial assurances in relation to continued access for carers — whether they are in receipt of caring benefits or not — and employment support allowance (ESA) or income support and its related payment to the training regime.

Members were greatly concerned by the provisions of the Bill that related to the abolition of income support. The Social Development Committee has taken a great interest in the migration of claimants from incapacity benefit and income support to employment and support allowance and jobseeker's allowance. Members were glad to receive ministerial assurances that carers and other vulnerable groups will not be transferred from income support until alternative benefits are in place. However, during consideration of recent secondary legislation, members indicated that they are still nervous about the Social Security Agency's ability to manage the transfer, over the next three years, of some 76,000 income support claimants to employment and support allowance and jobseeker's allowance.

The Committee's acceptance of the abolition of income support is dependent on our continuing close scrutiny of the transfer of claimants to other benefits. I assure the House that members will continue that work and will constructively advise the Department on improving related services to vulnerable claimants. The Committee was happy to receive ministerial assurances in respect of the passporting of claimants in receipt of income support and statutory sick pay to other benefits.

Additionally, in respect of clause 15, the Committee was glad to receive assurances relating to the procurement of goods and services associated with community care grants.

Some Members felt strongly that the substitution of grants with goods might lead to additional bureaucracy costs and poor product quality. The Committee welcomed ministerial assurances that best practice will be employed when goods and services are procured in relation to community care grants and that the Committee will be consulted by the Department prior to the completion of relevant contracts. I hope that the Minister follows through on that, because there is quite a probability that there will be abuses there.

3.30 pm

One of the more contentious aspects of the Bill was the new proposals for benefit sanctions. Although all Members oppose benefit fraud and the threat or use of violence against benefits office staff, there was some disagreement about whether benefit sanctions should be applied in addition to court sanctions. Members also questioned the effectiveness of sanctioning claimants for non-compliance with directions or failure to attend interviews. The Committee was interested in and surprised by the evidence presented by the Law Centre on the subject. Members were also somewhat reassured by the Department's confirmation that the families of claimants would not be adversely affected by sanctions and that the good cause provision would protect the mentally ill and vulnerable from unfair sanctioning. Despite the Committee's misgivings and as I have indicated, the majority of members accepted the provisions as drafted as an unavoidable part of the parity package.

Although Members did not generally welcome the provisions of the Bill, they were pleased to see clause 23, which increases the exemption

period from job-seeking conditions for victims of domestic violence. Members noted that the overall exemption period for claimants could amount to around 24 weeks, a period that it was felt would be similar to that generally available to employees in the same circumstances. Members also noted that benefit advisers will consider physical, psychological and financial abuse when assessing victims of domestic violence. That is all to be welcomed.

As I have said, Members found many of the provisions of the Welfare Reform Bill to be challenging — that may be an understatement. The majority of the Committee felt that the Bill had to be accepted in order to maintain parity with the rest of the UK on social security matters. Crucial to members' acceptance of the Bill was the ministerial assurance that good cause for non-compliance with its provisions would include childcare issues, mental illness, learning disability, other caring responsibilities and domestic violence. That assurance along with others on the recognition of the uniqueness of Northern Ireland's situation in respect of childcare and the use of appropriate, informed discretion by benefit advisers are the most important of the numerous assurances given by the Minister.

The Committee noted the absence from the Bill of provisions relating to the piloting of the automatic payment of state pension credit. Again, the Committee accepted a ministerial assurance that, if and when automatic payment of state pension credit is rolled out nationally, Northern Ireland claimants would not miss out.

I wish to indicate clearly that I am speaking as a Member of the Assembly from this point on and not on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development. My party and I support, in principle, any reforms to our welfare system that encourage those who are able to work and want to work to get back into work. Although that appears to be the basis of the Bill, it remains to be seen whether that noble objective can be achieved: that is open to question.

I want to dwell on the issue not of principle but of process. The Bill is unique as social security legislation in that it did not have accelerated passage. Instead, it had a proper Committee Stage. Assembly Committees and Members would generally not argue against a Committee Stage, because our duty and primary

responsibility is to scrutinise legislation robustly. However, I seriously question the value of the Committee Stage in this instance. I do not know what was going on in the mind of the former Minister and, I suspect, neither does the current Minister. Nevertheless, when she delayed, then further delayed and ultimately decided against seeking accelerated passage, she brought about a technical breach of parity in the process. I emphasise “technical” because it turned out to be very technical and because we have not been allowed to make any major changes. I remain unconvinced that, in doing us the dubious honour of granting a Committee Stage, the previous Minister did the Committee a favour. In fact, I firmly believe that the Committee was placed in the invidious position of taking reams of evidence from concerned stakeholders, only to have to ultimately ignore it because we had been warned of the grave consequences of proposing any amendment that risked breaching parity.

The cynic in me says that the Committee, rather than the Department, was deliberately placed in the position of being the bad guy who had to turn down amendments. In all sincerity, what is the point of a Committee Stage in which the Committee cannot consider amendments and is told by officials that there is no scope for even the smallest of changes? The practical implications of the Committee’s enduring a sham Committee Stage are many. We set aside weeks, during which we met twice weekly, to get the Bill through Committee Stage as quickly as possible, so as not to delay its passage any further than the former Minister had already done. Weeks of evidence, hours upon hours of deliberations, and what was the outcome? Not one single amendment would have been acceptable. The assurances that we sought and received as a Committee could have been attained in other ways.

Due to our heavy legislative schedule in the Committee, those weeks lost to the Welfare Reform Bill came at a cost. A Committee inquiry into housing had been proposed, about which I feel particularly sore because I proposed it. That inquiry was to have looked into alternative ways of funding social housing. As we all know, funding will become a major issue for the House over the next 10 months, never mind the next few years. However, it looks as if that inquiry will have to be jettisoned. I ask the Minister what would have been more useful: the Committee Stage on a Bill that could not be changed or an inquiry into an important housing issue that

might ultimately have assisted the Minister in providing more social housing? In future, will the Minister or his successor carefully consider the merits or otherwise of having a Committee Stage on legislation that is so clearly and totally locked into the issue of parity that the Committee has little or no ability to change it?

You will be glad to hear, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that is my little rant about my personal feelings over. In conclusion, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee, I should like to indicate that, despite the Committee’s many concerns, of which the House is aware, the Committee nonetheless, given the ministerial assurances received, recommends that the Second Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill be agreed.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Unlike Mr Craig, I am not of a cynical nature. I am delighted to hear that the Minister will meet Lord Freud on 22 July. In relation to this Bill, Sigmund Freud might have been a better choice, but that is just a personal observation.

I will begin by dealing with the positive aspects of the Bill, which should take only a very short time. One positive aspect is the fact that DLA payments to visually impaired people will be factored in, although we are not sure about the outworkings of that. Nevertheless, it will give those people access to a high rate of mobility allowance, which is a positive step that has been required for a long time. The exemption from job-seeking conditions for victims of domestic violence was mentioned, and the exemption period will be raised to 24 weeks. Again, that is positive. The Minister assured us that best practice will be used in respect of the social fund, which is to be welcomed.

In Committee, a witness suggested that a more appropriate title for the Bill would be “The welfare reform cart before the horse policy on a wing and a prayer and a nod and a wink Bill”. The overall thrust of the Bill is negative, because it will do little to improve the lot of the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive, for whom getting back into work is an aspiration. Those people should be encouraged and helped to do so.

The Bill is sanction-led and punitive, particularly for lone parents and people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency or particular disabilities, such as learning or visual problems. That is particularly the case

in respect of communication from local offices and general contact with the Social Security Agency. The Minister assured us that particular conditions will be taken into account, and I welcome that.

The Minister spoke about childcare provision. As yet, we do not have a viable childcare strategy. The Minister quoted figures about childcare provision: it is approximately 23% here, as opposed to 80% in England. In 2006, legislation was introduced in England and Wales that puts an onus on local authorities to provide childcare. If a gap is identified, the local authority has to fill it. The Minister assured us that sanctions will not be imposed if childcare is not available here.

The Minister talked about having a discussion about parity, but Jonathan Craig said that everything to do with parity is set in stone. At least that is the impression that Committee members get, because, in all the social security legislation that has been introduced, there was a lot of talk about parity. The Minister also assured us that staff will be trained to a high standard and will be able to cope with particular cases. Yet, at the same time, we are told that 207 people in the Social Security Agency will probably lose their job. I am sure that the Minister means what he says about those assurances. However, Ministers come and go, and he did say that he is trying to fit 30 months' work into 10 months. I hope that he can manage that difficult task.

In my experience, if sanctions are available, they will eventually be used. The Department would not have put them in place unless it intended to use them at some stage, whether to a greater or lesser degree. The Bill will mean that lone parents with very young children will eventually be required to claim jobseeker's allowance and seek work. Again, the Minister assured us that each case will be considered sympathetically and that, if childcare is not available, no sanctions will be imposed. If that policy is carried through, the age at which the sanction applies will, eventually, go as low as one. The parent of a one-year-old will be expected to look for work-related activity, not necessarily actively but reasonably.

Jonathan Craig mentioned income support, which, unless a viable alternative is suggested, will be phased out. The Minister said that the impact of that on carers and other vulnerable

groups will be lessened, but, in reality, we are talking about 76,000 people's benefit migrating from income support to employment and support allowance. The logistics of that will cause great difficulty.

3.45 pm

There is also the intention to introduce work-focused interviews for over 60s, which could result in many people losing benefit entitlements. The use of sanctions against people who have been convicted through the courts for the use of violence or threat of violence against social security staff and those already convicted of benefit fraud can only be seen as punitive. Again, I make the point that I have the greatest sympathy for social security staff, having been one myself for a period. I certainly do not condone, in any shape or form, violence against social security staff, who do a tremendous job under great pressure. They manage very well without adequate resources.

Parity has been quoted extensively in discussions and in the scrutiny of the legislation. However, pilot schemes will be implemented in Britain, so why are those schemes not being implemented here? The issues around the take-up of state pension credit, which, again, was mentioned previously, will be dealt with in Britain through a pilot scheme. Why not here? Effectively, from the point of view of parity, we are being asked to implement legislation that is prescriptive and can only impact negatively on people here. The legislation has not been thought out properly and its outworkings have not been considered fully.

There is very little in the Welfare Reform Bill that safeguards the dignity of the claimant. Iain Duncan Smith is now the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and his Centre for Social Justice has published a paper called 'Dynamic Benefits'. In the Welfare Reform Bill, we are looking at the thin end of the wedge. We have seen that already in the recent Budget. Yesterday and the day before, the Chancellor talked about people on benefits having to tighten their belt and take cuts. Undoubtedly, that will happen, so we are seeing the thin end of the wedge. The Welfare Reform Bill is probably the least punitive of the legislation that we can expect down the road.

Our function is not to enact bad legislation but to ensure that the administration of benefits is carried out in a fair and equitable manner. I welcome what the Minister said about

operational flexibility. Although the whole issue of parity is not to ruffle the feathers of the Treasury in respect of the subvention — God forbid that we should do that — if we can have in place a better operational structure, as happened with the Committee's report on DLA, that has to be welcomed.

We do not want legislation that marginalises and is punitive to those who are most vulnerable in our society. That is part of the problem that I have with the Bill. Although I have great reservations about it, we do not intend to divide the House. I thank the members of the Committee for Social Development and the staff, who have done a great deal of work in producing a report that, I think, was 647 pages long. I also thank all the people who were very helpful in giving evidence to the Committee. They shaped our views and gave us a lot of evidence that may not have been available previously..

Mr Armstrong: I welcome the opportunity to speak at the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill. In general, the majority of the Committee has welcomed the reforms contained in the Bill. It will further reform the welfare and benefit systems in Northern Ireland to improve support and incentives for people to move from benefits to work. It will also have a bearing on the abolition of income support in the future.

It is right that, in our society, the right to receive benefits exists as a safety net. However, with rights come responsibilities. One of the Bill's key goals is to break the cycle of welfare dependency. We are all aware of the very high levels of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland. However, many people who are not working do not want to work or are capable of working but need support and retraining to enable them to get back into active employment and pay tax. Work and a commitment to work, where possible, is vital to an individual's financial, physical and mental well-being. It also has a generational impact on the well-being of our children.

Many aspects of the Bill will help people in great need. I particularly commend the introduction of exemptions from job-seeking conditions for victims of domestic violence. Tackling unemployment and welfare dependency remains central to ensuring that people meet their potential in the workforce and engender a positive and long-term contribution to society and pay tax.

I reiterate my earlier assertion that we need to be more imaginative on how we address welfare reform effectively. As such, I look forward to the proposals that the coalition Government at Westminster will introduce in due course. I was disappointed by the delay in ensuring parity with the rest of the United Kingdom; however, the timely manner in which we have sought to move this Bill through the Committee and the House has sought to address that delay.

We must work alongside people and help to lift them out of poverty to live lives that are fulfilling to them, their families and society. Central to that is a commitment to work and to contribute fully to society.

Mrs M Bradley: I welcome the information given by the Minister and the fact that he will meet Lord Freud. I am sure that he will insist that the needs of the people of Northern Ireland are not the same as those elsewhere. Our needs are different. I am sure that the Minister will insist that, when the Welfare Reform Bill comes back to us and is applicable here, it will meet the needs of the people.

Ms Lo: I add my thanks to Committee and departmental staff, and I also thank all our stakeholders. Although I support the principles of the Bill in getting more economically inactive people into work, I have concerns about many of its aspects, as some sanctions appear to be very harsh. However, I accept the Minister's assurance that the Department will maximise operational flexibility and his view that there are many doubts as to whether the "work for your benefit" scheme will materialise in Northern Ireland at all. Most unemployed people want to work. However, health problems or a lack of qualifications mean that they cannot get a job, and many of them have fallen into the benefits trap. The focus must be on helping people to upskill so that they can get meaningful jobs and get out of the poverty trap. It is wrong to threaten them with sanctions or to wave big sticks over their heads.

We supported a number of Sinn Féin amendments, and we are disappointed that those amendments have not been accepted. Amendment No 1 proposed a new clause to provide an overarching safeguard on the welfare of children as the fundamental background to the Bill, and I supported it for several reasons. First, we have the highest level of child poverty in the UK, and that is unacceptable. OFMDFM

highlighted the importance of families taking up benefits to help them out of poverty; on the other hand, the Bill threatens to take benefits away from families and threatens them with sanctions. That is inconsistent with anti-poverty policies.

The Minister highlighted the fact that we still do not have a childcare strategy or accessible and affordable childcare here in Northern Ireland, and he was very sympathetic about that. As the Minister said, when welfare reform was developed in Great Britain, it was done in conjunction with a well-resourced childcare strategy.

It is important that we take all those issues into account when we consider the Bill. As it stands, the Bill has an awful lot of draconian aspects, and I urge the Minister and his departmental staff to be very sympathetic when implementing the legislation to ensure that we do not push the already marginalised sections of our community further to the margin.

The Minister for Social Development: I thank Members for their contributions. I do not intend to detain them long.

Mr Craig raised questions about the timely manner in which the Bill's processes were managed and handled. I am not over that issue, but I will ask for advice from officials on it. It is important that the Committee and the Department do not work hand in glove, because lines would get blurred and crossed. Nonetheless, there should, in principle, be suitable liaison between the Department and the Committee, given the burdens on the Committee because of its oversight and consideration of various pieces of legislation. To accommodate the differing needs of the Committee, I will certainly look at that matter to see whether I can reach any proper conclusions about how the legislation was handled.

I listened attentively to Mr Craig speaking in an individual capacity about accelerated passage. Standing back from it — I have come to this somewhat fresh — I feel that there are at least four or five grounds for why the legislation should have been subject to the full legislative process. First, there is an argument that accelerated passage is not necessarily a practice that should, per se, be adopted routinely or slavishly for welfare parity legislation — for want of a better term — or for any type of legislation. The second reason it might have

been appropriate for the matter to be subject to some further scrutiny is, as Mr Craig said, that there were misgivings about the legislation and that he, I and others find it challenging. Mr Brady described the legislation as sanctioned, punitive, not thought-out and not properly considered. Given that Members have those views on the legislation, it seems neglectful to not give Assembly the opportunity to explore that legislation properly.

Mr Brady: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister for Social Development: I will let Mr Brady in in a moment.

The third reason why full consideration of the legislation is appropriate is that it is always useful to get reassurances on particular legislation, including on operational flexibility, which is relevant to this Bill.

As Mr Craig indicated, if one element was most vital in the passage of the legislation, it was the reassurances on good cause, childcare and informed discretion. It will be useful for the Department, the Social Security Agency, the Minister and the House for those matters to be scoped as fully as possible at a particular time in order to give as full a reassurance as possible as to how they might play out.

4.00 pm

Before I give way to Mr Brady, the fourth reason that it was appropriate to consider the matter fully is simply that an ongoing discussion on welfare was taking place. We all knew that there was a possibility of a Tory Government. We all knew that Iain Duncan Smith and his organisation had ambitions and intentions on welfare reform. Therefore, it was useful and timely to discuss the issues, explore parity considerations and have a fuller conversation about what might be viewed as parity legislation. If we did not do it over the past of number of months, it was vital that we do it over the next number of months.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for giving way. Parity is mentioned constantly. The difficulty is that the Committee received briefings from departmental officials who, with respect, had no say in or input into this legislation. It was simply dumped on us whether we liked it or not, and that hindered proper questioning on and discussion of the issues. The legislation is formulated and enacted in Britain, and we are

expected to sit down and accept it, even if it is punitive and prescriptive here.

Childcare provision is one such issue, but, before I finish, I also want to make a point about DLA. I have listened to radio programmes all week about people getting DLA who should not be. DLA is the benefit for which the least fraud is committed: 0.01%. I wish that those who speak about DLA fraud would check their facts. DLA is a very difficult benefit to get, and as the Minister well knows, it is medically determined, and medical evidence has to be provided in order to be entitled to it. Therefore, those who speak about DLA fraud impugn many doctors, specialists and others in the Six Counties who contribute to helping people receive DLA.

The Minister for Social Development: Nothing that the Member said is inconsistent with the four points that I made, but I will emphasise those points. Reassurances were given during the debates at the Bill's various stages and in Committee that disability rights organisations, for example, would be involved in preparing guidance. Reassurances were also given that the Committee would be involved in procurement.

All those reassurances could be put on the record elsewhere, but in order to understand how good cause could be applied in particular circumstances, it would be useful to me as the Minister to grasp fully where operational flexibility resides, how good cause is managed and how people can be better trained. We may have to live with parity measures for some time. However, it will be highly useful if, during debates on future welfare reform Bills, we can scope, get reassurance and develop as fully and as reasonably as possible how operational flexibility operates.

I agree with what the Member said about disability living allowance, and I return to the point that I made. I have asked officials to use a number of source documents to map out Northern Ireland and create a matrix that explains our levels of DLA take-up more fully.

I believe, for all the reasons that I outlined earlier, that a range of factors give rise to DLA applications and to the uptake rate in the North. That exercise can give me an evidence base for my conversation with Lord Freud; whether it has any impact on him is a different matter. However, establishing a proper evidence base is important so that what he knows to be the case and what I understand to be the case about the

people who are entitled to receive DLA and the good grounds on which they get it can be put on record and beyond contradiction. Therefore, if London authorities guide us in a certain way, that will give us the rebuttal arguments that we need to say that they should not go in that way.

I acknowledge what Mr Craig said about the close scrutiny of the Committee when it comes to the transfer of benefit claimants. Given the number of people — 76,000 — who will be affected by proposals for migration from income support, that is a very healthy and important piece of work. I know that officials will give evidence to the Committee tomorrow on how migration is being planned and implemented.

Yesterday, senior officials and I met a group of women from Derry to discuss how the benefits system is working for people who have been affected by cancer. One consequence of that meeting was that a group of women who have been personally or otherwise affected by cancer and who have issues with the benefits system and how it is managed opened up a direct line of communication with senior officials on the benefits side in order to get matters addressed.

That meeting gave rise to examples of practice that was not the best, if I can put it that way. That will, in all likelihood, lead to my having a conversation with the president of the appeals tribunal in respect of questions that may be open to interpretation. For example, women who are applying for DLA because of cancer or cancer medication are asked questions that, in their minds, reflect on their capacity and competence as parents. People who are conducting appeals tribunals need to be mindful that the questions that they ask about DLA entitlement can make people who are in a difficult situation wonder whether they are being asked about their competence as a parent, which is utterly irrelevant.

Therefore, I, as Minister, and the Committee must keep an eye on how the benefits system is working so that issues are properly managed. That is why I welcome what Jonathan Craig said about the Committee's commitment to scrutinise closely the transfer of benefit claimants. I can give the reassurance that I will be on a parallel path.

Mr Brady confirmed that it was my intention to do 30 months' work in 10 months. I am tempted to say that I would be doing a bit better than a lot of other Ministers who have done 10

months' work in 30 months, but I will not go down that particular road.

As Members know, I hold a strong view that Ministers who go into government go into power. I have a view that, in this mandate and in the first mandate, there was too much of one and too little of the other. Members can work that out for themselves.

I do not necessarily agree with the language that Mr Brady used, but I do not dissent from the sentiment that he and many other Members expressed. Whether the words used were "challenging", "misgiving", "sanctions" or "punitive", they capture the flavour of those matters. In responding to my comments during a previous debate, Ms Ní Chuilín acknowledged that, as Minister, I was on the same page as many others. I will find that quotation before I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I have personal reservations about a lot of this legislation, but I have a ministerial responsibility to people in the North, and there is a difference. In trying to map my way through this issue, that has guided me. My personal reservations about a number of clauses are deep and substantial to the point where I would agree with words such as "misgiving" and "punitive". Nonetheless, as a Minister, it is my job to think beyond my personal inclinations and consider what is in the best interest of people who are subject to the benefits system.

If there are any other matters that I have not addressed, I will certainly come back to them. I wish to correct two matters. According to my officials, Mr Brady — this may have been a slip of the tongue, so I will not make it a point — said that parents with children as young as one would have to look for work. Over and above the issue of childcare, which we have fully explored, no parent of a child under one has to do anything. A parent of a child who is between two and three years old has to attend only work-focused interviews, and those would happen, at most, every quarter. Parents with children who are between three and six years old may have to do work-related activity, subject to all the caveats that are already on the record.

I welcome what Ms Ní Chuilín said in reply to the debate at the Bill's Consideration Stage. As regards some comments made previously, she said:

"In fairness to the Minister, I note that he took a different approach to the issue. The impression that I get — I am not asking him to confirm it, even though I am really tempted to — is that, if he was convinced that stretching matters and breaking parity on the issue would not affect a subvention, he might actually go with it. That is the sense that I got." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 53, p74, col 2].

That probably accurately and fairly reflects my views. Of course that view was contradicted a few days later when Ms Ní Chuilín said in a statement:

"The SDLP Minister, Alex Attwood, may be content with regulating sanctions, Sinn Féin are not. Fundamentally, we should not be punishing those who find themselves out of work for perfectly legitimate reasons. The other parties, and the SDLP in particular, have very serious questions to answer about why they are bringing forward legislation that will attack the weakest within our society, and nowhere is this more stark than in areas of high deprivation such as North Belfast."

I find those sorts of comments unnecessary. A Member should say one thing on the Floor of the House and then say it to the public, or he or she should say nothing.

During the various debates on this legislation, I went out of my way to say that I understood the sentiment behind amendments and that they were not mischievous, even though they might create mischief with the operation of the benefits system in the North. I tried to hear, listen and respond to what people said, but, being mindful of wider political and parity issues, I am somewhat constrained. I find it simply disingenuous to be told to my face in this House that others think that I would like to stretch parity in a way that would not affect a subvention and, a couple of days later, to be told that I am regulating sanctions. That is simply not the case.

Mr Brady: With respect, Minister, I think that you should take the compliments when you get them and the criticism when you get it.

The Minister for Social Development: I am thick-skinned and have been in politics long enough to take all of that. However, if we are to have a serious, balanced conversation about parity and about stretching and changing parity, then, in my view, the one thing that you do not do in the North is play politics with people in need who are entitled to the benefits. Therefore, I will take the compliment, but I will note the

criticism, because you are playing both sides of the fence, and that ill serves people who need all Members to be on the right side of the fence.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Welfare Reform Bill [NIA 13/09] do now pass.

4.15 pm

Private Members' Business

Victims and Survivors (Disqualification) Bill

Mr Deputy Speaker: The next item of business is the First Stage of the Victims and Survivors (Disqualification) Bill. I call Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Weir: Mr Deputy Speaker, due to technical issues that have been raised with me and that require clarification, it is now my intention to bring the Bill forward in autumn 2010. Consequently, the First Stage of the Bill is not introduced.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The First Stage of the Victims and Survivors (Disqualification) Bill has not been introduced.

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Deputy Speaker.]

Adjournment

Reavey Family Murders, January 1976

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that the proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes in which to speak. All other Members will have approximately eight minutes.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Choiste Gnó as an am a thabhairt domh a bheith páirteach sa díospóireacht seo. I thank the Business Committee for providing the time for the Assembly to debate this important issue.

John Martin Reavey, aged 24, and his brother Brian, aged 22, were murdered in their home on 4 January 1976. Gunmen broke into their home near Whitecross and sprayed the living room with bullets, killing John Martin instantly. Brian tried to escape. However, he made it only to the bedroom door before he, too, was murdered.

Anthony Reavey, who was 17 years old, threw himself under a bed for protection, but was shot and left for dead. Seriously wounded, he managed to crawl from the house to try to raise the alarm at a neighbour's house. Having survived for some weeks, Anthony later died.

I know the Reavey family well. I am aware that other Members of the House also know the family. They are a highly respected family in south Armagh. When that dreadful deed happened, no one in the locality could understand why the family had been targeted and attacked.

On the same night, another Catholic family, the O'Dowd family, who lived at Ballydugan near Gilford, was also attacked. Three members of that family were murdered. They were Joseph O'Dowd, aged 61, and his two nephews Barry, aged 24, and Declan, aged 19. Barney O'Dowd, the father of the two boys, was seriously injured. As it happens, all of them were SDLP members. They are related to Mr O'Dowd, Member for Upper Bann.

A group comprising loyalist paramilitaries who acted in collusion with members of the police

force, the RUC Reserve and the UDR, known as the Glenanne gang, was responsible for at least 18 gun and bomb attacks, in which 58 people were murdered. That group had its headquarters in the farm of James Mitchell, who is now deceased, which was situated just outside the village of Glenanne, around two miles from where the Reavey family lived. One of the gang's members, former RUC sergeant John Weir, confessed to his part in its activities and exposed the gang's members. I have already dealt in detail with the activities, victims and membership of that gang in a previous speech that I made in the House on 24 May 2010. The gang was responsible for the murder of the Reavey brothers, the O'Dowds, and many others.

On the day following his sons' murders, their father Mr Jimmy Reavey appealed that there be no retaliation for his sons' deaths. Unfortunately, that appeal fell on deaf ears. That night, the murders continued. Ten Protestant workers, who were on their way home in the mill works minibus, were murdered by a group that called itself the South Armagh Republican Action Force. The bus was stopped by a group of armed men who were dressed in camouflage jackets. Richard Hughes, who was the only Catholic on the bus, was picked out of the group and told to run up the road.

Many of his fellow workers, with the murders of the Reaveys from the previous night in mind, thought that he was to be the victim and tried to shield him. Richard was spared, because of his religion. His fellow workers were sprayed with bullets until all except one lay dead on the road. Alan Black from Bessbrook was the only one to survive.

I knew most of those who were murdered that night. They were from my native village of Bessbrook; I played football with some of them in the pond field. They were ordinary working-class people returning home after doing a day's work. I also played football with members of the Reavey family. Brian Reavey was a student at the same school that I attended, St Paul's in Bessbrook, where he was renowned as the top sportsman of his year group. His younger brother Anthony was also a talented footballer. Those young people had many things in common.

When the Kingsmill massacre was taking place, the Reavey family were on their way to Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry to bring home the remains of their murdered brothers. They came across

the scene of the massacre at Kingsmill, and one of the surviving brothers helped to divert traffic from that terrible scene. On reaching the hospital, Eugene Reavey, in the midst of his grief, did what any decent person would do: he went to the room in which the relatives of the Kingsmill victims had gathered, introduced himself and offered the condolences of his family to the victims.

Anthony Reavey became friends with Alan Black, who was one of the two survivors of the Kingsmill massacre, when both were in hospital recovering from their wounds. Alan was broken-hearted when he heard that Anthony Reavey had died on 30 January 1976. The original verdict at his inquest was one of death by natural causes, but that was later changed to an open verdict.

There was no real investigation of the Reavey murders, and the family was left to try to come to terms with the murders without any help whatsoever from those in authority. That was the case until Commander Dave Cox of the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) investigated the murders. Difficult as it was to come to terms with the murders, it was made even more difficult by a statement that was made by a Member of this House, Dr Paisley, in another place on 27 January 1999. He said:

"It is interesting to note that a police dossier carefully prepared on the Kingsmill massacre has recently come to light."

Dr Paisley continued:

"According to the dossier, Eugene Reavey, a well-known republican, 'set up the Kingsmill massacre'."

The Reavey family have been victims of collusion, not once, but twice: first, when three members of the family were murdered by the UVF, acting in collusion with elements of the security forces; and, secondly, nearly a quarter of a century later, when the name of one of the surviving brothers, Eugene, was blackened under the shield of parliamentary privilege. None of those accusations was true. Former RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan said that no police file contained any such allegation. Immediately upon hearing that report, the sole survivor of the Kingsmill massacre, Alan Black, phoned Eugene Reavey's home and told him that he knew that what Dr Paisley had said could not be true.

More recently, the HET has stated definitively that neither Eugene Reavey, his murdered

brothers, nor any member of his family had any connections with any paramilitary grouping or crime. Therefore, one must ask why Dr Paisley said what he said. Where did the supposed dossier come from? Who would have a motive to create it and plant it on a gullible MP? Dr Paisley did not question the provenance of the dossier, so he must have believed that it came from an authoritative police source, of which he has utilised many over his long political career.

Therefore, decades after the actual collusion, it seems that well-placed persons were still in action, covering up crimes and spreading lies and malicious slander that were based on tittle-tattle in an attempt to justify organised, systematic sectarian murder on a large scale.

The Reavey family are as satisfied as people in their circumstances can be with what the Historical Enquiries Team has done. However, one thing still rankles with them: the false allegation that Dr Paisley made against their brother Eugene. They would like to see that slur removed in their now 88-year-old mother's lifetime. It is not too much to ask. Eugene Reavey has written to Dr Paisley on several occasions, but he has received no reply. Dr Paisley is aware of the situation.

The Reavey family want no recompense other than to see the record set straight and their brother's name cleared. It is within Dr Paisley's gift to respond positively to the request from an 88-year-old mother and grandmother and her surviving sons and daughters, whether that is done in a face-to-face private meeting, in the House of Lords when he takes his seat there, or by whatever means with which Dr Paisley feels most comfortable. Ian Paisley is known as "The Big Man". He now has the opportunity to show that he is big, not just in stature but in heart and mind. I hope that, for the sake of Sadie Reavey, he takes that opportunity.

Many people died in south Armagh during the Troubles, and I want to remember them all here today, from whatever background they came. I hope sincerely that their loved ones get the truth that they deserve. I ask the House to join me in that sentiment and to recognise the innocence of the murdered Reavey brothers and the whole Reavey family. I ask the House to join me in urging Dr Paisley to do the right thing by the Reavey family. Perhaps, too, the Chief Constable, Mr Baggott, could take time

out of his busy schedule to visit Mrs Reavey and apologise in person on behalf of the police.

I am glad to welcome members of the Reavey family who have come here today to hear this debate. I trust that other Members who participate in the debate will do so in the spirit in which I have entered into it.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I apologise on behalf of Conor Murphy, the MP and an MLA for Newry and Armagh, who cannot be here because of another engagement. I thank Dominic Bradley for securing the debate, and I welcome the opportunity to speak on the matter. I got to know the Reavey family through my previous job, and I got the opportunity to work with and know people in the communities in Whitecross, Drumnahunshin, Greyhillan and Glenanne. Those people treated me well, and I want to put my appreciation for that on record.

I also want to put on record that the three members of the Reavey family — John Martin, Brian and Anthony — who were gunned down in cold blood at Greyhillan, Whitecross on 4 January 1976, were completely innocent. They were ordinary people who became victims of collusion that was carried out by members of the RUC, UDR, UVF and British intelligence. Part of that group became known as the notorious Glenanne gang.

I do not propose to repeat everything that Dominic Bradley said. Instead, I want to concentrate on the broader picture, which is closely linked to the murders of members of the Reavey family in Whitecross.

The murders of the Reavey family were not carried out in isolation. That notorious gang carried out a number of atrocities, and I would like to speak, if I may, on some of those incidents, such as the bomb at the Step Inn Bar in Keady, the shooting at the Rock Bar in Granemore outside Keady and the attacks on Donnelly's Bar in Silverbridge and Tully's Bar in Belleeks.

I want to put it on record that I had the privilege as a young boy of working as a paper boy for the McGleenan family, who owned a paper shop. One of their sons was killed in the Step Inn bomb. On the evening of Monday 16 August 1976, a no-warning bomb exploded outside the Step Inn in St Patrick Street in Keady, which is commonly known as Chapel Street. There were 15 to 20 people in the bar at that time. A blue

Ford Cortina hijacked three days earlier from the Shankill Road had been packed with more than 200 lb of explosives and was parked against the gable wall of the bar.

I want to put those events in context so that Members can understand. Paddy McGleenan's son and James McDonald's wife were killed in that attack. Those two men would have walked around and checked the streets for suspicious cars. The car that was stolen on the Shankill Road had been fitted with Armagh plates, so no remarks would have been passed on it. The bar owner, James McDonald, told the inquest that he had also noticed that street lights in Chapel Street had been turned off when he left the bar. It was common practice in those days for the lights —

4.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member is straying way off the topic of the debate. I ask him to return to the substance of the debate, which is the murder of the Reavey brothers.

Mr Boylan: I was just setting the context so that Members have a clear understanding, but I take your point, Mr Deputy Speaker. Betty McDonald, who was 32 years old and the mother of three young children, was in the bar when the bomb exploded. Her husband found her lying behind the bar after the explosion with their youngest child standing over her, crying. Gerald McGleenan, who was 22 years old, was standing outside his home opposite the Step Inn in Chapel Street when the bomb exploded. He was hit by shrapnel and died within minutes. A keen hurler, he had played in the county senior final the week before his death. Members of the team were pallbearers at his funeral.

Some 22 other people were injured in the blast, including a pregnant woman. Her unborn baby survived uninjured, only to be shot dead —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to remind the Member to come back to the substance of the debate. I know that you are trying to put the debate into context, but the matter that is being debated is the murder of the Reavey brothers. I ask the Member to take that into consideration.

Mr Boylan: With your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to set that murder in context because it did not happen in isolation. I said that at the very start.

Mr T Clarke: When the Member is putting things in context, will he acknowledge the complete context of murders in Northern Ireland, some of which his party and members of his party committed? If we are to stray off the topic for debate, which is the murder of the Reavey family, perhaps the Member will focus on the murders that some of his comrades conducted.

Mr Boylan: I am putting in context exactly what happened at the time. The murder of the Reaveys did not happen in isolation; it was joined together with operations carried out perhaps over a 12-month period. That is what I want to talk about today, because I am well aware —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand what the Member is saying, but the substance of the debate is the murder of the Reavey brothers; therefore, the main part of a speech should be about that. If the Member wishes to talk about the entire context of that period, he is at liberty to table a motion for debate in the House at another time.

Mr Boylan: Thank you very much for that guidance. I am just speaking about what happened at Greyhillan, Whitecross. There is a connection between what happened to the Reavey brothers in Whitecross and other incidents in south Armagh in that year. I want to put into context some of the cases where some of the weapons that were used in the murder of the Reaveys were also used in the murder and attempted murder of other people in south Armagh. Look at the unfortunate incident of two GAA supporters shot dead in Altnamackan, coming home from Dublin. It was proved that the 9 mm Luger that was used in the double murder had been used in other incidents. That is why I have to put what happened at that time into context. I referred to the bombing of the Step Inn because this gang was all part of that. We cannot deny what happened at that time.

It started in December 1975 in Donnelly's in Silverbridge. Unfortunately, the Reavey brothers were then killed in January 1976, and it continued for six months. It is clearly stated in the records and reports that the same weapons were used in a number of those incidents. That is why I wanted to bring that up today. The weapons that were used on the Reaveys were also used in the attack on the Rock Bar in Granemore, when Michael McGrath was shot in the stomach. The same weapons were shown

to be used and the same people involved as in the crimes committed against the Reaveys in Whitecross. That is why I am bringing that up today. I want Members to recognise that. There was an attempted murder in the Rock Bar in Granemore in June 1976, as well.

There is strong evidence that those attacks were carried out by what became known as the infamous Glenanne gang, which — whether or not people like to recognise it — was state-sponsored and state-led terrorism. The gang was a consortium of UDR, RUC and UVF personnel supported by military and British intelligence. It is due to the involvement of state bodies that the murders of the Reavey brothers and many other people, some of whom I have spoken about today, have never been resolved. That has blackened not only the characters of some of those families and some of the people in that area but the area itself.

In a debate earlier today, some Member was encouraging us to go to Dungannon and talking about the civic reception and civic issues and about what they were doing in Dungannon. I want to put south Armagh in that context, because the character of that area has been blackened, and that is not right. Atrocities have happened on both sides, and my party has stood up and said that it is willing to move forward and to work together on that issue. However, Members must recognise exactly what happened during that time, and I tried to set that in context. I will finish by saying that that situation must change.

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

Mr Boylan: I hope that the families and people of south Armagh, some of whom are in the Public Gallery today, find out the truth, receive an apology and get the recognition that they deserve.

Mr Kennedy: Clearly, very strong emotions are attached to the issue. I recognise Mr Bradley's right to table this topic for Adjournment debate. Unfortunately, Mr Boylan's contribution has not helped to deal with many of the issues involved.

Mr T Clarke: I thank the Member for giving way. He referred to the contribution of Mr Boylan, who suggested that the people concerned should get the apology that they are due. I have no problem with that. However, does the Member agree with me that Sinn Féin should

also apologise for the cowardly murders that it carried out in the same period?

Mr O'Dowd: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The political party of which I am proud to be a member has not been responsible for the murder of anyone. I can understand that there are strong emotions in the Chamber, as Mr Kennedy said. However, we must not let the debate degenerate into a slanging match.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member is quite right, and I thank him for that point of order. Sinn Féin is a political party and was not responsible for any murders in itself.

Mr T Clarke: I accept that ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker. I should have said, "the members of Sinn Féin who were convicted of murder". Does the Member agree with the point that I have just made?

Mr Kennedy: The Member makes an important point, and I hope to address the issues involved as I progress with my speech.

The early and mid-1970s were a truly dreadful time in the south Armagh area and, more particularly, in Whitecross and Newtownhamilton. It involved the murders of security force personnel and ordinary individuals who were caught up in a cycle that was mostly tit-for-tat deaths. The murders created an atmosphere of fear and distrust that stalked the region, and the consequences were severe. Lives were taken, lives were broken, and lives were changed for ever. In the south Armagh area, which I am proud to represent, we live and deal with that legacy today. Therefore, I do not want the debate to descend into a tribal jamboree of blame, counterblame and "whataboutery". However, it is important to put into context some of the events that all of us struggle to come to terms with and make sense of. None of those events should have happened.

It is my belief that the three Reavey brothers, Brian, John Martin and Anthony, who died some weeks later, were murdered in a very cruel and callous manner and were entirely innocent victims. I place that on record and have no doubt of that in my mind. On the same evening, just outside Gilford, members of the O'Dowd family were also murdered in the cycle of tit-for-tat deaths that was so common throughout County Armagh and other places in Northern Ireland.

From the early to mid-70s, particularly in the Whitecross/Newtownhamilton area, there was a series of murders, particularly of security force personnel, atrocities such as the murder of five Orangemen at Tullyvallen Orange Hall on 1 September 1975 and individual murders. Today, we heard allegations about who was responsible for those. It is alleged by some, as was repeated today in the Chamber, that members of the security forces were involved in that collusion. However, it is my belief that no substantial proof has been provided to justify those remarks.

We also heard about politicians' intemperate remarks. I draw to the attention of the House the remarks made by a former deputy First Minister, Séamus Mallon, who, after the murder of two individuals returning from a GAA match in the Republic of Ireland, said that loyalist assassins were operating within the UDR in Newtownhamilton. That was a highly provocative statement that has caused great offence down through the years and continues to do so. All politicians have a responsibility to remember that what we say, how we behave and how we react can have significant influence.

We already heard from Mr Bradley about the Kingsmill massacre, which is close to my heart, given that I knew nine of the individuals and their families and continue to try to assist those who were caught up in that massacre. That had a profound effect on the village of Bessbrook and the wider area, which is still felt to this day. I say again that none of that should have happened.

4.45 pm

This debate revolves around a single event, when three innocent people were gunned down in cold blood. That event was not justified by anything, but neither was it isolated. Within 24 hours, 16 people died who should not have died. The previous year, 207 people died who should not have died; and 300 other people were to die in 1976 following the events of January 1976. None of that should have happened.

I live in the area of those deaths. I was a teenager at the time, and I know the effect that they had on myself and my community. I now live some three miles from the original Reavey home and, therefore, even less distance from the scene of the Kingsmill massacre. I travel on that road very often, and I always, always reflect on the events of January 1976 and the fearful

consequences with which so many families have had to deal.

The critical thing is that none of it should have happened. We have, of course, real concerns that, if we are asked to provide inquiries similar to the Saville Inquiry, it will simply create a hierarchy of deaths as we look back. Everyone in Northern Ireland wants to try to look forward, yet to remember the mistakes of the past and to be sure to take account and take care of the victims. Therefore, as we study those complex issues and pay attention to those so badly affected and although we should acknowledge the past, it is time for us to strive to move forward and create the better and shared future that all our people need and deserve.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, welcome the debate secured by Mr Bradley. I also welcome members of the Reavey family here today.

We have to keep it in mind that we are talking about the brutal murder of innocent people. As someone from Newry and not that far from Whitecross when it happened, I remember the aftermath vividly. Mr Kennedy alluded to the Kingsmill massacre. I, too, knew people who were killed and murdered in that. I knew the Chapman brothers through football and darts, and I know Alan Black, who fortunately survived, even though he was shot 18 times.

Recompense has been mentioned. I know Mrs Reavey well. As has been said, she is 88 years of age. She reared a family that was extremely respectable, well-got and popular in our area. I went to school with Eugene Reavey, albeit a couple of years behind him, and I am sure that he will not mind me saying that. It was a family that was never, to anyone's knowledge, involved in anything nefarious, as has been alleged. Allegations were made against Eugene in particular.

The family wants justice in the sense of real justice. They simply want the record put straight. The Glenanne gang was alluded to, and its activities are well documented. Other Members spoke about murders by other groups. What we are talking about here is murder by people who were entrusted with upholding the law. Therein lies the difference. We are constantly berated in this Chamber by Members talking about the upholders of the law and the people who stood in the front line against terrorism and all the rest of it. Sometimes, people need to stand

up and put their hands up and say, "Yes, that happened; it did happen".

The Reavey family is not looking for anything but an admission. Indeed, the Historical Enquiries Team, as Dominic Bradley alluded to, has accepted fully that the Reavey brothers were innocent. Everybody in Newry and the surrounding area of south Armagh knew that the Reavey brothers were innocent, as, indeed, were the O'Dowds and the other people murdered in Donnelly's bar at Silverbridge and the people at Kingsmill.

All that anyone is asking is for that to be put in context.

I agree with Mr Kennedy that these things should not have happened, but the fact is that they did. We need to move on, but there are families such as the Reaveys who have to live with this every single day. Eugene Reavey's name has been blackened, and all that he wants is a simple apology. I see no problem with that. Dr Paisley rose in the British Parliament, using parliamentary privilege, and cast scurrilous allegations against Eugene Reavey. It is time that that was put to rest. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The date of 4 January is marked indelibly on my mind. As a young lad of eight and a half years, I remember sitting on a Sunday evening watching television with my family. As in many rural homes, the whole family had packed into the room to watch the Sunday evening film. A knock came at the door. Even at that young age, we were under strict instructions not to open the front door unless we knew who was there. I looked out through the window to our yard where I saw a number of my cousins standing in what, even to me at that young age, was recognisable as a distressed state. I opened the door and my next memories are of my mother and father crying for the first time that I can remember at the news of the deaths of my cousin Barry, 24; Declan, 18; and my uncle Joe, who was in his 60s.

At that age, all those things do not immediately sink in but, as the night wore on, I became aware that another family had been visited by the same heartache and horror: the Reaveys. There is a connection with any family that loses a loved one: the horror, the pain and all that goes with it. I know that Members opposite have lost loved ones in similarly horrible circumstances. Their pain is no different from

any other family's, whether we are talking about innocent civilians, republican activists or members of one of the British services who lost their lives during the conflict. The pain to a family member is no different.

The connection between the Reaveys and the O'Dowds is that the same gang carried out the killings. I can understand Mr Kennedy's defence of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and I accept that many people joined the Ulster Defence Regiment because they believed that they were doing the right thing. In their minds, they were serving all sections of the community. However, it is undeniable — beyond undeniable — that senior members of the Glenanne gang were also members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the RUC and British military intelligence. To deny that does not serve the memory of anyone, whether they be former members of the British forces who believed that they were serving honourably and doing the right thing, or the victims of that gang.

Mr Kennedy: Does the Member accept that it is comparatively easy to make allegations without producing serious and credible evidence and that a great many families whose relatives served in the security forces will feel deeply offended by statements made not only in the course of this debate but in the past, and that some account should be given to substantiate some of the allegations that have been made?

Mr O'Dowd: I do not wish to cause offence to anyone's family, but there is evidence. The Barron Inquiry, a thorough investigation of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, showed that they were carried out by the Glenanne gang. That inquiry identified members of the gang as members of the British Army, the RUC, the UDR and British intelligence agencies. We have a statement from a former member of the gang who was a sergeant in the RUC. A Mr McCaughey was both a member of the gang and a member of the RUC. I do not say that to offend people who have lost loved ones or anyone else; I say it because the truth needs to be told.

Why did Dr Paisley stand up in the British House of Commons and make those allegations against Eugene Reavey? It is well known that Mr Reavey is not a prominent republican, nor a republican in the sense that was presented to the British Parliament.

Why blacken Eugene Reavey's name? Was it an attempt to divert attention away from the growing media and political interest in exactly what the Glenanne gang was about? Who was the motivating force behind the Glenanne gang and the atrocities that it carried out in south Armagh? Was that why such a prominent politician as Dr Paisley stood up in Westminster and read out a statement which was factually incorrect and had no basis in reality whatsoever? Perhaps Mr Paisley believed it at the time. Mr Bradley said that the information was given to Mr Paisley, in his terms, by a reliable source. However, surely Mr Paisley cannot stand over it now.

There is no basis to the allegations made against Eugene Reavey or the Reavey family. It not only reflects on the Reavey family and on my relatives who were killed that night, but casts murkiness over that whole episode. Neither does it do any justice to those people who were gunned down mercilessly at Kingsmill. The families of the people murdered at Kingsmill deserve to know the truth about the people who lined them up against a bus and shot them dead that night. If allegations are being made against Eugene Reavey, or anyone else, that are untrue, it does not assist the quest for truth for the families of the Kingsmill victims either.

I remember sitting in my mother's sister's house near Lurgan the following night, when the news of the Kingsmill massacre came through. The same horror that I witnessed the night before in my family home was witnessed in that home as well, because people were appalled at what had happened. I join the call for Dr Paisley to withdraw the comments he made about Eugene Reavey in order to allow Mrs Reavey, in her last years, to know that her family has been completely vindicated, and to set the record straight.

Mr Kennedy said that we cannot go through the expensive processes of Saville, etc. The Saville report would never have been necessary if the truth had not been hidden. If we just let the truth about many of those things out, there will be no need to go down the road of Saville. Give families such as the Reaveys the truth around the circumstances in which their loved ones were killed. The Reaveys and the O'Dowd family were killed to strike terror into the Catholic community.

Mr Kennedy: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: Just let me finish this point.

The Kingsmill victims were killed to strike terror into the Protestant community. The circumstances around all those killings were wrong and the killings of individuals were wrong.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. How does he think that we can achieve truth for the families of the Kingsmill victims?

Mr O'Dowd: It is not up to me to dictate what the Kingsmill families want. They may want continuing custodial justice around those sorts of things. I believe that a fully independent, international truth inquiry would allow families such as those of the victims of Kingsmill, and other families who have never had the full truth around the death of their loved ones, to have the truth delivered to them. I am not saying that that is all that the Kingsmill families deserve. It is up to the Kingsmill families to decide what level they want to go to.

The reason why I support the peace process and will stand against those people who are trying to drag us into the past is that, as a young boy, I buried my neighbours and my friends, like so many other people did. I am not going back there. I am not letting anyone else drag us back into that society, because we all deserve better.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Orders, an Adjournment debate is to last for one hour. We have already had 45 minutes, and I have to allow 10 minutes for the Minister of Justice to respond. I therefore call Mr Alban Maginness to speak for five minutes.

Mr A Maginness: I apologise for not being here earlier, but I had other duties to attend to. I followed a large part of the debate on a monitor.

There are three points to be made. The first is that there is unequivocal recognition in the House of the innocence of the Reavey brothers and family. I think that that is of great comfort to the family. The fact that the Assembly says that without equivocation is very important to the family. The general recognition that this House has given to the Reavey brothers' innocence is very important; it is a significant decision on the part of the House.

5.00 pm

Although everyone that we are talking about was a victim of terrorism and, in particular, of

sectarian and counter-sectarian violence, it has to be said that the slur on Eugene Reavey occasioned by Dr Paisley speaking in the House of Commons and associating him with the Kingsmill massacre hurt very deeply. It behoves all of us in this House to encourage Dr Paisley — who has made hard political decisions that nobody would have countenanced in his political life — who is big in stature, personality and persona to become an even bigger man by admitting to his error in so describing Mr Reavey in the House of Commons. This House should urge him to resile from what he said in the House of Commons. That would go a long way towards reconciling the Reavey family, particularly Mr Reavey and his mother, who, I think, would gracefully accept such a retraction.

I take issue with what Mr Kennedy said about Séamus Mallon. Séamus Mallon spoke with knowledge about what had occurred. There is no equivalence between what was said by Mr Mallon and by Mr Paisley, and there should be no attempt to make their statements equivalent. Mr Mallon expressed views that were widely held in the community. Indeed, the activities of the Glenanne gang have been well documented; the gang included a former RUC sergeant who confessed to his part in its activities and who exposed other gang members. There is no doubt that what Mr Mallon suggested was proven to be correct. If there is any doubt, further investigation should take place, and if an inquiry is needed, let us have one to clear the matter up. However, collusion in the murder of the Reaveys is, in my view, demonstrably clear. A sad, sad aspect of those murders is that people who should have been dedicated to the rule of law and order betrayed the trust that the community had given them.

This debate is important because it allows the Reavey family and the community at large to recognise that people care for them, for their reputation and for the fact that the family has suffered grievously, not just through physical injury and death but also through damage to their reputation. However, today, their reputation has been restored.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

The Minister of Justice (Mr Ford): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate and congratulate Dominic Bradley on securing it.

I met Eugene Reavey in May of this year, when he raised with me the findings of the Historical

Enquiries Team. It was absolutely clear that, 34 years on, the pain of the loss of his brothers remains very real for him and for his family. Therefore, first, I would like to express publicly, as I have already expressed privately, my sympathy for him and his wider family circle on the loss of his three brothers: John Martin, Brian and Anthony.

As other Members, Mr Bradley and Mr Kennedy in particular, said, 4 and 5 January 1976 were two of the most tragic days in the history of the Troubles, with the murder of three Reavey brothers, the murder of three members of the O'Dowd family and, the following day, the terrible events at Kingsmill, where 10 workers were singled out on their way home from work and gunned down.

When I met Eugene Reavey, I was not aware of the contents of the review summary report that the Historical Enquiries Team had prepared for him and his family. That is because the HET's commitment is to the families of the victims of the Troubles. No one is entitled to see an HET report without the prior approval of the family concerned. At that meeting, Mr Reavey gave approval for me to be given a copy, which is why I am able to speak about it today.

Let us remember that we are discussing only one of 782 cases, involving 1,007 victims, that have been completed so far by the HET. It was established in 2005 and is tasked with reviewing all 3,261 deaths that occurred as a result of the Troubles between 1968 and 1998. It has the two-fold aim of striving to bring a measure of resolution to families and ensuring that all investigative and evidential opportunities are subject to thorough and exhaustive examination.

Every one of the deaths that occurred during the Troubles is a tragedy. Each case is also unique, and families will have markedly different views and perspectives and different questions and issues of concern. As I said, the HET approach is family centred. In the review of the murder of the Reavey brothers, it attempted to answer more than 30 questions from family members. To carry out that work effectively, the HET developed a five-phase process that includes the collection, assessment and review of all relevant material, followed by a focused reinvestigation and resolution. In this review, as in all others, the HET accessed witness

statements, forensic reports, the original police case papers and intelligence information.

In summary, the HET reached the following conclusions about the murder of John Martin, Brian and Anthony Reavey: the Reavey family was well respected in the local community; the attack happened at a time of spiralling sectarian violence in south Armagh; and there was no evidence, nor were there any evidential opportunities, that could bring about the identification or prosecution of those responsible. The inquiry found that John Martin, Brian and Anthony Reavey were entirely innocent victims who had no criminal convictions or links to any paramilitary group.

As the Minister of Justice elected in 2010, I have no responsibility for the events of 1976. However, I repeat the conclusions of the HET: the three Reavey brothers, John Martin, Brian and Anthony, were entirely innocent victims who had no criminal convictions or links to any paramilitary group. I particularly welcome the fact that Danny Kennedy, as a unionist representative of that area, acknowledged that this afternoon.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

The Minister of Justice: The report further stated that no member of the Reavey family had any verified links to any paramilitary group, which is contrary to later speculation. I know, from the meeting in May, about the particular hurt that has been caused to Eugene Reavey by the repetition of that speculation. This afternoon, Mr Bradley and other Members referred to the feelings of Mr Reavey's mother. We all wish those feelings to be taken into account.

The HET report also states that there are sufficient accounts from the Reavey family members and from independent observers to evidence the harassment that the family endured from some members of the security forces after those terrible murders. They were the subject of disinformation, rumour and innuendo, which caused them great distress for many years. That issue has been well aired this afternoon.

Northern Ireland has moved a long way from the dark days of the Troubles. For most of us, those days are memories, and, for younger members of society, they are history. However, there is no doubt that some of those who suffered directly still suffer to this day.

The report, I believe, underlines the positive role that the HET is playing in providing a measure of resolution to families who lost loved ones during the Troubles. It pledges to deal with families with honesty, trust and confidentiality and to carry out its work with great sensitivity and professionalism. Its commitment to families has resulted in its seeking to answer more than 6,200 questions raised by families seeking answers about the death of their loved ones.

An independent survey carried out last year, and which will be repeated this year, found that 95% of families who engaged with the HET viewed it as professional; 86% were at least satisfied with its performance; while only 5% were dissatisfied. That has also been recognised internationally. The secretariat to the Committee of Ministers in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) believes that the HET can be considered as:

"a useful model for bringing a 'measure of resolution' to those affected in long-lasting conflicts".

As a result, the ECHR has financed the visit of a delegation from Russia to meet the HET so that it can learn from the HET's expertise in bringing resolution to those affected in long-lasting conflicts, such as the one in Chechnya.

The HET was established in 2005 and scheduled to last for six years. With one year left of the project, only 782 cases, involving 1,007 victims, out of 2,561 cases, have been completed. It is clear that the work will not be completed within the time allocated, although it expects to complete more than 1,000 cases by the end of the six years originally proposed.

I am pleased that the Chief Constable has given his commitment to continue the work of the HET with a targeted finish of March 2013. He has also indicated that more time will be given if it is required.

Reports, such as those produced by the HET and, indeed, the Saville report into the events of Bloody Sunday, which we talked about last week, bring into sharp focus how best we can address the legacy of Northern Ireland's past and how we can move forward as a society.

Although the Northern Ireland Office has retained policy responsibility for addressing the past, there are many issues for the Executive to consider. I am committed to working with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First

Minister and other Executive colleagues to ensure that the rights and needs of victims are fully met and that those parts of the justice system that fall to me play their part. We owe it to the memory of John Martin, Brian and Anthony Reavey, and to the memory of all other victims of the Troubles, and to Mr Eugene Reavey, his family circle and the others who were bereaved and suffered during the Troubles, to commit the Assembly and all the institutions of government to promote reconciliation and to seek to work together to build a shared future. I will ensure that the Department of Justice plays its part.

Adjourned at 5.13 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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Employment and Learning

Enterprise Ulster: Annual Report and Accounts 2006-07 and Accounts April to June 2007

*Published on
Monday 28 June 2010*

The Minister for Employment and Learning

(Sir Reg Empey): I am pleased to inform Assembly Members that the Enterprise Ulster Annual Report & Accounts for the 2006/07 year and also the Accounts for the three month period prior to the closure of Enterprise Ulster on 30 June 2007 will be laid today. As a result of the winding up of the organisation there were a number of financial and auditing issues which took some time to resolve. The accounts were signed off by the NIAO earlier this year and I am now in a position to proceed with laying the documents.

The Report and Accounts are available on the internet at www.delni.gov.uk, and hard copies are available from the Library. Additional copies may be obtained by contacting the Department's Employment Service Modernisation Branch on 028 9025 2238.

Regional Development

Roads Service: Section Offices

*Published at 12.00 noon on
Wednesday 7 July 2010*

The Minister for Regional Development

(Mr Murphy): I wish to inform Assembly Members of plans for my Department's Roads Service to reorganise a number of its Section Offices.

As a result of increasing financial pressure on Road Service's admin budget, and as part of its 'Roads Service 2012' Project, I have approved the reorganisation of eight of Roads Service's smaller Section Offices into four new combined Section Offices, each covering two adjacent Council areas.

This reorganisation will help Roads Service to manage budgetary pressures in 2010/11 and in future years.

This stage of the reorganisation involves combining the following Section Offices:

- Coleraine and Limavady;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh;
- Banbridge and Craigavon; and
- Magherafelt and Cookstown.

In each case, the new Section Office will look after network maintenance activities in two Council areas. Such an arrangement already exists and works well in Roads Service's Ballymena and Larne Section Office and at its Ballymoney and Moyle Section Office.

Discussions to keep Trade Unions and the affected Councils informed will continue over the summer months, in advance of the changes being made.

Environment

Publication of PPS 7 Addendum

*Published at 12.00 noon on
Tuesday 10 August 2010*

The Minister of the Environment (Mr Poots): I am pleased to inform Assembly members that the Executive, at its meeting on 22 July 2010, has endorsed the Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS 7), titled 'Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas'.

Public consultation on a draft PPS 7 Addendum concluded on 5 March 2010 with a total of 89 responses received from organisations, and individuals. The responses received were generally supportive of the proposed policies. The final Addendum includes a number of minor changes to improve the clarity of the document.

The policies set out in the Addendum will help towards the better management of proposals for the redevelopment of existing buildings; proposals for the infilling of vacant sites (including extended garden areas), and proposals for the conversion or sub-division of existing building to flats or apartments (including those for multiple occupancy).

These additional operational planning policies are designed to ensure that the character of established residential areas is not unduly impacted upon by future residential development proposals.

The Addendum will also help reduce flash flooding in urban areas by encouraging greater use of permeable paving within new residential developments.

Copies of the final policy have been placed in Members' pigeon holes.

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 2 July 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Newtownards Castlebawn Development Project

Mr J Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the written representations received from elected representatives, in relation to the Newtownards Castlebawn development project, in the last four years, including the names of the representatives involved and the dates of any written representations made.

(AQW 7517/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): Our records show that over the last 4 years we have received five written representations from elected representatives in relation to the Newtownards Castlebawn development project. Details of these are outlined in the Table below.

Date of Written Representation	Detail
26 January 2009	Letter registering concern about the DOE decision to take the project to Public Local Inquiry and delays encountered through the work of the Planning Appeals Commission.
27 May 2009	Letter seeking clarification on information contained in the response from First Minister and deputy First Minister to the letter of 26 January 2009.
30 July 2009	Letter requesting a meeting to discuss how to expedite the Castlebawn development application.
7 April 2009	Letter regarding the delay in the Public Inquiry.
20 October 2009	Letter seeking a start date for the Planning Appeals Commission Inquiry.

With regard to the identities of the elected representatives, we are seeking consent from the third parties concerned to disclose their personal information, in accordance with data protection principles. To disclose their identities without consent would represent unfair processing of their personal data, as they would have had no expectation that this information would be disclosed.

The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body which operates at arms length from Government and exercises its functions independently and free from influence by the Department or any other body.

OFMDFM holds sponsorship responsibility for the Commission but has no locus in planning appeal matters or referred work and has no operational remit. Responses to the representations made reflect this position.

The Chief Commissioner of the Planning Appeals Commission is responsible for the financial, operational and administrative management of the Commission. In this capacity she may have received representations from elected representatives and consequently we have passed the detail of your question to the Chief Commissioner for her consideration and response to you.

Display of Flags in Public Areas

Mr J Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the review of the Joint Protocol in Relation to the Display of Flags in Public Areas will be published.

(AQO 1456/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The working group set up to look at the current Flags Protocol and to review it has so far met on two occasions on 7 October and 23 November 2009.

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) is currently being developed for consultation. When the consultation is completed and the CSI Programme launched then the Flags Protocol will be reviewed in the context of the new Programme.

Officials are still actively monitoring this issue of flags and research is continuing into the monitoring of a baseline report commenced in 2006.

Review of Public Administration

Mr P McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 7179/10, for a full breakdown of their Department's spending on the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 7850/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The vast majority of spend on the Review of Public Administration related to Salary Costs and General Administrative Expenditure with a small amount over the period spent on consultancy. A breakdown is provided below.

Year	Salaries and General Administrative Expenditure £m	Consultancy £m	Total £m
2002/03	£0.60	£0.20	£0.80
2003/04	£0.86	£0.04	£0.90
2004/05	£0.88	£0.02	£0.90
2005/06	£1.10	£0.00	£1.10
2006/07	£0.50	£0.00	£0.50
2007/08	£0.35	£0.05	£0.40
2008/09	£0.40	£0.00	£0.40
2009/10	£0.20	£0.00	£0.20
Total	£4.89	£0.31	£5.20

Hillsborough Agreement: Reviews

Mr J O'Dowd asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on implementation of the programme of reviews covered in the Hillsborough Agreement.

(AQO 1444/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Under the terms of the Hillsborough Castle Agreement a commitment was made to establish three Working Groups.

The Working Group on Outstanding Executive Issues, which Junior Minister Kelly and Junior Minister Newton jointly chair, has met on 10 occasions since its inception and will meet again on 22 June.

As a result of the Working Group's deliberations, there has been a significant reduction in the number of papers awaiting formal agreement by the Executive.

At the outset the Working Group identified 47 outstanding issues which required consideration. To date 30 of these have been cleared for inclusion on the agenda of an Executive meeting and have been agreed by the Executive. We continue to work towards a resolution of all outstanding issues.

The Working Group on Improving Executive Function and Delivery has completed its work and has submitted its report to us. We are currently considering this report and intend to write shortly to all Ministerial colleagues to seek their views on the report, before responding to its recommendations.

The third Working Group proposed under the Hillsborough Castle Agreement related to commitments made in the St Andrews Agreement. Following preliminary consultations with other parties in the Executive, we wrote to Party Leaders on 3 June enclosing a schedule of specific issues from the St Andrews Agreement which parties believe have not been faithfully fulfilled and remain outstanding.

They have proposed that this schedule should form the basis of the work to be taken forward by the St Andrews Agreement Working Group which the Executive agreed to establish on 11 February, with a remit to make recommendations on how progress can be made on these matters.

Once we receive final confirmation regarding nominations by the political parties to this Working Group, it is our intention that an early meeting of the Group will be convened under the Chairmanship of Junior Ministers.

Home Office and UK Border Agency

Ms A Lo asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what representations they have made to ensure that the Home Office and the UK Border Agency respond appropriately to elected representatives in Northern Ireland acting on behalf of constituents.

(AQO 1445/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Immigration is a matter reserved to the UK Government and Westminster Parliament. The new Coalition Government is still in its infancy and we are waiting to see if the policy of the Home Office and the UK Border Agency within the new Government on this matter differs from that of the previous Government. If the policy remains the same, we will write to the Home Secretary to ask him to consider alternative ways in which Members of the Legislative Assembly might be enabled to make representations on behalf of individual constituents, in recognition of their position as elected representatives. Constituents can of course continue to raise any concerns and have their cases represented by a Westminster MP.

The UK Border Agency has stated that it will work with MLAs on any general/policy issues which they raise.

Our officials have regularly raised this issue with officials in the UK Border Agency.

Attorney General: Executive

Mr P Doherty asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Attorney General in relation to the Executive.

(AQO 1446/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have agreed that the Attorney General should act as the chief legal adviser to the Executive.

He will be able to attend Executive meetings and pre-meetings, though it is not anticipated that it would be necessary for him to attend all meetings. Draft Executive papers will be copied to the Attorney General at the same time as they are circulated by the originating Minister to Ministerial colleagues for comment.

The advice of the Attorney General would be sought on the most important and complex legal matters facing the Executive and Ministers, including where there is disagreement between Departments on

legal issues. It is expected that the Attorney General's advice would normally be followed, without prejudice to the ultimate decision-making responsibilities of the Executive.

Although only a small number of matters on which legal advice is sought result in litigation, it has been agreed that litigation arising in matters on which the Attorney General's Office had provided advice should be led by the Attorney General's Office on behalf of the Executive.

These roles and responsibilities are in line with the report by John Larkin QC and our response of March 2010, which have been placed in the Assembly Library. They have also been agreed by the Executive.

Assembly Members

Mr A Ross asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the number of Assembly Members for the electorate in Northern Ireland compared to Scotland and Wales.

(AQO 1447/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: In terms of numerical comparison, the people of Northern Ireland have, per capita, more MLAs than their counterparts in Scotland and Wales in respect of their equivalent institutions. Scotland, for example, with a population of just over 5 million, elects 129 members to the Scottish Parliament which, if translated to Northern Ireland, would suggest that the Assembly should have around 43 rather than 108 members. Using the Welsh example, the equivalent figure would be 35. Clearly, however, any future consideration of the optimum size of the Northern Ireland Assembly would require consideration of a wide range of issues other than numerical comparisons of this nature.

However, the United Kingdom Government has announced its intention to bring forward legislation to provide for a reduction in the number of seats in the House of Commons and more equally sized parliamentary constituencies; and that the Boundary Commission will be empowered to draw up the new constituencies during the current Parliament. As Section 33 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides for six members of the Assembly to be returned for the parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland, any reduction in the number of these constituencies would have a direct impact on the future size of the Assembly.

Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Bill: Code of Conduct

Ms M Ritchie asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the reasons for the delay in the publication of the statutory Code of Conduct which will underpin the Draft Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Bill and for their assessment of the likely impact of this delay.

(AQO 1448/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Code of Conduct was published for consultation on 23 June 2010.

Devolved Executives

Mr T Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on relationships between the devolved Executives in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the UK Government.

(AQO 1449/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We believe that there is a shared recognition by the UK Government and all of the devolved administrations of the importance of co-operation and communication between us as we face many common issues and challenges, particularly in addressing the implications of a reduction in public expenditure.

The importance of the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) as the framework within which this dialogue can take place has been given a renewed and stronger emphasis. A meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee, in plenary format, took place on 8 June and all administrations have committed themselves to regular dialogue and a programme of further meetings during the rest of this year

A copy of the communiqué issued after the JMC Plenary meeting has been placed in the Library.

Commissioner for Older People Bill

Mr G Savage asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what substantive changes have been made to the Commissioner for Older People Bill since it was first mooted in 2006.

(AQO 1450/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Executive's Programme for Government gave a commitment to provide a "strong independent voice" for older people and on 18 December 2007 the then First Minister and deputy First Minister announced their intention to appoint an Older People's Commissioner.

Following considerable research and development work, a draft Bill and set of policy proposals were produced and subsequently issued for public consultation which ran from 1 October 2009 and concluded on 7 January 2010.

Substantive changes have been made to the Bill following the responses received to the consultation and these are:

- adding nursing and residential care homes in the private and voluntary sectors as "relevant authorities" in the Bill. This means that the Commissioner's formal review and investigation powers will apply to all nursing and residential care homes, regardless of sector;
- inserting a new clause to give the Commissioner the power to procure conciliation services to provide an alternative to legal proceedings in disputes involving older people; and
- amending some of the clauses which limit the Commissioner from acting when another organisation has responsibility for a service, in order to give the Commissioner greater discretion to act if he or she considers it necessary.

The Bill is now at Committee Stage and the OFMDFM Committee will scrutinise it in detail and then issue a report to the Assembly.

We are committed to establishing a Commissioner for Older People within the lifetime of this Assembly and would once again affirm our commitment to delivering for older people and ensuring that they are given their rightful place as full and valued members of our community.

Legislative Programme 2009-2010

Mr D Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the Executive's legislative programme for the remainder of the current 2009/10 session.

(AQO 1451/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Following the Introduction on 21 June 2010 of the Welfare of Animals, Tourism (Amendment), and Transport Bills, a further two Executive Bills are proposed for introduction by the relevant Ministers before the end of the current Assembly session: the Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill. This would bring to 29 the total number of Executive Bills introduced during 2009/10. In addition, the Executive has supported the Caravans Bill promoted by Mr John McCallister MLA.

Private Sector

Mr R Beggs asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with the Prime Minister in relation to increasing the size of the private sector in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1452/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: At our meeting with the Prime Minister, David Cameron, on 20 May we discussed a number of matters relating to the economy both on a global and local level,

including the need to address the historic imbalance between the public and private sectors here, and the link between economic stability and continued political progress.

We also raised the issue of increasing the private sector here with the Prime Minister during a wider debate on the economy at the Joint Ministerial Committee Plenary meeting on 8 June. It is clearly an issue that he, and the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson, are committed to working on with the Executive in order to seek a long-term solution.

Efficiency Savings: Local Government and Education

Mrs M O'Neill asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Executive will achieve the proposed efficiencies flowing from the review of Local Government and the review of the education system. **(AQO 1453/10)**

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Implementation of Review of Public Administration (RPA) has now been embedded within the business of respective Departments. There are no implementation decisions impacting on our department. Costs and required efficiencies in respect of the 2008-11 budget period have been fully integrated into departments' budget settlements and are being managed in that context. The Department of Finance and Personnel monitors the achievement of Departments' Efficiency Delivery Plans, including RPA efficiencies that are included as part of the overall delivery of efficiencies.

Whilst there remains a number of cross departmental issues, the current protocol arrangements establish the lead Ministerial responsibility for bringing these RPA matters to the Executive.

Realising the full potential to raise educational standards and deliver efficiency savings is dependent on the establishment of the Education & Skills Authority (ESA). Until such time as the Education Bill to enable that to happen is enacted, arrangements have been made to provide for the convergence of education services across the existing organisations under the current legislation and structures. This is necessarily a sub-optimal position compared to the establishment of ESA. To help address the need to realise efficiencies through removal of duplication and streamlining of services, a Convergence Delivery Plan was published in March 2010. The convergence work is being led by the Chief Executive designate of the Education & Skills Authority, working with the five Education and Library Boards and the other education bodies.

The Executive have not yet reached agreement on an alternative delivery timetable for local government reform, but it remains committed to delivering its vision for local government. Central to that vision is the provision of high-quality, efficient services that respond to people's needs and continuously improve over time. The Environment Minister will be bringing fresh proposals on a delivery timetable before the Executive over the summer, with a view to reaching agreement within the Executive and providing clarity on the timetable for all those affected by or with an interest in local government reform.

Staff Salaries

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many staff in their Department, and associated Quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages. **(AQW 8042/10)**

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Two members of staff in the Department and eight people in OFMDFM Arms Length Bodies are currently paid in excess of £100,000 per annum in salary.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Compensation for Potato Farmers

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in securing compensation for potato farmers who had crops destroyed by the harsh winter weather. **(AQW 7719/10)**

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): A funding bid for potato losses following the severe January 2010 frost and also for sheep losses due to the ice storm of 31 March was submitted as part of the June monitoring round. The outcome of this is still awaited.

Should funding be made available, an announcement about a scheme will be made in due course.

Down/Armagh Rural Transport

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the funding provided to Down/Armagh Rural Transport (DART) in each of the last three years, including this financial year; and (ii) the services provided by DART.

(AQW 7781/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As part of the package of actions to address rural poverty and social exclusion DARD, working through and in partnership with DRD, provided £1,321 to cover the 250 passenger journeys provided by DART between scheme commencement in Dec 2009 and March 2010. To date in 2010/11 £1,050 has been provided to cover 213 passenger journeys provided by DART. DARD also awarded DART with a letter of offer for £4,444 in 2009/10 under the 'Local' Rural Challenge Programme to provide disadvantaged or marginalised individuals or groups, based in rural areas, with a free and accessible community transport service to a range of cultural events across the north of Ireland. The "Arts Express" Project also aims to facilitate respite for carers and the associated costs with the provision of respite.

DART are one of the 16 Rural Community Transport Partnerships providing the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme service funded by DARD through DRD.

DRD would be better placed to advise on the wider range of services that DART provide for them.

Rivers Agency

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how often the Rivers Agency cleans designated watercourses.

(AQW 7810/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Rivers Agency operates a programme of cyclical inspection visits for designated watercourses. The frequency of inspection visits for each watercourse depends on the characteristics and flood risk associated with each watercourse. These timescales are usually not more than 6 years for rural watercourses and 1 year for urban watercourses. Works will be programmed, where inspections highlight the need for maintenance and these are subject to available resources and competing priorities

Designated Watercourses

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the criteria under which designated watercourses, that are not due for a clean-up, would be cleared.

(AQW 7812/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: When Rivers Agency officials become aware of a significant obstruction that is likely to impede the free flow of water and create an imminent flood risk, maintenance works can be carried out to remove the obstruction as soon as possible. There are no set criteria for determining when such emergency works are carried out. This process is managed by operational decisions being taken on a case by case basis depending on the severity of the risk of flooding, the availability of resources, and competing priorities.

Agricultural Courses

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many students are currently registered for agricultural courses, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 7813/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department does not record details of students registered on courses by constituency. Information is recorded on a County basis and for agricultural courses the current number of students per county is: -

- County Antrim - 167
- County Armagh - 66
- County Derry - 57
- County Down - 107
- County Fermanagh - 57
- County Tyrone - 130
- Belfast - 9.

Zip Wire Courses in Forests

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any plans she has to attract outdoor pursuits companies to set-up zip wire courses in forests.

(AQW 7829/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Forest Service is currently seeking to finalise contractual arrangements with Go Ape, a High Trees Adventure company, who have been appointed as a preferred operating partner following a tender process.

Go Ape have secured planning permission in May 2010 to develop a High Trees Venture at Tollymore Forest, which includes zip wires activities.

Promoting the Sale and Consumption of Local Produce

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what financial assistance is available for developing farmer markets to promote the sale and consumption of local produce.

(AQW 7830/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has in the past provided financial support to a number of farmers' markets under the Leader + and Peace II funding programmes, most notably in Derry, Ballymoney and Strabane.

Opportunities for future support for farmers' markets may exist under the Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme, although this is dependent upon the priorities set within the local development strategies by the Local Action Groups and Council clusters in each area.

Continental Market in Belfast

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has had any contact with Market Place Europe, which organises the Continental Market in Belfast, regarding the inclusion of stalls at the Christmas and summer markets at Belfast City Hall that promote and sell local produce.

(AQW 7834/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have not had contact with Market Place Europe in relation to the Markets you have mentioned although my Department has offered assistance through the Regional Food Programme to a project aimed at including local produce stalls at the Christmas

Market. DARD have issued a Letter of Offer to an applicant under the 2010/11 Regional Food Programme which is the primary vehicle used by my Department to assist our agri-food industry to showcase the quality food that is available here.

Coppicing or Biomass Planting

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much land has been used for coppicing or biomass planting in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7844/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In the last three years, there were a total of 375 hectares of Short Rotation Coppice willow planted under the Short Rotation Coppice Scheme 2007 and its predecessor, the Short Rotation Coppice Challenge Fund.

Two hundred and seventy five hectares were planted in 2007/2008, sixty four hectares were planted in 2008/2009, and thirty six hectares were planted in 2009/2010.

Pork Imports

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 7183/10, (i) if she has any plans to keep a record of pork imports from within the single European market; and (ii) to detail the number of live pigs imported from the Republic of Ireland in the last twelve months.

(AQW 7994/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I do not have any plans to keep a record of pork imports from within the Single European markets. Pork is permitted to move freely within the EU and there is no statutory requirement for DARD to record this information.

A total of 584,091 pigs were imported from the south of Ireland in the last twelve months, split as follows:

Breeding and Production	Direct Slaughter
31,639	552,452

European Fisheries Council Meeting in Luxembourg

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she will be representing the Executive at the European Fisheries Council meeting in Luxembourg on 29 June 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

(AQW 7996/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I will not be attending the Agri-fish Council in Luxembourg on the 29 June but I will be represented by a senior official from my Department. There are two substantive fisheries items on the Agenda. Council will discuss the Commission's Policy Statement on Fishing Opportunities for 2011 which sets out its proposed approach to determining TACs and Quotas based on scientific advice from ICES, which will be available shortly. The other item is a presentation from the Commission on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I have had an opportunity to discuss these issues with the Defra Minister, Richard Benyon MP and other Fisheries Ministers from the devolved administrations and we have an agreed position to take on these matters at Council.

Glenree House, Newry

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 7391/10, (i) if she plans to undertake a survey in Glenree House, Newry to assess staff morale; (ii) when the

survey will commence; and (iii) whether it will be carried out by a person, or persons, independent of her Department, the staff at Glenree House and their union NIPSA.

(AQW 8006/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: This issue is under active consideration. The Department has been working with NIPSA and a process for resolving the matter has been agreed.

European Fisheries Council Meeting

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with her ministerial colleagues in Britain and the Republic of Ireland regarding the European Fisheries Council meeting on 29 June 2010.

(AQW 8054/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I had very useful discussions with ministerial colleagues from Britain on 23 June about the Agenda items for the Agri-fish Council on 29 June, and we agreed a position to take on those matters at Council. My officials have had discussions with their counterparts in the south and I am seeking an early meeting with the newly appointed Fisheries Minister Sean Connick TD.

Single Farm Payment

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 7729/10, how monies held in the Single Farm Payment national reserve have been used to date.

(AQW 8106/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The national reserve was used in 2005 when Single Farm Payment was introduced to make awards to farmers in the following categories (as specified in the relevant EU Regulations);

- Farmers who made eligible investments by 15 May 2004
- New Entrants who commenced farming by 2 November 2004
- Dairy producers who leased out quota between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005 for reasons of force majeure or exceptional circumstances
- Farmers who converted by 15 May 2004 from dairy to beef, sheep or arable enterprises
- Farmers who reduced production because of participation in Management of Sensitive Sites (MOSS) Scheme
- Farmers who under certain conditions received land which was leased to a third party during the reference period (2000 – 2002).
- Farmers who leased land between 1 January 2003 and 15 May 2004 for a period of six years or more where the lease conditions cannot be adjusted.
- Farmers who purchased land by 15 May 2004 under certain conditions which was under lease to a third party during the reference period (2000 – 2002).

In 2009, entitlements were allocated in respect of land used for orchard and nursery stock production as a result of reforms to the CAP fruit and vegetable regime. While these were not awards from the national reserve, the fact that monies were in the national reserve and could be used to fulfil these awards meant that no scaleback was required to existing SFP entitlements as a consequence of allocating these entitlements.

European Fisheries Fund

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will make a statement to the Assembly on the progress of the European Fisheries Fund.

(AQW 8124/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I do not intend to make a statement to the Assembly on this matter. The information set out below provides details on progress with the European Fisheries Fund to date.

Since August 2009, four European Fisheries Fund Measures have remained open for applications. These Measures are:-

- Productive investments in aquaculture
- Investments in processing and marketing
- Collective actions
- Fishing ports, landing sites and shelters

A fifth measure, to protect and develop aquatic fauna and flora, was opened for a short period during April 2010 and has since closed, with its budget fully committed.

Measure level business cases for two further measures, namely “Small scale coastal fishing” and “Investments on board fishing vessels and selectivity” have now been completed and my Department will open both Measures immediately upon receipt of DFP approval, which is currently being sought.

An evaluation of the South Down Fishing Taskforce investment is currently being undertaken. This independent evaluation will inform my Department of the potential for further socio-economic investment for the sustainable development of fisheries areas that may be available through Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund.

To date, my Department has received 41 applications for projects, seeking £6.155m of assistance. Of those applications 1 was withdrawn, 5 were rejected because they didn't comply with EFF rules and decision on a further 4 has been deferred pending further information. £3.86m grant has been awarded to 30 successful applicants. One further project, seeking a total of £1.38m grant will be presented to the next Selection Panel for decision.

I propose to make an announcement on other Priority Axis 1 Measures shortly. In doing so I will take into account the recommendations on fleet adaption in the report of the Fisheries Forum.

European Fisheries Fund

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assessment she has made of the modernisation and decommissioning issues of the European Fisheries Fund.
(AQW 8140/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department carried out a survey of the modernisation needs of the fishing fleet last year and also commissioned an update of the “Fleet Futures Economic Model” to assist the Fisheries Forum make recommendations to me on the future shape of the local fishing industry and the use of the EFF.

The modernisation survey has identified a need, and desire, to invest in our fleet across a range of themes, most notably safety, re-engining, catch quality, energy efficiency and crew facilities. These findings, together with the views of the Fisheries Forum, have been factored into the Business Case completed for a proposed vessel modernisation scheme for which we are now seeking DFP approval.

The updated “Fleet Futures” analysis is available from my Department's internet site (www.dardni.gov.uk/fisheries). This is a complex piece of work which, using a methodology which linked together TAC, costs, projected prices size and the acceptable normal average profit per vessel, analysed the likely state of the fishing fleet in 2013 under a range of scenarios. The model also provided for an increasingly restrictive ‘Days at Sea’ effort control regime which was imposed in 2009 as a result of the Cod Recovery Plan affecting all vessels 10m or over in length catching cod in the Irish Sea. The Fleet Futures economic model would suggest that there is a significant mismatch between the size of the current fleet and the fishing opportunities available to it.

I am currently considering the Fisheries Forum Report which has made recommendations relating to the adaption of the fleet. I will make an announcement during July about the implementation of the report's recommendations, after I have had the opportunity to reflect on any comments the ARD Committee may make following its consideration of the Report at its meeting on 29 June.

Sheep and Lamb Population

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the sheep and lamb population for each of the last three years.

(AQW 8180/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Sheep and lamb populations for the past three years are given below. This information is taken from the June Agricultural and Horticultural Survey. All figures are in thousands.

2007

Breeding Ewes	957.3
Other Sheep	39.5
Lambs	1027.2
Total	2024.0

2008

Breeding Ewes	935.4
Other Sheep	39.4
Lambs	998.8
Total	1973.6

2009

Breeding Ewes	892.4
Other Sheep	39.6
Lambs	964.8
Total	1896.7

Agriculture: Climate Change

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the likely impact of climate change on the agriculture sector.

(AQO 1497/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on the way we produce food in the future mainly because of the impact of changes in weather patterns and the need to take measures to mitigate and adapt to these changes.

Knowing and assessing the risks is vital to development of appropriate measures and my Department is working jointly with other regions to assess risks in agriculture, forestry, flooding and fisheries.

The climate change risk assessments, due by 2012, will ensure that a range of potential variations are considered, not just extremes. While risk assessments continue to assess the impact, we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are widely accepted as a major contributor to climate change.

With 21% of local emissions attributed to the agriculture sector, mainly from nitrous oxide and methane, the sector needs to make significant reductions alongside other sectors both to contribute to overall reduction targets and to respond to increasing commercial pressures. This can be achieved by changing farming practices to produce lower carbon food products.

However I want to ensure that while emission levels are lowered this does not lead to less production here and more imports. I want to ensure that jobs and production are kept here in the North while maintaining and increasing our exports, especially of meats and dairy products.

I am establishing a stakeholder group with the objective of developing a strategic approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the initial meeting of that group will take place shortly.

In Ireland we need to work together and I have discussed our respective approach to dealing with the impact of climate change with Minister Smith at the NSMC and we have agreed to continue to share information and collaborate in particular on research in this area.

The Executive has agreed to establish a cross Departmental working group to take forward the work necessary to ensure the achievement of the Programme for Government target of a 25% reduction in emissions by 2025 across all sectors. The agriculture sector will have to contribute to this target alongside other sectors.

LEADER Programme

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many new business ideas have been developed, with assistance from her Department, through the LEADER initiative, in the South Down constituency and across Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1502/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In answering the members question I will confine my answer to projects assisted using the LEADER methodology under the LEADER plus programme and current Axis 3 programmes of the NIRDP. The focus of the LEADER plus programme in the North which ran from 2000 until 2006 was on supporting the development of new and existing small rural businesses and increasing their contribution to the local economy. Data was not collected on the basis of either the number of new business ideas developed or on a parliamentary constituency basis. I can advise however that during the life of the LEADER plus programme 69 projects were funded in county Down investing some £1.1 million in the area. The total investment for LEADER plus programme was £20 million across the North creating some 1,300 jobs.

Building on the success of this programme Axis 3 of the new Rural Development programme has at its core the development and creation of small businesses. These are being delivered under a number of measures but specifically 3.1 Farm Diversification, 3.2 Micro business creation and development and 3.3 Tourism. The South Down area is primarily covered by the Down Rural Area Partnership and to date under the new programme measures the group has received 192 applications, 37 of these worth almost £850,000 have been assessed and approved for funding. With 14 letters of offer issued and a further 17 letters of offer ready to issue. So far the job creation potential of these projects in this area stands at 65 full time equivalents, I think you will agree this is a great jobs boost during the current economic down turn.

It is encouraging to see that even in the current financial climate the latest call for applications in this area has resulted in some 74 requests for funding having been received.

The programme as a whole has now received 2,397 applications and the Joint Council Committees have issued letters of offer worth just over £9 million. Across the North the breakdown is as follows:-

GROW	29 letters of offer issued worth £750,000
North East Region	66 letters of offer issued worth £1.7 million
Lagan Rural Partnership	25 letters of offer issued worth £650,000

Down R Area Partnership	14 letters of offer issued worth £300,000
SOAR	30 letters of offer issued worth £725,000
ARC	58 letters of offer issued worth £1.7 million
SWARD	121 letters of offer issued worth £3,250,000

This is a significant investment in our rural communities.

Farm Identification Details

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether farm businesses can pass on a farm herd number and business identification details on the same farm unit to another farmer.
(AQO 1503/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: It is not possible to transfer the Department's registration of one individual herd or flock keeper directly to another nor for business identification details to transfer from one farm business to another. Each farm business is allocated a unique identification number by my Department.

It remains possible for individuals to be added to an existing herd / flock-keeper registration (i.e. into joint names) as long as the original keeper remains alive.

Aquaculture

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the potential for an aquaculture industry in our coastal waters.
(AQO 1505/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The potential for sustainable aquaculture development in our coastal waters has already been realised to a certain extent. There are currently 48 sites licensed by my Department for the cultivation of shellfish, mainly the bottom culture of mussels. There is also one salmon farm with licensed marine sites in Glenarm and Red Bay. In 2008 these parts of the sector produced over 10,000 tonnes of fish and shellfish valued at just under £8.5m and employed 95 people.

There may be scope for further development in the aquaculture sector as a whole and, as cited in the recent Fisheries Forum Report, those involved in the sector consider that a doubling of production is potentially achievable.

There are some factors that may limit further development in coastal waters not least site suitability, competition for space with other water users and the current moratorium on the granting of new licences for the bottom culture of mussels. However, with my Department making £1.6m available under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) to support the development of the sector and a determination to establish aquaculture as a legitimate activity and an equal partner within the marine planning process, I believe that the aquaculture sector has a bright future.

Forest Service: Carrickfergus

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any plans she has to develop the 835 hectares of land managed by the Forest Service in Carrickfergus.
(AQO 1507/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I presume the area you are referring to is Woodburn forest which is situated five miles to the west of Carrickfergus. NI Water own 743 hectares of the land at Woodburn forest and any developments outside current use are a matter for them to consider. Plans for the area under my Department's management, focus on maintaining sustainable forest management practice.

Dog Control Legislation

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in strengthening the dog control legislation.

(AQO 1508/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I introduced the Dogs (Amendment) Bill in the Assembly on 24 May 2010 and it passed its Second Stage on 7 June. The Bill has now been referred to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

The Bill will strengthen and improve the existing arrangements we have to tackle the issues of dog attacks, straying and unwanted dogs and it will promote responsible ownership.

The Bill will maintain the ban on types of dogs that have been bred for fighting, such as the pit bull terrier. I also intend to bring forward subordinate legislation to introduce further strict exemption conditions including a requirement that an exempted dog must be kept away from children when not muzzled and under control.

The Bill will introduce new powers for dog wardens to impose control conditions on problem dogs, whatever their breed. This approach is widely accepted as the way forward in dealing with dog control and dangerous dogs issues.

The Bill will introduce compulsory microchipping, and will make it an offence to allow a dog to attack and injure another person's dog. Finally, the Bill increases the penalty for owners whose dogs attack and injure people at home, where many of the most serious recent attacks have taken place.

When the Bill is enacted I believe that it will, when taken in its entirety, make dog control legislation here the strongest in these islands.

I would like to thank Members for their contribution to the Second Stage debate on the Bill and for the many supportive comments. I look forward to working closely with the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee as they undertake their detailed and important scrutiny of the Bill.

Sheep: Electronic Identification

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the implementation of the electronic identification of sheep.

(AQO 1509/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: From 1 June all sheep moving off holdings have been identified with EID. Markets and Meat Plants acting as Central Points of Recording have been reading the tags and providing sheep farmers with lists of eartag numbers. This has reduced the impact of the new controls on the industry to a minimum, and ensured the free trade in livestock is maintained.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Assistance for Angling Clubs or Societies

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what assistance is available from her Department for angling clubs or societies to help them restock fish in rivers.

(AQW 7687/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): DCAL operates a Supportive Breeding Programme for salmon by assisting angling clubs to collect brood stock from their waters which are transferred to the Bush Salmon Station where eggs are stripped in the hatchery. The salmon fry are released back into the waters by the club with the aim of increasing the salmon numbers in these rivers. The Department also authorises the possession of fish for restocking purposes by angling clubs by granting permits, under Section 14 of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966.

The Department also regularly procures trout from the Marble Arch Hatchery in Fermanagh as part of a programme to rebuild the local trout strain in the Erne feeder tributaries

The Department also liaises with angling clubs to restock rivers when a successful prosecution has been taken in relation to a pollution incident and compensation has been awarded by the Court which can be used for restocking.

The Loughs Agency has responsibilities relating to rivers in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. The Agency does not usually directly support salmonid stocking programmes, but prefers to rely on habitat restorations to improve the survival of natural populations. The Agency has carried out in-stream habitat restoration works on a number of rivers, often in partnership with angling clubs. The Agency will also normally support or partner with angling clubs for similar works in civil compensation cases relating to fish kills.

The Loughs Agency is also in the process of developing an economic appraisal for a scheme that will enable clubs and societies to apply for small-scale financial assistance for carrying out works of this nature.

Libraries

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether libraries can impose their own charges for hiring out rooms or other areas within their facilities; and if his Department has issued any guidance on this matter.

(AQW 7777/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Northern Ireland Library Authority, known as Libraries NI, is a statutory body set up under the Libraries Act (NI) 2008. It became responsible for the management and delivery of the public library service from 1 April 2009.

Chapter Eight, paragraph six, of the Libraries Act (NI) 2008 sets out the Authority's duties in relation to agreeing charges for certain library services (including room hire):

'Charges for certain library services

- 6.—(1) The Authority may not make any charges for any library services provided by it unless -
- (a) The services in question are specified in a scheme of charges approved by the Department and published by the Authority; and
 - (b) The charges are made in accordance with that scheme.
- (2) The scheme of charges may make different provision for different cases including different provision in relation to different persons, circumstances or localities.'

Ulster-Scots Agency Offices in Belfast and Donegal

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money has been spent on (i) the Ulster-Scots Agency offices at 68-87 Great Victoria Street, Belfast; and (ii) the Ulster-Scots Agency offices at The Diamond, Raphoe, Donegal in each year since the leases for these premises were acquired; and to provide a breakdown of expenditure for each year.

(AQW 7789/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency acquired office accommodation at 68-72 Great Victoria Street Belfast from 1 July 2008. The cost of the premises for the ground and first floor accommodation was –

	Rent	Rates	Total
2008	£ 42,888	£ 7,894	£ 50,782
2009	£ 83,950	£ 15,790.29	£ 99,740.29

The Agency also spent £45,573 and £12,748 in 2008 and 2009 respectively fitting out the visitors centre located on the ground floor of the premises at Great Victoria Street Belfast.

The Ulster-Scots Language Society and The Ulster-Scots Community Network are also based in the Great Victoria Street premises on the second floor. The cost of their office accommodation equates to £25,850 per annum.

The office in Raphoe has been leased since 1 April 2002 and the amounts for rent and rates which are paid in Euros are shown in the table below.

Year	Rent	Rates	Total
2002	€9,144	—	€9,144
2003	€12,192	—	€12,192
2004	€12,192	€1,148	€13,340
2005	€12,192	€1,205.84	€13,397.84
2006	€12,192	€1,086.68	€13,278.68
2007	€13,563.60	€1,086.68	€14,650.28
2008	€14,020.80	€1,323.90	€15,344.70
2009	€14,020.80	€1,323.90	€15,344.70

Ulster-Scots Agency Offices in Belfast and Donegal

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the start date; and (ii) the end date of the leases for the Ulster Scots Agency offices in (a) Belfast; and (b) Donegal.

(AQW 7790/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The start dates for the leases for the Ulster-Scots Agency's offices in Belfast and Donegal are 1 July 2008 and 1 April 2002 respectively.

The end dates for the leases are 30 June 2018 and 31 March 2012 respectively.

Ulster-Scots Agency Offices in Belfast and Donegal

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the Ulster Scots Agency offices in Belfast and Donegal are (i) fully staffed, functional and operational; and (ii) open to the public; and whether there are any plans to open these offices to the public.

(AQW 7792/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency is at present staffed to its agreed complement. The Agency's offices in Belfast and Donegal are fully staffed, functional and operational. Both offices are opened to the general public during normal working hours 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday – Friday.

The Agency has a dedicated visitors centre based on the ground floor of the Great Victoria Street premises but due to staffing constraints the centre is not continually open. The Agency has used the space for several events, such as the "Burns Week" celebrations held in January this year.

Ulster-Scots Magazine 'Oot and Aboot'

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the number of issues of the Ulster Scots magazine 'Oot and Aboot' that have been published to date; (ii) the dates of publication; and (iii) the (a) production; and (b) distribution costs associated with each issue of the magazine.

(AQW 7794/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Two issues of the Ulster-Scots magazine 'Oot and Aboot' have been published to date. The dates of publication were December 2008 and December 2009.

In 2008 the production costs were £13,755 and distribution costs were £1,989. In 2009 the production costs were £12,490 and distribution costs were £2,403.50.

Sport NI

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline any joint initiatives between Sport NI and its Scottish and Welsh equivalents aimed at benefiting sport in each jurisdiction.

(AQW 7871/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In order to benefit sport in Northern Ireland and in Scotland and Wales, Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) works in collaboration with its equivalents, Sport Scotland and the Sports Council for Wales, across a number of areas relating to sports policy, strategy and practice. These include joint facilities initiatives, implementation of UK Coaching Framework, policy on recognition of sporting activities and governing bodies, equality and inclusion policy in sport and research and information sharing.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what arrangements have been made to ensure that the 2013 World Police and Fire Games will be a success.

(AQO 1510/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As you are aware the Games are now just over 3 years away (August 2013) and the matter of the funding for the Games and the establishment of a delivery vehicle becomes more pressing as each day passes.

I have prepared a draft Executive Paper which has been with the deputy First Minister since May of this year and I had hoped that I would have had agreement by now to this being placed on an agenda of a NI Executive meeting.

In addition a Business Case which includes a recommended delivery mechanism for implementing the 2013 World Police and Fire Games has been commissioned and referred to DFP for approval.

In the interim a 2013 Stakeholder Group, chaired by DCAL and incorporating key stakeholders from the Police Service for Northern Ireland, NI Prison Service, NI Fire and Rescue Service, Belfast City Council and Sport NI, is managing the 2013 World Police and Fire Games project until such times as a delivery vehicle is established.

The Stakeholder Group has identified and taken forward preparatory work on various workstreams including Volunteering, Tourism, Legacy, Transport and Logistics and Sport for the planning and organisation of the Games in conjunction with relevant external bodies.

My officials are also liaising with DFP in regard to the Business Case.

Chief Executives' Salaries

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the annual salaries of, and expenses paid to, the Chief Executives of all arms length bodies and quangos associated with his Department, for the last available financial year.

(AQW 7913/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The annual salaries of, and expenses paid to, the Chief Executives of all DCAL's arms length bodies in the year ended 31 March 2010 are listed below:

ALB & Quangoes	Salary £	Expenses £	Total £
ACNI	72,126.00	997.06	73,123.06
NI Screen	65,976.00	4,769.00	70,745.00
Armagh Observatory*	N/A	N/A	0.00
Armagh Planetarium*	N/A	N/A	0.00
NI Museums Council*	N/A	N/A	0.00
NMNI	119,745.64	1,738.53	121,484.17
Libraries NI	96,888.00	3,324.80	100,212.80
Sport NI	90,755.12	4,566.12	95,321.24
Language Body - Foras Na Gaelige (EURO)***	119,271.00	6,603.13	125,874.13
Language Body - Ulster Scots Agency***	50,224.50	0.00	50,224.50
FCB**	8,074.16	294.00	8,368.16
Waterways Ireland***	91,436.00	3,704.92	95,140.92

* Armagh Observatory, Armagh Planetarium and Northern Ireland Museums Council do not have Chief Executives.

** FCB was absorbed into the Department on 1st June 2009, therefore salary and expenses figure provided above relates to April and May 2009 only.

*** Waterways Ireland, Foras Na Gaelige and Ulster Scots Agency operate on a calendar month – January – December 2009.

I hope you find this information useful

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 7955/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure I am conscious of the need to control and manage the use of consultants in my Department. During 2009/10 I instigated procedures ensuring that I would review and approve all consultancy spend within my Department. In addition my Department makes an annual return to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) on consultancy expenditure broken down by consultant and project. The return includes an estimate of spend for future financial years. My Department also maintains an internal database which is reviewed on a quarterly basis and reconciled with consultancy spend recorded on Account NI.

UEFA Football Coaching Licence

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the total number of people who have obtained a UEFA football coaching licence in each of the last five years, broken down by licence type who were (i) registered professional footballers; (ii) registered semi-professional footballers; and (iii) not registered footballers.

(AQW 7984/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Neither the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure nor Sport Northern Ireland holds this information. The Irish Football Association (IFA) is responsible for the implementation and management of the UEFA football coaching licensing scheme in Northern Ireland. The provision of information on the numbers and backgrounds of individuals who may have obtained different types of UEFA coaching licences in the last five years would therefore be a matter for the IFA.

UEFA Football Coaching Licence

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the financial assistance available to applicants for a UEFA football coaching licence from each local council, broken down by licence type; and to make a statement on the discrepancy in funding available from individual councils.

(AQW 7986/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Neither the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) nor Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) holds this information. I am, nevertheless, aware that some district councils may operate small grants programmes to provide individuals and sports clubs with financial assistance for local sporting development purposes. Such assistance may include funding to help individuals attain different types of sports' coaching qualifications. The release of funding for these purposes is a matter for each district council. However, I understand that the level and type of support that each council may be willing to provide is based on a number of factors and that these can include local need, demand, available finance and the nature of their area's sporting infrastructure.

Ulster-Scots Academy Project

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the Ulster Scots Academy project.

(AQW 8050/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Work is currently being undertaken by the Department with the aim of giving new impetus to the Ulster-Scots Academy project. I recently established a Project Steering Group, chaired by a retired Civil Servant, to take forward the establishment of an Ulster-Scots Academy.

Ulster American Folk Park

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of recorded visitors to the Ulster American Folk park in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8089/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The attached table details the number of recorded visitors to the Ulster American Folk Park in each of the last ten years.

UAFP 2000	120031
UAFP 2001	110533
UAFP 2002	126170
UAFP 2003	127652
UAFP 2004	124879
UAFP 2005	134452
UAFP 2006	146085
UAFP 2007	157325
UAFP 2008	152717
UAFP 2009	154471

Paddy Barnes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will consider organising a reception for Paddy Barnes who won a gold medal in the European Amateur Boxing Championship.

(AQW 8136/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I have already written to Paddy to congratulate him following his success in winning a gold medal at light-flyweight at the European Amateur Boxing Championships in Moscow. In addition, I have asked my officials to include Paddy's name on the list of invitees to my Department's Annual Sporting Reception which acknowledges the outstanding achievements of Northern Ireland athletes throughout the year on the national and international stages.

Ulster Hall

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the damp problem in the Ulster Hall.

(AQO 1514/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The damp on the interior walls of the Ulster Hall is due to underlying historical problems which were corrected during the recent refurbishment work.

Following investigative works and trial samples of painting, the Architects are content with the initial assessment of the situation, namely that the ingress of water from the exterior has been stopped and that the repair works carried out to the external envelope of the building are sound.

Redecoration works were carried out by the Main Contractor in May of this year and the salt staining visible on the walls following this work was greatly reduced.

A comprehensive redecoration of the affected areas of the hall will be carried out in July 2010 and it is anticipated that, given the recent spell of good weather, further drying out will have taken place and further improvements in the condition of the walls will be achieved.

Bloody Sunday Inquiry Report

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many copies of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry Report are available in public libraries, broken down by location.

(AQW 8182/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: There are currently 2 copies of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry Report available in public libraries. A copy is held in Londonderry Central Library and in Belfast Central Library.

Libraries NI has also ordered 20 copies of 'The Principal Conclusions and Overall Assessment of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry'. House of Commons Papers 30 2010/11 by William Hoyt. This is a condensed version of the Bloody Sunday report which Libraries NI will provide in heritage collections, some larger libraries and local Londonderry branches.

All libraries provide free internet access so members of the public can access the report online.

Libraries: Closures

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the criteria used to select the ten public libraries which have been marked for closure.

(AQO 1524/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Libraries NI Review – "Meeting the Demands for a Modern Public Library Service within Northern Ireland – Stage 1 Greater Belfast" set out Libraries NI's vision for the future of the Public Library Service.

This document also defined the criteria to assess individual libraries in the Greater Belfast area. These are:

- 1 Fit for purpose
- 2 Capable of delivering on the Libraries NI vision
- 3 In the right location
- 4 Sustainable

No single criterion was considered in isolation. All of these factors were taken into consideration in determining whether a library had the potential to positively contribute to the vision. Those libraries which failed to meet the criteria were considered for closure.

An extensive public consultation process was held to obtain evidence. As you will be aware this process shaped Libraries NI's final decision to close ten rather than the fourteen libraries originally identified.

On the 27 May the Libraries NI Board agreed the final outcome of the review of libraries in the Greater Belfast Area. The Board includes elected Councillors from my own party, the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the UUP.

Libraries: Closures

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether he will re-consider the decision to close some public libraries in light of the 84% to 90% satisfaction rate among library users in his Department's recent survey 'Experience of Library Usage in Northern Ireland'.

(AQO 1511/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am keenly aware of the importance of the public library service for everyone in Northern Ireland and welcome the high satisfaction rate amongst library users.

Libraries NI are improving library services across Greater Belfast by re-distributing resources towards front line services. They expect that the long term effect will be an increase in the numbers of people using libraries and even higher satisfaction rates.

Issues such as the relocation or closure of libraries are operational matters for Libraries NI. It is inappropriate for me to intervene unless, there was evidence of a significantly flawed consultation process or, if Libraries NI failed in their statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient public library service'.

The Libraries NI Board includes elected Councillors from my own party, the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the UUP.

Spending Priorities

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how his Department prioritises its spending programmes.

(AQO 1515/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department is committed to ensuring the delivery of its responsibilities under the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government. Spending priorities were previously identified as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. My officials are currently reviewing Departmental spending in the light of Budget 2010 and all areas of expenditure will be carefully examined. Programmes will be prioritised based on the extent to which they contribute to the Executive's over-arching aim of building a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come.

Twelfth of July

Mr J Bell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the contribution of the Orange Order Twelfth of July festivities to leisure and cultural life.

(AQO 1521/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I believe that the Twelfth of July has enormous potential for the economic wellbeing of Northern Ireland. The Orange Institution works closely with the NITB and Tourism Ireland in relation to its flagship programme. In 2009, as part of a Tourism Initiative, the Order was represented at a delegation in New York which encouraged Americans to consider visiting Northern Ireland.

Current estimates suggest that over 20,000 people are directly engaged in flute, pipe, accordion and silver bands, representing the largest community arts sector in Northern Ireland.

Marching bands provide outlets for the provision of artistic and musical excellence as well as providing an opportunity for cultural expression for many thousands of people in Northern Ireland. They provide a means to develop skills and provide entertainment giving young people a chance to contribute, build personal skills and confidence and to cement their role in society.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the findings of his Department's survey 'Views on the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland' which found that only 9% of respondents had been to the Public Record Office and only 2% were aware of its new location.

(AQO 1522/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: This survey, 'Views on the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland' was published in August 2009 and was a Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Omnibus survey. Interviews commenced in April 2009, at least 5 months before it was announced that the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) was closing to the public in advance of the relocation to Titanic Quarter. The report predates recent work which has highlighted the move and therefore it is not surprising that only 2% of the public, at that stage, were aware of where PRONI was moving to. Of those who were aware that PRONI was moving, a high proportion knew that PRONI was re-locating to Titanic Quarter.

In the past year PRONI has taken the opportunity accorded by outreach events and on the PRONI website (www.proni.gov.uk) to actively promote the re-location of the Record Office to Titanic Quarter to potential users both at home and further afield. The PRONI website (www.proni.gov.uk) has received 1 million visits in 2009/10 and 83% of these were international visits.

The report does not indicate the age range and geographical location of those surveyed but the fact that 9% of people, across Northern Ireland, have visited PRONI, the national archive institution located in Belfast, is worthy of note. Of those surveyed 68% had heard of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, which is an impressive statistic, and of those who had ever visited PRONI just over a fifth had been in the last year. We would anticipate that many more people will visit the new premises in the future.

Football: Milk Cup

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding his Department has provided to the Northern Ireland Milk Cup in the last two years.

(AQO 1523/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In 2008/09 DCAL's Events Unit made a capped shortfall award to the Milk Cup of £50,000 towards the organisation of the event. In 2009/10 the Unit made a further award of £65,000 towards participation costs, specifically travel and accommodation. In addition to this, Sport Northern Ireland, which is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding, has had a sponsorship arrangement with the Milk Cup over the last three years worth £12,000 per year.

Department of Education

Capital Expenditure in the Irish Medium Sector

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the amount of capital expenditure in the Irish-medium sector, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7542/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Is mar seo a leanas a bhí caiteachas caipitil ar Ghaelscoileanna sna trí bliana a chuaigh thart:

Capital expenditure on Irish-medium schools in the last three years was as follows:

	£000s
2007/08	511
2008/09	841
2009/10	2,662

Costs to Schools to Supplement State Funding

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the costs that grant maintained integrated schools are expected to pay to supplement state funding, compared to that of controlled schools in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 7598/10)

Minister of Education: Is í Foirmle Cómhaoinithe (CFF) Bhainistíocht Áitiúil Scoileanna (LMS) an mheicníocht a úsáidtear chun leithdháiltí buiséid tharmligthe scoile aonair a chinneadh. Is í is aidhm léi ná leithdháileadh cothrom follasach an mhaoinithe atá ar fáil a bhaint amach thar gach scoil, de réir a leibhéil choibhneasta riachtanais féin.

The Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula (CFF) is the mechanism used to determine individual school delegated budget allocations. Its aim is to achieve an equitable and transparent distribution of available funding across all schools based on their relative level of need.

All schools are funded on a consistent and equitable basis, regardless of their geographical location, management type or sector. Schools covered by the common funding formula receive a fully delegated budget using common values and criteria; and under the arrangements set out in the Common Funding Scheme, schools have common access to centre support and services. The budget shares for each school are designed to meet the day to day running costs for every school, with schools funded on the basis of identified needs.

The Common Funding Formula, used to distribute delegated budgets to schools reflects any costs associated with the running of grant maintained integrated schools, which are otherwise met by Education & Library Boards for their controlled and maintained schools. Full details of the common funding arrangements for grant-aided schools are available on the Department of Education website: http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/schools_funding_pg/9_schoolfunding_commonfunding_pg/9_schoolfunding_thecommonfundingscheme_pg/9-commonfundingscheme201011-3.htm

All schools are able to seek voluntary contributions and may receive certain funds from external sources, within the financial guidance established by the relevant Funding Authority. However, no school is expected to supplement their grant-aided budget share.

Maximum Enrolment Capacity

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to list the maximum enrolment capacity of each post-primary school in the Mid-Ulster area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7658/10)

Minister of Education: Is mar atá mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos atá an t-uastuilleadh rollaithe (ie an méid formheasta rollaithe) do gach iar-bhunscoil i limistéar Lár-Uladh, i ngach ceann de na cúig bliana a chuaigh thart.

The maximum enrolment capacity (ie approved enrolment number) of each post-primary school in the Mid-Ulster area, in each of the last five years, is as detailed in the table below.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Magherafelt High School	580	580	540	520	560
St Colm's High School	340	340	340	340	340
St Mary's College	350	350	350	350	350
St Pius X College	850	850	850	850	850
St Patrick's Co-ed Comprehensive College	1,355	1,355	1,355	1,355	1,355
Sperrin Integrated College	400	450	500	500	500
Rainey Endowed School	700	700	700	700	700
St Mary's Grammar School	1,070	1,070	1,070	1,070	1,070
Cookstown High School	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
St Joseph's College	680	680	680	680	680
Holy Trinity College	960	800	725	710	710
St Joseph's Grammar School	500	500	500	500	500

Newly Qualified Teachers

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education what steps her Department is taking to encourage primary schools to use newly qualified teachers, rather than retired teachers, when substitute teachers are required, to enable them to gain the experience necessary to apply for permanent teaching posts.

(AQW 7856/10)

Minister of Education: Tá mé fós buartha faoin nós a bhíonn ag fostóirí leanúint de mhúinteoirí scortha a athfhostú ar bhonn sealadach nó ionadaíoch a athfhostú. Ní fostóir na múinteoirí í an Roinn, áfach, agus is faoi na boird Ghobharnóirí atá an cinneadh ar cé a cheapfaidh siad ar aon phost múinteoireacht i scoileanna.

I remain concerned about the practice of employers continuing to re-employ retired teachers either on a temporary or substitute basis. However, the Department is not the employer of teachers, and the decision on whom to appoint to any teaching position in a school rests with the Board of Governors.

Over the years the Department has repeatedly exhorted employers to give preference to newly qualified teachers or experienced non-retired teachers seeking to return to employment when filling vacancies, including those of a temporary nature. The Department has also advised employers that retired teachers should only be re-employed to provide short-term cover where newly qualified teachers or experienced non-retired teachers are unavailable; and writes to employing authorities annually, urging them to draw to the attention of school principals the continuing level of re-employment of prematurely retired teachers

The Department has issued guidance to employing authorities and schools informing them that they must use the Substitute Teachers' Register (NISTR) when booking all qualified substitute teachers paid through the Departmental payroll. NISTR allows schools to identify younger teachers seeking employment as substitutes and allows employing authorities to monitor the availability of non-retired teachers.

Where teacher substitution costs are paid from centre funds, this is limited to a maximum of point 4 on the teachers' six-point main pay scale and any substitution costs in excess of this are charged to the school's delegated budget. This provides an incentive to schools to employ newly or recently qualified teachers as substitutes.

In addition, the rules of the Teachers' Pension Scheme militate against the employment of retired teachers, in that such teachers may suffer a reduction in pension as a result of earnings from employment as a teacher. The Department has strict controls in place to monitor such cases.

Review of Public Administration

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education to provide a breakdown of her Department's total spending on the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 7864/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé do Dawn Purvis (Oirthear Bhéal Feirste) ar AQW 6175/10 a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 14 Bealtaine 2010.

I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 6175/10 which I provided to Dawn Purvis (Belfast East) and was published in the Official Report on 14 May 2010.

Preschool Places in the Foyle Constituency

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education what additional provision will be made to fund pre-school places in the Foyle constituency in 2010/11.

(AQW 7947/10)

Minister of Education: Ar 20 Bealtaine, d'fhógair mé go mbeadh mé ag tabhairt suas le £1.3m de chistiú breise chun déileáil leis an ghanncion áiteanna réamhscoile sa scoilbhliain 2010/11.

On 20 May I announced that I was committing up to £1.3m of further funding to address the shortfall in pre-school places in the 2010/11 school year.

This money will fund extra places in the voluntary/private sector and has already been allocated to each of the Education and Library Boards, based on the number of unplaced children in their respective areas.

I am advised by the WELB that, having liaised with pre-school providers, an additional 38 places have been allocated to settings in the Foyle constituency. This process of allocation is on-going and should ensure that, where possible, every child receives a funded pre-school place.

Department for Employment and Learning

Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students, from disadvantaged backgrounds, have dropped out of degree courses at (i) Queen's University; (ii) Ulster University; (iii) St Mary's College; and (iv) Stranmillis College, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7860/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Department considers students from Socio-Economic Classification groups 5 to 7 as being from a disadvantaged background. The latest

information on the numbers dropping out for this group is only readily available for the two academic years 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The number of full-time first degree entrants from Socio-Economic Classification groups 5 to 7 dropping out of Higher Education after their first year are detailed in the table below for each Northern Ireland Higher Education Institution:

	2006/07 entrants	2007/08 entrants
Queen's University	50	60
University of Ulster	125	145
St Mary's	5	5
Stranmillis	0	0

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08 entrants failing to continue in Higher Education in 2008/09. Information in relation to those dropping out is only collected for those first year entrants who do not return in the following academic year.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) for an update on the potential redundancies at the Belfast Metropolitan College; (ii) what discussions his Department has had with the Belfast Metropolitan College in relation to the potential redundancies; and (iii) to detail the outcome of these discussions.

(AQW 7878/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department is aware of the financial difficulties faced by Belfast Metropolitan College and that various efficiencies are being considered, including the possibility of redundancies. While the implementation of the efficiencies is a matter for the College Governing Body, my Department will continue to work with Belfast Metropolitan College to ensure that it is returned to financial stability and maintains the delivery of high quality further education.

Programme-led Apprenticeships

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of Programme-led Apprenticeships in each constituency, in the 2009/10 financial year.

(AQW 7909/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Programme-Led Apprenticeships were introduced on 7th September 2009.

The attached table details the number of Programme-Led Apprentices in each constituency as of 4 June 2010. The table is based on analysis and cross referencing of participant postcodes with electoral constituencies.

ANNEX 1

OCCUPANCY ON PLA BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY ON 4TH JUNE 2010

Constituency	Occupancy on PLA
Belfast East	100

Constituency	Occupancy on PLA
Belfast North	236
Belfast South	76
Belfast West	321
East Antrim	115
East Londonderry	147
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	98
Foyle	218
Lagan Valley	163
Mid Ulster	94
Newry & Armagh	145
North Antrim	121
North Down	69
South Antrim	90
South Down	205
Strangford	169
Upper Bann	130
West Tyrone	181
Not known as postcode is missing	24
Total	2702

Stranmillis College

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why Stranmillis College failed to hold an election for a Board of Governors in May 2010.

(AQW 8058/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In accordance with the Colleges of Education (NI) Order 2005 and the College's Instrument of Government, only three members of the Stranmillis Governing Body are elected. The Principal is appointed by virtue of her office, while up to 10 members (including the Chair) are appointed following public competitions run in accordance with Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (CPANI) guidelines. Of those elected:

- One is elected by students at the college from among their number. The current member's term of office is not due to expire until 31 May 2011.
- One is elected by non-teaching staff at the college from among their number. The current member's term of office is not due to expire until 31 January 2012.
- One is elected by teachers at the college from among their number. The current member's term of office is due to expire on 31 August 2010. In anticipation of the vacancy, the College proceeded to hold an election for a replacement. A Notice of Election was published on 8 April 2010 with a closing date, for the receipt of nominations, of 28 April. Despite a reminder to the teaching staff on 27 April, no nominations were received and the teaching staff were advised of this outcome on 8 May 2010. The matter was formally reported at the next meeting of the Governing Body on 24 June when it was agreed that the election process would be re-run in September 2010.

Institute of Professional Legal Studies

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the level of bursary for students at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8079/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has not provided any funding for bursaries for students at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in each of the last five years.

Departmental funding for Northern Ireland domiciled students pursuing postgraduate diplomas and certificates, including those for legal practice, in the United Kingdom has not been available since September 2005. At that time, my Department reviewed its priorities in light of the Government's 2002 Science, Engineering and Technology Strategy "Investing in Innovation" and decided that its postgraduate support budget should be targeted at funding Masters and PhD courses at the higher levels recommended in that report.

Student Support Fund

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if colleges which currently administer the Student Support Fund will continue to provide this fund in the 2010/11 academic year.

(AQW 8117/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department, working in conjunction with the Further Education sector, carried out a review of student support during 2009/10. It was agreed from the 2010/11 academic year the 'Student Support Fund' will be known as the Hardship Fund, which will continue to assist students, including those with physical or other disabilities, who for whatever reason face financial difficulties in meeting their cost of living and which may restrict their ability to attend their chosen course of study. All six FE Colleges will deliver the Hardship Fund from 2010/11.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Businesses Supported by Invest NI in Cookstown and Magherafelt

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of businesses supported by Invest NI in (a) the Cookstown District Council area; and (b) the Magherafelt District Council area in each of the last five years; and (ii) the amount of money invested in each business.

(AQW 7696/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): During the period 2005/06 to 2009/10, (a) 119 businesses in Cookstown and (b) 151 businesses in Magherafelt were offered financial support by Invest NI. Table 1 shows the number of businesses offered assistance and the amount of assistance offered by Invest NI to these businesses in each of the 5 years. The amount of investment planned by these businesses is also included. The Total Assistance Offered represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. Total Planned Investment represents the expected cost of the projects to these businesses and includes Invest NI's financial support.

TABLE 1: BUSINESSES ASSISTED BY INVEST NI IN COOKSTOWN & MAGHERAFELT DCAS (2005/06 – 2009/10)

	Cookstown DCA			Magherafelt DCA		
Financial Year	No of Businesses	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m	No of Businesses	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m
2005/06	39	1.04	6.91	50	0.96	7.07
2006/07	43	1.44	9.39	46	0.93	3.74
2007/08	53	2.53	21.89	53	2.37	13.08
2008/09	63	2.45	13.39	65	2.45	30.19
2009/10	65	6.57	44.29	81	3.09	12.51
Total	*119	14.03	95.86	*151	9.81	66.59

* Totals do not add because a business can be offered assistance in more than one year.

- (ii) Table 2 provides details of individual offers over £50,000 highlighted in the table above (a list of offers below this amount is extremely long and not suitable for display). Under data protection legislation, offers to businesses registered as Sole Traders or Partnerships cannot be disclosed.

TABLE 2: INDIVIDUAL DETAILS OF BUSINESSES OFFERED OVER £50,000 BY INVEST NI IN COOKSTOWN & MAGHERAFELT DCAS (2005/06 – 2009/10)

Year	Client Name	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m	DCA
2005/06	Cde Ireland Ltd	63,819	125,326	Cookstown
2005/06	Central Laundries Ltd	83,739	194,000	Cookstown
2005/06	Grampian Country Pork Limited	211,251	4,249,124	Cookstown
2005/06	Keystone Lintels Limited	137,114	457,048	Cookstown
2005/06	Bulrush Horticulture Limited	96,769	416,768	Magherafelt
2005/06	Copper Industries (Ireland) Limited	87,569	283,765	Magherafelt
2005/06	Four Dee (Ni) Limited	51,286	152,750	Magherafelt
2005/06	Micran Limited	57,560	383,389	Magherafelt
2005/06	Moyola Precision Engineering Limited	183,218	3,797,233	Magherafelt
2005/06	William Clark And Sons Limited	120,605	437,509	Magherafelt
2005/06	Windell Ltd	114,000	745,000	Magherafelt
2006/07	Ba Kitchen Components Ltd	85,750	2,989,250	Cookstown
2006/07	C N C Components (Uk) Ltd	159,985	1,191,629	Cookstown
2006/07	Cde Ireland Ltd	334,550	985,433	Cookstown
2006/07	Grampian Country Pork Limited	60,769	189,064	Cookstown

Year	Client Name	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m	DCA
2006/07	Mcquaid Engineering Ltd	236,365	1,020,006	Cookstown
2006/07	Oakleaf Contracts (Europe) Limited	150,000	843,171	Cookstown
2006/07	Trade Mouldings Ltd	76,658	576,000	Cookstown
2006/07	Creagh Concrete Products Ltd	102,936	171,560	Magherafelt
2006/07	Four Dee (Ni) Limited	79,127	378,196	Magherafelt
2006/07	Kbb Doors Ltd	84,554	628,512	Magherafelt
2006/07	Macrete Ireland Ltd	80,015	133,358	Magherafelt
2006/07	Maghera Joinery Works Limited	80,000	264,000	Magherafelt
2006/07	Mcerlain's Bakery (Magherafelt) Limited	76,190	301,761	Magherafelt
2006/07	Sperrin Metal Products Ltd	60,000	427,000	Magherafelt
2006/07	The Savile Row Holding Company Limited	107,912	283,281	Magherafelt
2007/08	Briway Tracks Ltd	52,880	373,950	Cookstown
2007/08	Cde Ireland Ltd	412,483	6,974,514	Cookstown
2007/08	E P S Environmental Limited	90,215	325,872	Cookstown
2007/08	Fsl Electronics Ltd	120,809	294,560	Cookstown
2007/08	Good4u Food And Drink Company Limited	74,930	390,124	Cookstown
2007/08	Hilton Meats (Cookstown) Ltd	163,739	545,798	Cookstown
2007/08	Keylite Roof Windows Limited	213,539	620,826	Cookstown
2007/08	Meteor Controls (International) Ltd	808,277	10,432,262	Cookstown
2007/08	Mid Ulster Reproductions Limited	50,074	364,770	Cookstown
2007/08	Quarry-Fix Ltd	83,411	154,673	Cookstown
2007/08	C.M Interiors Ltd	68,800	499,784	Magherafelt
2007/08	Essential Designs (Ni) Ltd	160,751	1,905,742	Magherafelt
2007/08	Fireglass Direct Ireland Ltd	87,628	740,305	Magherafelt
2007/08	Macrete Ireland Ltd	200,326	500,814	Magherafelt
2007/08	Micran Limited	60,000	337,000	Magherafelt
2007/08	Moyola Precision Engineering Limited	992,600	4,228,400	Magherafelt
2007/08	S D C Trailers Ltd	94,952	169,920	Magherafelt
2007/08	Specialist Joinery Fittings Ltd	69,195	227,695	Magherafelt

Year	Client Name	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m	DCA
2007/08	The Savile Row Holding Company Limited	110,000	2,069,000	Magherafelt
2007/08	William Clark And Sons Limited	85,031	260,705	Magherafelt
2008/09	Ba Kitchen Components Ltd	81,250	176,487	Cookstown
2008/09	C N C Components (Uk) Ltd	63,440	171,190	Cookstown
2008/09	Cde Ireland Ltd	50,000	133,000	Cookstown
2008/09	Keylite Roof Windows Limited	83,000	241,250	Cookstown
2008/09	Keystone Lintels Limited	682,331	3,626,416	Cookstown
2008/09	Mcquaid Engineering Ltd	60,400	189,200	Cookstown
2008/09	Ppi Ltd	92,694	229,487	Cookstown
2008/09	T E S (Ni) Ltd	366,550	4,521,325	Cookstown
2008/09	Trade Mouldings Ltd	85,497	261,841	Cookstown
2008/09	Central Welding Ltd	73,526	1,121,952	Magherafelt
2008/09	Copper Industries (Ireland) Limited	60,136	159,671	Magherafelt
2008/09	F.P Mccann Limited	240,000	1,665,000	Magherafelt
2008/09	Homeseal (Energy Savings) Limited	98,000	1,010,496	Magherafelt
2008/09	Moyola Precision Engineering Limited	158,061	395,152	Magherafelt
2008/09	S D C Trailers Ltd	725,000	21,204,000	Magherafelt
2008/09	Specialist Joinery Fittings Ltd	70,538	138,995	Magherafelt
2008/09	Tnr Systems Limited	84,000	1,416,655	Magherafelt
2008/09	Windell Ltd	200,920	566,629	Magherafelt
2009/10	Anaconda Equipment International Ltd	152,928	316,958	Cookstown
2009/10	Axon Power & Control Ltd	150,990	369,622	Cookstown
2009/10	Ba Kitchen Components Ltd	256,591	1,031,992	Cookstown
2009/10	Cde Ireland Ltd	403,683	1,103,651	Cookstown
2009/10	Dale Farm Limited	4,000,000	36,050,000	Cookstown
2009/10	Fsl Electronics Ltd	51,566	101,616	Cookstown
2009/10	Glenavon House Hotel (1982) Limited	63,645	94,230	Cookstown
2009/10	Gortavoy Plant Ltd	118,460	240,665	Cookstown
2009/10	Grampian Country Pork Limited	52,465	140,931	Cookstown
2009/10	Keystone Lintels Limited	255,000	1,228,000	Cookstown

Year	Client Name	Total Assistance Offered £m	Total Planned Investment £m	DCA
2009/10	Ppi Ltd	61,355	135,880	Cookstown
2009/10	T E S (Ni) Ltd	141,893	432,558	Cookstown
2009/10	Turkington Engineering Limited	56,350	256,350	Cookstown
2009/10	Anderson Interiors Limited	97,750	510,250	Magherafelt
2009/10	Beam Vacuum Systems Limited	59,569	336,215	Magherafelt
2009/10	Creagh Concrete Products Ltd	208,619	545,576	Magherafelt
2009/10	Delwyn Enterprises Ltd	56,600	116,600	Magherafelt
2009/10	Electro-Tech Machinery Limited	58,591	218,426	Magherafelt
2009/10	F.P Mccann Limited	207,095	549,615	Magherafelt
2009/10	Fireglass Direct Ireland Ltd	154,381	1,071,348	Magherafelt
2009/10	Hughes Furniture Ltd	52,137	125,303	Magherafelt
2009/10	Macrete Ireland Ltd	57,894	127,004	Magherafelt
2009/10	Maghera Joinery Works Limited	185,473	510,852	Magherafelt
2009/10	Mcerlain's Bakery (Magherafelt) Limited	179,446	1,578,677	Magherafelt
2009/10	Micran Limited	97,990	233,569	Magherafelt
2009/10	Moyola Precision Engineering Limited	64,077	206,522	Magherafelt
2009/10	Rogers Fencing Systems Ltd	78,960	281,959	Magherafelt
2009/10	S D C Trailers Ltd	385,369	998,746	Magherafelt
2009/10	Specialist Joinery Fittings Ltd	123,834	304,729	Magherafelt
2009/10	The Savile Row Holding Company Limited	320,694	2,271,506	Magherafelt
2009/10	Tobermore Concrete Products Limited	108,797	698,198	Magherafelt

Notes:

- 1 Under Data Protection legislation Sole Traders and Partnerships have been removed from Table 2.
- 2 A business can be offered assistance in more than one year.

In addition, during the same period Invest NI also indirectly offered support to new business starts through the Enterprise Development Programme (formerly the Start a Business programme), delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Northern Ireland. Table 3 shows the number of offers made and the associated assistance offered to these projects.

TABLE 3: NEW BUSINESSES ASSISTED UNDER THE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN COOKSTOWN & MAGHERAFELT DCAS (2005/06 – 2009/10)

	Cookstown DCA		Magherafelt DCA	
Financial Year	Number of Offers	Assistance Offered (£)	Number of Offers	Assistance Offered (£)
2005/06	89	41,050	145	70,250
2006/07	92	32,400	102	37,200
2007/08	106	38,800	125	47,600
2008/09	71	24,000	68	10,800
2009/10	80	-	82	-
Total	438	136,250	522	165,850

Note: The new Enterprise Development Programme established in 2009 does not offer financial support to establish a business but provides training, advice and guidance.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the (a) GAA events; (b) soccer events; (c) motorcycling events; and (d) horse racing events promoted by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in each of the last five years; and the amount the Northern Ireland Tourist Board spent on promotion for each event.

(AQW 7746/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) remit is to market Northern Ireland within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland markets. Events are used as a hook when and where appropriate. Tourism Ireland Ltd (TIL) is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland in Great Britain and overseas markets.

NITB's role is not designed to promote specific individual sporting events or to support ongoing promotional activity for these events. However, as part of NITB's activity over the last five years, events are regularly promoted in, for example, event press releases which are issued regularly; the Northern Ireland Visitor Guide which contains annual events and is distributed in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland by NITB and internationally by TIL; and press trips which are brought to key events such as the North West 200.

All events of interest to visitors are featured on www.discovernorthernireland.com.

The events covered are provided by the local Tourist Information Centre network or are those which have been notified to NITB in advance. Organisers who wish for their events to be listed on the website should contact events@nitb.com.

Invest NI

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the running costs of Invest NI; (ii) the amount of financial assistance it has awarded to businesses; and (iii) the number of jobs created as a result of this investment, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7786/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

(i) The Invest NI running costs for each of the last 3 years were as follows:

2007/08	£30,475,000
2008/09	£31,804,000
2009/10	£32,772,000

These figures relate to Staff Costs and 'Other Administrative Expenses' as published in the Invest NI Annual Report and Accounts, and include the occupation costs of the Invest NI headquarters building.

(ii) and (iii) Table 1 shows the amount of financial assistance that Invest NI offered to businesses in each of the 3 years between 2007/08 and 2009/10 and the number of jobs promoted and safeguarded as a result of this support.

The Total Assistance Offered represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. Only part of this assistance is employment related (52%) for the period under review.

In terms of relating this activity to actual job creation, it is too early to assess the job creation impact of these offers, as some projects can take up to 5 years to fully mature; however, recent research has shown that generally around 75% of jobs promoted will be created.

**TABLE 1: INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED & JOBS PROMOTED / SAFEGUARDED
(2007/08 – 2009/10)**

Year	New Jobs	Safe Jobs	Employment Related Assistance Offered (£m)	Total Assistance Offered (£m)
2007/08	4,767	2,207	62.5	115.2
2008/09	6,492	848	87.6	150.1
2009/10	4,307	2,264	82.4	182.1
Total	15,565	5,319	232.6	447.4

Notes:

- 1 Total Assistance Offered includes Employment Related Assistance Offered.
- 2 Employment Related Assistance Offered is directly comparable to job numbers. Total Assistance Offered is not.
- 3 New Jobs represents the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 4 Safe Jobs represent the number jobs that would have been lost if the project was not supported.
- 5 Figures may not add due to rounding.

In addition, during the same period Invest NI also indirectly offered support to 7,825 new business starts through the Enterprise Development Programme (formerly the Start a Business programme), delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Northern Ireland. Table 2 shows the number of offers made, the associated assistance offered to these projects, and the number of new jobs these offers are expected to create.

**TABLE 2: NEW BUSINESSES ASSISTED UNDER THE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
(2007/08 – 2009/10)**

Financial Year	Number of Offers	Assistance Offered (£)	New Jobs
2007/08	3,348	1,240,600	3,482

Financial Year	Number of Offers	Assistance Offered (£)	New Jobs
2008/09	2,328	557,800	2,421
2009/10	2,149	-	2,235
Total	7,825	1,798,400	8,138

Note: The new Enterprise Development Programme established in 2009 does not offer financial support to establish a business but provides training, advice and guidance.

Call Centres

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of call centres that have received financial assistance from (a) her Department; and (b) Invest NI in each of the last five years; and (ii) the number of jobs (a) created; and (b) lost in call centres in the same period.

(AQW 7787/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) In the five year period from 2005/06 until 2009/10, Invest NI made 117 offers of financial assistance to call centres promoting 5416 new jobs and safeguarding a further 868 jobs. Total assistance offered was just over £41.5million. Details for each of the five years can be found in the table below.

Year	No of Offers	New jobs	Safe Jobs	Total Assistance
2005/06	17	576	0	3,269,048
2006/07	28	2,009	109	16,038,089
2007/08	19	1,079	67	8,443,277
2008/09	20	1,567	0	9,372,718
2009/10	33	185	692	4,385,173

- (ii) Over the 5 year period from 2002/03 to 2007/08 (latest available data), there were 9,555 job gains, and 154 job losses, in call centres supported by Invest NI, resulting in an overall increase in employment of 191%.

These figures are based on actual change in employment within client businesses, and do not directly relate to those projects assisted during the period, as referred to in (i).

The contact sector in Northern Ireland currently employs more than 14,000 people contributing significantly to the economic prosperity of Northern Ireland.

Assistance Granted to Export Companies

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the amount of financial assistance granted to export companies by (a) her Department; and (b) Invest NI; (ii) the number of jobs created in this industry; and (iii) the value of exports achieved, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7788/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) (a) Invest NI is a non-departmental public body of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and is responsible for the delivery of the Department's policies and strategies in relation to business support in Northern Ireland.
- (b) Invest NI will work with any manufacturing and tradable services business that has export potential and the prospect of improving productivity by becoming more internationally competitive.

Therefore, the response to this question covers all companies offered assistance by Invest NI over the period 2005/06 to 2009/10.

Table 1 shows the amount of financial assistance that Invest NI offered to businesses in each of the 5 years between 2005/06 and 2009/10 and (ii) the number of jobs promoted and safeguarded as a result of this support.

The Total Assistance Offered represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. Only part of this assistance is employment related (55%) for the period under review.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED AND JOBS PROMOTED / SAFEGUARDED (2005/06 – 2009/10)

Year	New jobs	Safe Jobs	Employment Related Assistance Offered (£m)	Assistance Offered (£m)
2005/06	5,352	3,844	90.2	133.7
2006/07	5,701	523	51.0	96.9
2007/08	4,767	2,207	62.5	115.2
2008/09	6,492	848	87.6	150.1
2009/10	4,307	2,264	82.4	182.1
Total	26,618	9,685	373.7	678.0

Notes:

- 6 Total Assistance Offered includes Employment Related Assistance Offered.
- 7 Employment Related Assistance Offered is directly comparable to job numbers. Total Assistance Offered is not.
- 8 New Jobs represents the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 9 Safe Jobs represent the number jobs that would have been lost if the project was not supported.
- (iii) Table 2 shows the value of exports generated by Invest NI clients between 2004/05 and 2008/09.

TABLE 2: INVEST NI CLIENTS' EXPORTS (2004/05 – 2008/09)

Year	Exports (£billion)
2004/05	4.9
2005/06	5.2
2006/07	5.6
2007/08	6.0
2008/09	5.9

NOTES:

- 1 Due to data collection methodologies, this information is not directly comparable to that set out at points (i) and (ii) above.
- 2 For comparative purposes values are expressed in 2008/09 prices.
- 3 2008/09 figures are provisional and subject to change.

Invest NI Offices Located Abroad

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number and location of Invest NI offices located abroad; and (ii) the value of inward investment from each location, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7791/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) Invest NI currently has a network of 11 offices located outside Northern Ireland. In addition, Invest NI has representatives based in Tokyo and Seoul.

Invest NI has a network of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) offices located in North America (Boston, New York, San Jose), Europe (London, Brussels, Dublin) and South Asia (Mumbai). These offices focus on promoting Northern Ireland as a location capable of providing solutions to the business needs of new investors.

Invest NI also operates Trade Development Centres in Dubai, Mumbai, Dusseldorf, Taipei and Shanghai which provide practical assistance to Northern Ireland companies seeking to develop and secure new business and strategic business partnerships in those markets. In addition, Invest NI has a representative in Seoul who focuses on promoting technology development and university links.

- (ii) Inward investment is the culmination of a process involving the participation of many Invest NI teams, often from across different offices. As such, it is not possible to align each investment with a particular office. The tables below detail the number of jobs promoted and planned investment in the last three financial years by source region.

2007-08

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	3	298	276	35.70
Great Britain	7	308	67	12.32
North America	14	422	1,102	119.56
Republic of Ireland	7	324	30	41.09
India	2	834	0	19.96
Asia Pacific	2	552	0	27.50
Total	35	2,738	1,475	256.13

2008-09

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	6	775	2	85.67
Great Britain	12	262	3	17.02
North America	11	1,667	0	574.81
Republic of Ireland	13	1,345	152	107.38
India	0	0	0	0
Asia Pacific	1	6	0	0.39
Total	43	4,055	157	785.27

2009-10

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	8	339	53	22.59
Great Britain	17	445	1,001	40.75
North America	17	868	0	112.34
Republic of Ireland	10	76	58	13.84
India	2	86	0	6.06
Asia Pacific	2	1	16	0.28
Total	56	1,875	1,128	195.87

TOTAL

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	17	1,472	331	143.96
Great Britain	36	1,015	1,071	70.09
North America	42	2,957	1,102	806.72
Republic of Ireland	30	1,745	240	162.32
India	4	920	0	26.02
Asia Pacific	5	559	16	28.16
Total	134	8,668	2,760	1,237.27

Notes:

- 1 Figures include offers of assistance towards both first-time inward investments and reinvestments by existing externally-owned clients.
- 2 Table totals may not add due to rounding.
- 3 New Jobs Promoted represent the number of jobs expected to be promoted by the project.
- 4 Safeguarded Jobs represent the number jobs that would have been lost if the project was not supported.
- 5 Total Planned Investment includes planned investment by the client and Total Assistance Offered by Invest NI.

Biogas Industry

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the bio-gas industry has the potential to meet renewable energy targets; and what plans her Department has to develop this industry.

(AQW 7858/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: While onshore wind will continue to be Northern Ireland's main renewable resource – it is the most readily available and currently least expensive – it is important to broaden our renewable energy mix. The DETI-led Bioenergy Inter Departmental Working Group's (IDG) draft Action Plan noted that bioenergy, including biogas, has the potential to make a modest contribution to Northern Ireland's renewable energy targets. The IDG is currently revising the draft Plan in light of consultation responses.

DETI has recently completed a Call for Evidence on the costs associated with installing and operating Anaerobic Digestion (biogas) plants in Northern Ireland to determine if the current number of Renewables Obligation Certificates (ROCs) offered under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) should be increased from the current two ROCs per megawatt hour of electricity generated. The findings from the Call for Evidence will be included in the public consultation on proposed changes to the NIRO in 2011, which will issue in late July 2010.

Opportunities for Local Businesses in the Emerging Market of Cuba

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the potential opportunities for local businesses in the emerging market of Cuba, particularly in light of any future lifting of the U.S embargo.

(AQW 7866/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI is in continual contact with UK Trade and Investment and the Foreign Office on opportunities for Northern Ireland companies in emerging markets throughout the world, including Cuba. Invest NI will continue to monitor the situation in Cuba in light of any future lifting of the US Economic Embargo, and will assist any Northern Ireland company wishing to maximise new export opportunities when they are identified.

Currently there is limited trade between Northern Ireland and Cuba. In 2009 exports from the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, decreased by 36% on 2008 figures and amounted to £8.9 million.

Microbusiness

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what information and advice is available for people who want to set up a micro-business from home.

(AQW 7925/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest Northern Ireland's Go For It programme is targeted at early stage entrepreneurs and start up businesses. It offers individuals a bespoke package of training and support with participants receiving advice on finance, marketing, sales and other fundamentals which are likely to give their business the best possible chance of success.

The programme is delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland through Local Enterprise Agencies across Northern Ireland.

Advice is also available on the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website which provides online business advice.

Renewables Market

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to develop the renewables market at a small scale installer base in terms of (i) financial incentives to homeowners similar to the Renewable Heat Incentive initiative in Great Britain; and (ii) loans or tax credits to homeowners for changing to renewables, following the withdrawal of the Low Carbon Buildings Programme grant aid in May 2010.

(AQW 7949/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department is nearing completion of a study to investigate the potential for developing renewable heat in Northern Ireland and as part of this is considering the most appropriate way of incentivising renewable heat in Northern Ireland in the longer term. This will, of course, have to be addressed in the context of the current fiscal position and agreed by the Executive. In the wider context, the funding mechanism for the proposed GB scheme is far from clear at present. However, my officials are in discussions with the Department of Energy and Climate Change to ensure that Northern Ireland could benefit from any UK wide funding mechanism that may be introduced.

Following the closure of the Low Carbon Buildings Programme, my Department is considering if any short term support will be necessary to ensure that the market in Northern Ireland is not unduly

disadvantaged. This will, however, be dependent on the availability of funding. As tax credits are a reserved matter, I have no plans to develop tax credits for homeowners changing to renewables.

Renewable Energy Targets

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of whether the hydro-power industry has the potential to meet renewable energy targets; and what plans her Department has to develop this sector.

(AQW 8003/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: While onshore wind will continue to be Northern Ireland's main renewable resource – it is the most readily available and currently least expensive – it is important to broaden our renewable energy mix.

A study commissioned by the Department has shown a maximum resource of 32MW installed capacity, and other studies have suggested a practicable resource of around 8MW, primarily from small-scale installations. This would indicate that hydro-electricity has the potential to make a modest contribution to Northern Ireland's renewable energy targets.

DETI has increased the amount of subsidy available under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to hydroelectric installations up to 1MW capacity accredited after 1 April 2010.

Strategic Energy Framework Policy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's discussions with the Small Wind Energy Group in relation to the Strategic Energy Framework policy.

(AQW 8004/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There have been no discussions with the Small Wind Energy Group (SWEG) in relation to the Strategic Energy Framework. In fulfilment of my commitment given to the Assembly at its debate on the Renewables Obligation (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010, discussions have taken place regarding SWEG's concerns that existing renewable electricity generators accredited under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation before 1 April 2010 do not benefit from the increased Renewables Obligation Certificates introduced for new generators accredited from this date.

Staff Salaries

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many staff in her Department, and associated quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8044/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Two staff members are paid in excess of £100,000 pa.

Department of the Environment

Consultants and External Investigators used in Relation to Staff Grievances

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to Craigavon Borough Council, to detail the cost of (i) consultants and external investigators used in relation to staff grievances, and where possible to list the names of individuals or organisations involved in each case; (ii) industrial tribunals including, payment of claims and legal costs and expenses; and (iii) payments made to interim staff, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7798/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): This information is not held by my Department. These matters are the responsibility of Craigavon Borough Council. My Department has no power to intervene in personnel issues within district councils.

Craigavon Borough Council

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current circumstances in Craigavon Borough Council which have allowed the council to use measures, other than vacancy control measures, to appoint senior posts.

(AQW 7802/10)

Minister of the Environment: Appointments to senior posts are a matter for Craigavon Borough Council in consultation with the Local Government Staff Commission. My Department has no power to intervene in personnel issues within district councils.

Allotments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what action is being taken to increase the number of allotments.

(AQW 7814/10)

Minister of the Environment: District councils have a discretionary power under the Allotments Act (Northern Ireland) 1932 to provide allotments for use by residents in their districts. District Councils are independent statutory bodies responsible for conducting their own affairs and it would not be appropriate for me or my Department to interfere in such internal matters. If you have an interest in a particular area you may wish to contact the appropriate council directly to ask what they are doing to promote this activity.

Reform of the Planning Service

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost to date of the reform of the Planning Service.

(AQW 7827/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has chaired a working party that includes representatives of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Rivers Agency, the former Water Service, now Northern Ireland Water and Roads Service, agencies of the Department for Regional Development, to develop a strategy to promote the wider use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

The working party has met 10 times since 2006. It produced a strategy document that was approved by the Assembly Environment Committee on 7 January 2010.

In addition, SuDS are also discussed between Departments at meetings of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Stakeholder Forum, the WFD Implementation Working Group and the WFD Interdepartmental Board as the wider use of SUDS is an action set out in the recently published WFD River Basin Management Plans.

Agencies and Bodies Funded by the Department

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7160/10, to detail the level of funding to all non-government organisations listed in each of the last two years; and the funding planned for this year.

(AQW 7832/10)

Minister of the Environment: The table below provides funding details for my Department for non-government organisations (NGOs) for the last two years 2008-09 and 2009-10 and funding planned for this year. An additional small number of NGOs have been identified which were not included in my

response to AQW 7160/10. The funding relates to 5 groups within conservation areas under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Scheme as well as PLACE (an organisation which examines issues relating to Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Community and Environment) and West Belfast Partnership.

Non - Government Organisations Funding	2008- 09 Expenditure £	2009-10 Expenditure £	2010-11 (Planned Funding) £
Architectural Heritage Fund	160,000	305,228	20,000
Alliance Youth Works	0	0	22,000
An Creaghan	0	0	29,000
Arena Network	0	0	22,000
Association of Prevention Trusts	0	15,075	0
Baglady Productions	0	0	0
Belfast Hills Partnership	84,872	89,560	75,000
Bryson House	102,858	58,196	0
Butterfly Conservation NI	50,084	48,486	59,000
Carntogher Community Association	0	0	0
Carren Conservation Group	0	0	0
Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Society	149,771	154,849	160,000
Conservation Volunteers NI	363,129	303,100	180,000
Copeland Bird Observatory	15,432	8,553	8,000
Countryside Recreation Network	323,097	266,850	170,000
Creggan Education Research	0	0	0
Derg Valley Care	19,650	37,460	0
Earth Science 2000	0	5,000	0
East Belfast Mission	170,793	51,037	0
Eco Seeds Ltd	0	0	0
Envirocentre	42,063	0	0
Environmental Campaigns	0	0	0
Fermanagh Local Strategy	0	0	0
Friends of Somerset Ponds	0	0	0
Groundwork NI	0	0	0
Killesher Community Development Association	3,000	0	0
Landscape Institute NI	0	0	0
Limavady Community Development Initiative	65,933	14,606	0
Lough Neagh Advisory Committee	0	0	25,000

Non - Government Organisations Funding	2008- 09 Expenditure £	2009-10 Expenditure £	2010-11 (Planned Funding) £
Marine Conservation Society Ltd	3,890	19,283	18,000
Mid Ulster Enterprises	0	0	0
Mourne Heritage Trust	231,124	301,860	290,000
NI Environment Link	249,960	181,541	210,000
NI Raptor Study Group	0	0	10,000
Quarry Products Association	4,690	2,100	13,000
Regeneration of South Armagh	0	0	0
Share Centre	0	0	0
Shopmobility Belfast	19,488	49,475	0
South Lough Neagh Regeneration	0	0	0
Speedwell Project	42,729	64,029	65,000
Sperrin Tourism Ltd	0	0	0
Sustainable NI	0	0	0
Talnotry Avian Care Trust	6,244	48,208	32,000
The Mammal Society	0	0	0
The National Trust	732,151	262,241	117,000
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	404,665	190,643	227,000
The Ulster Wildlife Trust	199,021	318,402	220,000
The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	83,771	107,400	32,000
The Woodlands Trust	476,993	125,064	102,000
Tidy Northern Ireland	117,964	123,929	127,000
Tourism and Transport Consult	0	0	0
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society	52,633	43,027	40,000
Various Churches	696,730	476,814	639,000
Voluntary Services Lisburn	163,564	8,155	0
WWF	0	0	0
Disability Action	185,000	182,000	Not finalised
Community Place	177,000	177,000	Not finalised
THI - Lisburn City Centre Management Ltd	20,000	5,000	Not finalised
Bushmills THI Partnership	8,805	0	Not finalised
THI - Walled City Partnership Ltd	32,793	71,428	Not finalised
THI - Lurgan Forward	38,500	10,786	Not finalised

Non - Government Organisations Funding	2008- 09 Expenditure £	2009-10 Expenditure £	2010-11 (Planned Funding) £
THI - Canal Street Heritage Initiative	23,304	0	Not finalised
PLACE	0	9,649	Not finalised
West Belfast Partnership Board	0	13,386	Not finalised
Total	5,521,701	4,149,420	2,912,000

Review of Public Administration

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 6992/10, to provide a full breakdown of his Department's spending on the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 7862/10)

Minister of the Environment: Pursuant to AQW 6992/10 my Department's spending to the end of May 2010 on local government reform under RPA, is set out in the table below.

Departmental Administration Costs	£4.256k
Strategic Leadership Board/Policy Development Panel/Taskforce Costs	£0.422k
Support Funding for NILGA specific to Reform Programme	£1.106k
Support for Modernisation Projects	£0.102k
Transition Committee Costs	£1.729k
Consultants' Fees	£0.691k
Local Government Boundaries Commissioner	£1.259k
Total	£9.565k

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment if any discussion has taken place between his Department, or its agencies and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department for Regional Development, or their agencies, in relation to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; and to outline how many meetings have taken place and the outcome of these meetings.

(AQW 7934/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has chaired a working party that includes representatives of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Rivers Agency, the former Water Service, now Northern Ireland Water and Roads Service, agencies of the Department for Regional Development, to develop a strategy to promote the wider use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

The working party has met 10 times since 2006. It produced a strategy document that was approved by the Assembly Environment Committee on 7 January 2010.

In addition, SuDS are also discussed between Departments at meetings of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Stakeholder Forum, the WFD Implementation Working Group and the WFD Interdepartmental Board as the wider use of SUDS is an action set out in the recently published WFD River Basin Management Plans.

River Pollution

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of the Environment how many fish have been killed, as a result of river pollution, in Upper Bann rivers, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7936/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating reports of water pollution affecting ground or surface waters and for instigating enforcement action, where necessary, under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

Investigations of fish kills' are undertaken by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Inland Fisheries in conjunction with Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

The numbers of fish killed in Upper Bann rivers in each of the last three years are contained in Table A in the answer. The numbers contained in the table are estimates only as some fish may have been killed, but not observed, due to predation, being washed downstream or turbidity.

TABLE A

Year	Estimated number of fish killed
2007	None
2008	580
2009	30

River Pollution

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of the Environment how many fish have been killed, as a result of river pollution, in North Antrim rivers, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7945/10)

Minister of the Environment: Investigations of fish kills are undertaken by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Inland Fisheries in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

The information presented in the table below is taken from the NIEA pollution incident database which records pollution incidents on a river catchment basis. The following catchments are considered to represent North Antrim Rivers:- Lower Bann, Glens and Rathlin, Bush and the Braid and Maine.

The numbers of fish killed listed are estimates as more fish may have been killed but not observed due to predation, being washed downstream or not being observed due to turbidity.

Year	Estimated number of fish killed
2007	10
2008	550
2009	80

Pollution Incidents in the Three Mile Water River

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the number of reported pollution incidents in the Three Mile Water river and its tributaries, in each of the last five years; (ii) what type of pollution was identified; (iii) where the sources of pollution were located; (iv) how many polluters have been identified and brought before the courts; and (v) what fines and costs were imposed on these polluters in each case.

(AQW 7948/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating reports of water pollution affecting ground or surface waters and for instigating enforcement action, where necessary, under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

In response to each of your questions:

- (i) Details in relation to the number of confirmed reports of water pollution incidents in the Three Mile Water and its tributaries in each of the past five years are detailed in Table A below.

TABLE A

Year	Total number of confirmed water pollution incidents	Low Severity	Medium Severity	High Severity
2005	15	11	4	0
2006	10	7	3	0
2007	10	10	0	0
2008	6	6	0	0
2009	3	2	1	0

- (ii) Details in relation to the type of pollution identified for the confirmed water pollution incidents which occurred in the Three Mile Water and its tributaries in each of the past five years are detailed in Table B below.

TABLE B

Year	Sewage	Agriculture	Non Agricultural Waste Discharge	Other	Oil
2005	5	1	2	2	5
2006	5	0	2	1	2
2007	7	0	1	1	1
2008	4	0	1	1	0
2009	0	0	2	1	0
Total	21	1	8	6	8

- (iii) The sources of the pollution for the confirmed water pollution incidents occurring in the Three Mile Water and its tributaries in each of the past five years are detailed in Table C below.

TABLE C

Year	Industry	Domestic	Farm	NIW/Water Service	Other	Transport
2005	5	2	1	4	3	0
2006	4	2	0	3	1	0
2007	1	2	0	5	2	0
2008	0	5	0	1	0	0
2009	1	0	0	0	2	0
Total	11	11	1	13	8	0

- (iv) It is NIEA policy that enforcement will be considered for all medium and high severity pollution incidents, unless there are compelling mitigating circumstances. Enforcement action can include prosecution, the issue of a warning letter or the issue of a legally binding notice. Of the 44 water pollution incidents which occurred over this period, 36 were found to be low severity, 8 incidents of medium severity and no high severity incidents. 31 polluters were identified, 4 formal warning letters issued and one case file is being prepared for submission to the Public Prosecution Service for consideration for prosecution. In the three remaining medium severity pollution incidents there were mitigating circumstances which rendered enforcement inappropriate.
- (v) No prosecution cases have yet come to court for water pollution incidents which occurred in this catchment over this time period, therefore, no court fines have been imposed to date.

Pollution Incidents in the Three Mile Water River

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how much his Department has spent, in each of the last five years on (a) dealing with the impact of pollution incidents in the Three Mile Water river and its tributaries; and (b) preparing casework to identify polluters before the courts; and (iii) how much was reimbursed to his Department by (a) polluters; and (b) the courts to cover the costs of these incidents.

(AQW 7950/10)

Minister of the Environment: In response to each of your questions:

(i)(a) The costs to the Department in each of the past five years of dealing with the impact of water pollution incidents in the Three Mile Water and its tributaries are detailed in Table A below.

TABLE A

Year	Total Cost
2005	£1,580
2006	£1,081
2007	£832
2008	£499
2009	£333

(i)(b) The majority of the water pollution incidents which occurred in the Three Mile Water and its tributaries over this five year period were of low severity, therefore, in line with NIEA policy prosecution is not appropriate. In one case of water pollution, which occurred in this catchment in this period, a file is being prepared for submission to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) for consideration for prosecution. As this case is still being prepared for PPS by NIEA, it is not possible to give an actual figure for the final costs of preparing this case at this time.

(ii)(a) From 1 April 2008, NIEA policy has been to recover costs from all polluters who cause high or medium severity pollution incidents, in addition to issuing warning letters or prosecution. As a result of this revised cost recovery policy, £166.32 was recovered from a polluter for one medium severity incident which occurred in the catchment during 2009.

(ii)(b) As no prosecution cases have taken place during this period no costs have been recovered through the courts in this period for pollution incidents in this catchment.

Demand for Local Landfill Capacity

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he intends to take to reassess the demand for local landfill capacity; and how he intends to ensure that 'waste stays local'.

(AQW 7981/10)

Minister of the Environment: Waste Management planning is a function of local government, and District Councils are responsible for deciding what arrangements are appropriate for the management of waste within their area. In doing so consideration is given by Councils to the need for, the capacity, and location of landfill sites and the resultant proposals form part of the waste management plans prepared by the three regional waste management planning partnerships.

These plans, which are subject to full public consultation and Departmental approval, were last approved in 2006. The Waste Management Groups are due to submit new waste management plans in 2011 and this will provide a further opportunity to consider proposed arrangements.

Pollution in the Lismore Stream

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7509/10, to detail the length of time between each incident of pollution in the Lismore Stream being reported and an inspection being carried out.

(AQW 7989/10)

Minister of the Environment: Pursuant to AQW 7509/10, the table below sets out the date and time each incident was reported to Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the date and time the Investigating Officer commenced the investigation on site.

Date incident reported	Time incident reported	Date incident investigated	Time incident investigated	Incident Severity
11 April 2007	15:30	11 April 2007	18:30	Low
20 April 2008	16:00	20 April 2008	17:10	Low
3 May 2008	19:02	3 May 2008	19:50	Low
1 July 2009	15:00	2 July 2009	09:00	Low

High Hedges Bill

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the High Hedges Bill.
(AQW 8036/10)

Minister of the Environment: The High Hedges Bill is currently at Committee Stage which has been extended until 17 December 2010.

The aim is to have the legislation enacted by March 2011 or earlier if possible.

Alleged Fraud within Craigavon Borough Council

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Local Government Auditor's report in which he refers to the alleged fraud within Craigavon Borough Council (i) whether this alleged fraud involved (a) a council officer in the consideration and award of a tender; (b) a tendering firm; or (c) the installation or supply of boilers; (ii) how this fraud went undetected for so long; and (iii) for his assessment of whether any council officer has been neglectful in their duties in overseeing this.

(AQW 8103/10)

Minister of the Environment: This matter has been referred to the police for investigation. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Vacant Posts in the Civil Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many funded vacant posts currently exist in the Civil Service; and at what grades.

(AQW 6921/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): The number and grades of funded vacant posts which currently exist in the Civil Service are set out in the attached table.

The number of funded vacant posts which currently exist in the Civil Service at 21 May 2010

Grade	Total	Grade	Total
Administrative Assistant	27	Grade 7 - Human Rights Adviser	1
Administrative Officer	57.7	Grade 7 - Office of Social Services	3
Assistant Information Officer	1	Grade 7 - Principal Legal Officer	5
Assistant Scientific Officer	1	Grade 7 - Statistician	1
Careers Advisor	7	Grade 7 - Veterinary Officer	1
Compliance Officer	1	Grade 7 - Veterinary Officer Testing	1
Conservator E	1	Higher Psychologist	1
Curatorial C	1	Higher Professional & Technical Officer Ferry Manager	1
Deputy Principal	30	Higher Professional & Technical Officer Quantity Surveyor	2
Deputy Principal Accountant	2	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Level 2	9
Deputy Principal Auditor	1	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Level 3	3
Executive Officer 1	52.7*	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Level 4	2
Executive Officer 2	49	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Level 5	1
Fisheries Officer 1	2	Industrial Staff	3
Forest Officer III	1	Inspector Grade III	2
Grade 3 - Senior Civil Service	3	Inspector Group 1	3
Grade 5 - Chief Social Services Officer	1	Inspector Group 2	5
Grade 5 - Legislation Counsel	1	Inspector Group 4	1
Grade 5 - Senior Civil Service	5	Labourer	2
Grade 5 - Senior Medical Officer	1	Librarian	1
Grade 5 – Solicitor	3	Nurse	1
Grade 6 – General Service	4	Personal Secretary	1

Grade	Total	Grade	Total
Grade 6 Economist	1	Physiotherapist	1
Grade 6 Senior Human Rights Adviser	1	Plant / Fitter Mechanic	1
Grade 6 Senior Principal Legal Officer	1	Professional & Technical Officer	15
Grade 7 – General Service	17	Professional & Technical Officer Marine Maintenance Supervisor	1
Grade 7 - Health Professional Officer	1	Purser	2

The number of funded vacant posts which currently exist in the Civil Service at 21 May 2010
(Continued)

Grade	Total	Grade	Total
Scientific Officer	1	Specialist Grade A	2
Semi-Skilled Grade G	2	Senior Professional and Technical Officer	3
Senior Fisheries Officer	1	Supervising Examiner	2
Senior Purser	3	Supervisor 1	2
Senior Scientific Officer	7	Supervisor Grade B	1
Senior Traffic Examiner	2	Technical Grade 1	4
Senior Valuer	1	Technical Grade 2	1
Support Grade Band 2	8	Trading Standards Service Inspector	3
Staff Officer	30.6	Typist	2
Staff Officer Accountant	5		

Total: 424

* Department of Justice Grade C vacancies shown as Executive Officer I, pending review of those posts which span both NICS grades Executive Officer 1 & Executive Officer 2

Note: The number of vacancies can fluctuate as posts are filled or new vacancies are created due to internal moves or natural staff turnover.

Civil Service Computer Systems

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent on (i) updating; and (ii) maintaining software systems for the Civil Service computer systems in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7578/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The requested information is contained in the attached Annex.

Spend on (i) updating; and (ii) maintaining software systems for the Civil Service computer systems in each of the last three years is as follows:

(i) updating software systems

2007-2008 *	2008-2009*	2009-2010
£31,051,057	£18,358,270	£17,406,103

(ii) maintaining software systems

2007-2008*	2008-2009*	2009-2010
£14,203,501	£14,949,918	£17,235,224

* excludes DEL as all their Information Technology Services were hosted and managed under a Public Finance Initiative contract.

In addition, the following table shows the spend on updating and maintaining software systems where a breakdown into (i) and (ii) has not been provided:

2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
£10,142,195	£8,050,827	£6,829,930

All the above figures exclude DOJ which advised that the provision of this information would incur disproportionate cost.

Pool Cars

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many pool cars are available for use by Government Departments and their agencies to transport Ministers and senior civil servants; and to detail (i) the mileage covered by pool cars; and (ii) the total running costs, including drivers' wages, for each of the last three years.

(AQW 7721/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There are 17 cars available for use by Government Departments and their agencies to transport Ministers and senior civil servants.

The mileage covered by pool cars and the total running costs, including drivers' wages, for each of the last three years are listed in the attached table:

Year	Total Mileage	Total Running Costs (salary costs, fuel costs and car maintenance)
2007-2008	348,443	£404k
2008-2009	404,102	£433k
2009-2010	355,339	£441k

Civil Servants Absent from Work

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil servants, who were absent from work for any length of time, who had the validity or authenticity of their sick notes queried in each of the last five years, broken down by Department.

(AQW 7743/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Vacant Posts in the Civil Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the average number of vacant posts in the Civil Service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7750/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The average number of vacant posts in each of the last five years is set out in the attached table.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF VACANCIES IN EACH OF THE LAST 5 YEARS

Year	Average Number of Vacancies
1/4/2006 ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾	1559
2006/07 ⁽²⁾	1808
2007/08	2061
2008/09 ⁽³⁾	1941
2009/10	1114

Average vacancy information obtained from data provided by Departments on a quarterly basis at 1 July, 1 October, 1 January and 1 April each financial year.

- (1) Figure only held for one date in 2005/2006 ie 1 April 2006.
- (2) Excludes Water Service, as the function transferred out of the Northern Ireland Civil Service on 1 April 2008 and vacancy levels were not monitored.
- (3) Data in relation to 2008/09 are based on the average of 2 quarters' figures as validated staff in post data from the new HR data system were unavailable in January and April 2009.

Retired Civil Servants

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people have retired from the Civil Service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7752/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel:

Year:	No. of Members Retiring:
2005/2006	901
2006/2007	934
2007/2008	967
2008/2009	779
2009/2010 ¹	954

Detail regarding movement of all Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) members, whether active or retired, is published on the Department of Finance and Personnel website in the annual DFP Superannuation and Other Allowances Resource Accounts.

¹All figures provided are final with the exception of those in respect of 2009/2010 which are still in draft form but which will form part of the final Resource Accounts report.

Public Sector Posts in East Antrim

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps he is taking to address the lack of public sector posts in East Antrim.

(AQW 7828/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no centrally directed programme for determining the location of public sector posts. Decisions on the location or relocation of public sector posts are for the Ministers and public bodies responsible for those posts, taking account of business need, value for money and affordability as appropriate.

Pool Cars

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what log record is kept of civil servants' use of pool cars; (ii) how many civil servants, in each Department, used pool cars in each of the last three years; and (iii) what mileage they covered.

(AQW 7835/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Log sheets are maintained to record individual journeys made by civil servants using pool cars.

The attached table shows the number of journeys made in pool cars by civil servants broken down by department by year for each of the last three years.

Information on mileage is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Department	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
DOE	143	321	154
DARD	281	177	102
DCAL	45	9	15
DETI	165	120	360
DFP	441	466	378
DHSSPS	373	379	266
DRD	76	137	115
DSD	216	246	201
DE	332	166	70
OFM/DFM	825	640	524
DEL	378	306	274
Total by year	3,275	2,967	2,459

First Trust Bank

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the impact of the decision to sell the First Trust Bank.

(AQW 7845/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The implications of this decision will depend on whether the sale goes ahead and who might buy it. The concerns that I have relate to the competitiveness of our local banking sector and the possible direct impact for some of the 1,500 people employed by First Trust Bank. The loss of any significant number of these jobs would be very disappointing.

It is crucial that, as we emerge from the recession, we retain a competitive banking sector capable of supporting business growth by lending at reasonable terms. In that respect the sale of First Trust Bank may not harm the local economy if it is taken over by a strong bank that injects a new level of competition – however that is by no means guaranteed.

I have already met with the Irish Banking Officials Organisation to discuss this issue and subsequently raised the issue with the Irish Minister of State, Dr Mansergh. I also intend to raise the issue with Minister Lenihan at the earliest possible opportunity.

NICS Equal Pay

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the progress in the implementation of the NICS equal pay settlement.

(AQW 7893/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The implementation process is well underway, with around 12,000 staff affected by the equal pay settlement now moved to the new pay scales and paid the associated arrears of pay. The next steps in the process have commenced, which involve staff being advised of their individual lump sum payments and being asked to sign agreements to accept the terms of the settlement. Preparatory work on the final step in implementation, a comprehensive pay and grading review, is underway.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 7956/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: During 2009/10, my Department spent £1.1m on external consultancy. This figure, which is provisional and is subject to the finalisation of the Department's 2009/10 accounts, represents a reduction of more than 75% on the 2008/09 expenditure.

The Department issued revised guidance on the engagement of external consultants in April 2009, and has and continues to take steps to minimise the reliance on the use of external consultants, including an increased focus on the use of internal resources to undertake work, for example the use of internal consultants from the Department's Delivery and Innovation Division, and continued downward pressure and monitoring of external consultancy costs by the Departmental Board.

The majority of external consultancy expenditure in previous years related to supporting the development and implementation of the NICS reform programme. Given that these key reform projects have moved from implementation to service delivery, external consultancy costs are expected to reduce further during 2010/11.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Bank Staff

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of using bank staff in each Health and Social Care Trust, in the last financial year.

(AQW 1146/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Information on the cost of bank staff is not held centrally and has been supplied by individual Health and Social Care Trusts.

HSC Trust	Cost of bank staff 2008/09 (£)
Northern	4,488,890
Belfast	7,007,000
Southern	3,420,072
South Eastern	2,382,536
Western	3,680,916
NI Total	20,979,414

It should be noted there is a reducing reliance on banking staff due to cuts in the health budget.

GP Out-of-hours Service

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 3313/10, to provide a breakdown of the costs for each out of hours base for 2007/08, to cover costs associated with doctors, nurses, secretarial staff and taxi services.

(AQW 3616/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The breakdown of operational costs of each Out of Hours base for 2007/08 is detailed in the attached table.

Belfast HSC Trust	North & West	South & East
Medical Staff	£1,188,756	£1,176,384
Admin Staff	£366,303	£362,118

No nurses work in GP Out-of-Hours in Belfast Trust.

Fleet cars are used but the costs were not available within the timeframe to respond to this AQ.

DALRIADA URGENT CARE

GP costs	£3,000,000	All costs including employer superannuation
Nursing Costs	£395,000	All costs inc employer superannuation, NIC
Fleet	£60,000	Lease and maintenance costs, fuel, insurance
Salaries/Wages	£891,000	Operational staff (supervisors, call handlers, drivers), mgt, admin

SOUTH EASTERN HSC TRUST

	Newtownards	Downpatrick	Lisburn	
GP Costs	£1,128,737	£432,264	£1,213,413	
Nursing costs	£0	£0	£0	No nurses worked in GP Out-of-Hours in South Eastern Trust in 2007/08.
Fleet	£6,753	£866	£14,564	
Salaries / Wages	£267,263	£98,502	£328,615	

Southern HSC Trust		
GP Costs	£2,785,078.30	
Nursing costs	£0	No nurses worked in GP Out-of-Hours in Southern Trust in 2007/08.
Fleet	£17,769.59	
Salaries / Wages (except GPs and admin)	£806,192.24	

WESTERN URGENT CARE

	L'Derry	Limavady	Strabane	Omagh	Enniskillen	Total
GP Costs	£850,782	£567,188	£567,188	£779,883	£779,883	£3,544,923
Nursing Costs	£91,062	£54,534	£74,590	£94,413	£76,259	£390,857
Fleet cost	£46,248					
Admin Costs	£122,384	£68,282	£65,110	£69,861	£76,624	£402,261

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Health and Social Care Board: Press Officers

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many press officers work for the Regional Health Board.

(AQW 3896/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of press officers that work for the Regional Health Board is 8 headcount 7.23 whole-time equivalent*.

The Board has advised that communications functions include all media relations (including 24 hr on call service); all internal communications for Trust staff; strategic communications for issues such as public consultations; management of Assembly questions; all publications, print and design; public affairs; website / intranet content and enquiries; events / conferences, photography and support in responding to Freedom of Information requests.

*Source: Health and Social Care Board

Cost of Maintaining Unused and Empty Buildings

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost to the Health Service of maintaining unused and empty buildings.

(AQW 3949/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total annual maintenance cost to the Health Service for unused and empty buildings is approximately £247,262.00.

Health Estates have been liaising with Land and Property Services on the sale of vacant properties.

Storing Medical Records at Mallusk

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the annual cost to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust of storing medical records at Mallusk.

(AQW 3950/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: For the financial year 2008-09 South Eastern HSC Trust spent a total of £150k on the storage of medical records at Mallusk.

The Business Services Organisation is currently pursuing options to eliminate paper records.

Flights Booked for Civil Servants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of flights booked for Civil Servants in his Department which were paid for wholly, or in part, but never used; and (ii) the costs and loss of revenue incurred booking these flights, in each of the last five years. **(AQW 4041/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information in respect of the Department is provided below:

Year	Number of flights paid for but not used	Costs incurred
2005-06	61	£12,139
2006-07	44	£9,780
2007-08	63	£15,370
2008-09	49	£10,482
2009-10 (to 31 December 2009)	28	£4,916

Reports

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number and full title of any 'value for money' and/or 'efficiency' reports commissioned by his Department in each of the last three years; and (ii) the cost of completing these reports. **(AQW 4479/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Value for Money (VFM) audit is an essential and regular management tool employed by the Department in discharging its statutory responsibility to ensure that VFM is provided in the use of resources.

The following table sets out the title and cost of each of the value for money audits commissioned over the last three years by the Department.

Title of VFM Audit	Total Cost for Audit
Social Services Workforce	£50,000.00
Use of Temporary Staff	£35,000.00
Allied Health Professionals (Podiatrists, Dietetics & Orthoptics)	£30,000.00
Staff Travel & Subsistence – October 2009	£65,702.00
Staff Absence – November 2008	£68,000.00
Allied Health Professionals (Speech & Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists & Physiotherapists) – July 2008	£108,551.00
Support Services for Carers – June 2008	£99,425.56
Staff Training – February 2008	£179,336.25
Day Services – September 2007	£126,519.19

Title of VFM Audit	Total Cost for Audit
A & E Activity – September 2007	£99,801.00

The purpose of the Departments VFM audit stagey is to provide independent assurance to the Accounting Officer and also identify potential improvements to the value for money provided by all HSC bodies.

Discharge from Hospital

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients in the last 12 months have had their discharge from hospital delayed because a care package was not available.

(AQW 4743/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available in the format requested.

Children Treated in Adult Mental Health Wards

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children have stayed, or been treated, in adult mental health wards or units in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5682/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is set out in the table below:

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
25	38	41	44

* Figures for 2009/10 are not available.

Such admissions occur only when there is a clinical need for urgent admission and an age appropriate bed is unavailable. In the majority of cases admissions are of children of 16 plus years of age.

The Department has issued guidance on the steps that should be taken to ensure the safety and proper treatment of any young people placed in such facilities.

Western Health and Social Care Trust: Domiciliary Healthcare Workers

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's policy on the retention of domiciliary health care workers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6398/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The recruitment and retention of domiciliary care workers is a matter for each HSC Trust. The Western Trust has advised that it has not encountered any retention difficulties regarding domiciliary care workers and this remains the position.

The Trust has also advised that it currently employs 910 domiciliary care staff, a reduction of 114 since 2007. This reduction involved home help workers, who provided low level practical support, while the Trust has focussed resources on supporting service users with the most complex needs. As well as directly employing these staff, the Trust has contracts with 17 independent sector providers for domiciliary care.

Western Health and Social Care Trust: Domiciliary Healthcare Workers

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any reduction in the number of domiciliary health care workers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust since May 2007.

(AQW 6399/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The recruitment and retention of domiciliary care workers is a matter for each HSC Trust. The Western Trust has advised that it has not encountered any retention difficulties regarding domiciliary care workers and this remains the position.

The Trust has also advised that it currently employs 910 domiciliary care staff, a reduction of 114 since 2007. This reduction involved home help workers, who provided low level practical support, while the Trust has focussed resources on supporting service users with the most complex needs. As well as directly employing these staff, the Trust has contracts with 17 independent sector providers for domiciliary care.

Ketogenic Diet

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average waiting time for children with intractable epilepsy to gain access and commence the ketogenic diet.

(AQW 6549/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are no children waiting for specialist dietetic assessment to consider their suitability for commencement on the ketogenic diet.

Northern Ireland Eating Disorders Services

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding has been allocated to, but not yet spent by, the Northern Ireland Eating Disorders Services from (i) his Department; (ii) the Health and Social Care Board; and (iii) the Health and Social Care Trusts, in (a) the last five financial years; and (b) this financial year to date.

(AQW 6554/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Funding for Eating Disorders Services is allocated by my Department to the Health and Social Care Board. The Board then allocates this funding to the relevant Trusts on a capitation basis. Each Trust has provided details of funding allocated but not spent, which is set out in the table below.

		Belfast Trust*	Southern Trust	Western Trust	Northern Trust
Year	Dep't Allocated	Unspent	Unspent	Unspent	Unspent
2005/06	£1m	£0	£0	£0	£0
2006/07	£1m	£0	£9k	£0	£0
2007/08	£1.5m	£0	£67k	£0	£7k
2008/09	£2m	£190k	£3k	£0	£0
2009/10	£2.5m	£0	£2k	£0	£33k

* Belfast Trust also provides the Eating Disorders Service on behalf of the South Eastern Trust.

Belfast and Southern Trusts have indicated that underspends in 2007/08 and 2008/09 were due to recruitment difficulties following the allocation of additional funding for new posts.

No figures are yet available for the current financial year.

Ketogenic Diet

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children are on the waiting list for the ketogenic diet.

(AQW 6576/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently no children waiting for specialist dietetic assessment to consider their suitability for commencement on the ketogenic diet. 10 children are on the ketogenic diet in Northern Ireland and a further 6 children assessed as suitable have been given a treatment commencement date.

Royal Victoria Hospital Dentistry Department

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the current waiting time for an appointment at the Royal Victoria Hospital dentistry department; and under what circumstances is a patient deemed to be high priority.

(AQW 6596/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The current waiting time for a first outpatient appointment at the Royal Victoria Hospital dentistry department is up to 26 weeks for non-urgent patients.
- (ii) The classification of referrals as either urgent or routine is carried out by a consultant within the specialty of referral.

Pest Control

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much each Health and Social Care Trust spent on pest control in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6650/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below sets out the costs of pest control by Health and Social Care Trusts for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust £k	Northern Health & Social Care Trust £k	South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust £k	Southern Health & Social Care Trust £k	Western Health & Social Care Trust £k
2007/08	42,861	28,275	6,939	16,437	30,603*
2008/09	37,026	38,642	21,979	16,541	9,140
2009/10	23,932	20,740	32,321	17,461	13,379

The above amounts spent on pest control must be seen relative to the large size of the Health Service Estate. There are 1,600 blocks of buildings including major hospital complexes, local hospitals, residential accommodation, day centres, health clinics and administrative buildings and a property estate of some 1.2 million hectares of land. All this has an estimated replacement value of at least 10 billion pounds.

There is continuing significant new investment in capital buildings with £600m of funding in the current CSR period for facilities in the acute, primary & community and mental health and learning disability sectors.

Assembly Question AQW 5140/10

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) when he expects to be in a position to respond to AQW 5140/10, which was due for answer on 11 March 2010; (ii) to detail the

reason for the delay in answering this question; and (iii) if he can confirm that he has returned a draft answer to his officials for amendment.

(AQW 6767/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: An answer has now been provided to this Assembly Question.

Patient Safety

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can override a decision of a Health and Social Care Trust in the interests of patient safety.

(AQW 6841/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Yes, however patient safety will always be the paramount consideration for any Health and Social Care Trust.

Serious Clinical Incidents in Hospitals

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of serious clinical incidents in each hospital in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6850/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information, which has been supplied by the Northern HSC Trust, is set out in the table below. Figures for 2005/06 relate to legacy Trusts and are not available.

Clinical incidents were categorised as 'serious' if they met one of more of the following criteria;

- (i) the incident warranted regional action or learning to improve safety or care;
- (ii) the incident was of public concern; or
- (iii) the incident required an independent review.

NORTHERN HSC TRUST

	Antrim Area	Causeway	Mid Ulster	Whiteabbey	Braid Valley
2005/06	-	-	-	-	-
2006/07	2	0	0	0	0
2007/08	5	1	0	0	0
2008/09	9	2	1	0	1
2009/10	9	1	2	2	0

Doctors

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of doctors currently working at (i) Altnagelvin Hospital; (ii) the Royal Hospital; (iii) Craigavon Hospital; (iv) the Mater Hospital; (v) Antrim Area Hospital; and (vi) the Mid-Ulster Hospital, broken down by grades of (a) Foundation; (b) Registrar; (c) Senior Registrar; (d) Consultant; and (e) other grades.

(AQW 6911/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

MEDICAL STAFF EMPLOYED IN SELECTED HOSPITALS BY GRADE AT 31 MARCH 2010

	Foundation / Senior House Officer		Specialty Registrar		Staff Grade / Associate Specialist		Consultant		Other Grades		Total	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
Altnagelvin Hospital	41	41.0	111	110.5	22	19.6	121	118.0	12	4.6	307	293.7
Royal Group of Hospitals	88	88.0	352	345.0	43	35.8	276	265.1	5	0.9	764	734.8
Craigavon Area Hospital	41	41.0	114	111.7	35	31.2	115	111.5	4	2.6	309	298.0
Mater Hospital	31	31.0	45	45.0	9	7.8	48	43.7	2	0.2	135	127.7
Antrim Area Hospital	58	57.8	93	91.4	12	11.3	95	90.9	4	1.5	262	252.9
Mid-Ulster Hospital	4	4.0	6	6.0	2	2.0	10	10.0	0	0.0	22	22.0

Source: Human Resources Management System

Notes:

- 1 HC = Headcount, WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent
- 2 Figures exclude staff on career breaks and staff with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03.
- 3 Royal Group of Hospitals includes Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital and Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.
- 4 The figures include some staff who are based on the Hospital Sites, but who do not directly support Hospital activity.
- 5 There is no seniority system within the Registrar grade.

Health Service Staff Employed on Contracts

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for each of the last five years (i) the number of health service staff employed on contracts whose contracts were terminated early; (ii) the amount of compensation paid out because of the early termination of these contracts .

(AQW 6947/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is only available from April 2007 when the current Health and Social Care Trusts were set up.

- (i) In this period the number of permanent employment contracts terminated in all Health and Social Care organisations on the grounds of ill health was 258 in the 2007/08 year; 287 in the 2008/09 year and 261 in the 2007/08 year. Contracts terminated on disciplinary grounds were 84 in the 2007/08 year; 69 in the 2008/09 year and 53 in the 2007/08 year.
- (ii) In four cases, two ill health and two disciplinary contract terminations, compensation payments ranging from £1,700 to £35,000, and totalling £79,200, were made as a result of successful claims for unfair dismissal.

Patient Safety

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can override a decision of (i) a local commissioning group; or (ii) the Health and Social Care Board in the interests of patient safety.

(AQW 6997/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Yes, however patient safety will always be the paramount consideration for the Health and Social Care Board and any local commissioning group.

Media Campaigns

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department and other bodies under his remit have spent on media campaigns in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7115/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department and other organisations under my remit have spent the following amounts on media campaigns in each of the last three years:

Spend on Media Campaigns 2007-10

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
£2,558,368	£3,623,167	£2,589,052.32 (approximate total)

This money has been spent on important campaigns relating to domestic violence, sexual violence and abuse; swine flu; promotion of the lifeline helpline; appeals for blood donation; alcohol and drug misuse and a number of fire safety campaigns including the importance of home smoke alarms. In addition the Fire Service has a statutory responsibility to promote fire safety and to provide information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fires.

External Contracts for Press, Media or Communications

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the external contracts for press, media or communications entered into by each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years; and (ii) the individual and total costs of these contracts.

(AQW 7206/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on individual contracts is treated as commercial in confidence. The total value of those contracts across Health and Social Care Trusts is £107,912.77.

Doctor and Consultant Posts Advertised for the Mid-Ulster Hospital

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of doctor and consultant posts advertised for the Mid-Ulster Hospital, including the date of each advertisement in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7503/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The employment of staff is the responsibility of each individual Trust.

The Northern Trust has confirmed that the following doctor and consultant posts have been advertised for the Mid-Ulster Hospital in the last three years:

2007

Title of Post:	Speciality:	Location:	Date Advertised:
Consultant Anaesthetist	Anaesthetics	Mid-Ulster Hospital	15.01.07
Locum Appointment for Training:	General Medicine	Antrim/Mid-Ulster Hospital	07.09.07
Trust Physician	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	23.10.07

2008

Title of Post:	Speciality:	Location:	Date Advertised:
Trust Physician 4 posts	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	08.01.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 2 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	08.01.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 1 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	08.01.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 2 Level)	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	15.02.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 2 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	19.02.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 1 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	19.02.08
Trust Physician	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	26.02.08
Temp Locum Consultant Surgeon	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	27.04.08
Trust Physician	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	20.05.08
Trust Physician	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	11.07.08
Trust Physician	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	15.07.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 2 Level)	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	13.08.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 3 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	19.08.08
Locum Appointment for Training (ST 2 Level)	General Medicine	Mid-Ulster Hospital	30.09.08
Trust Grade 2 posts	A&E	Mid-Ulster Hospital	28.10.08

2009

Title of Post:	Speciality:	Location:	Date Advertised:
Locum Foundation Year 1	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	13.02.09
CT 2	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	13.02.09

Title of Post:	Speciality:	Location:	Date Advertised:
Locum Appointment for Training	Surgery	Causeway/Antrim/ Mid-Ulster Hospitals	16.03.09
Temporary Locum Consultant Surgeon	Surgery	Mid-Ulster Hospital	27.04.09
Speciality Doctor 9 posts	General Medicine	Whiteabbey/ Mid-Ulster Hospitals	18.05.09
Locum Doctor foundation year 1		Trustwide	01.12.09
Locum Doctor foundation year 2		Trustwide	01.12.09

New Local Enhanced Hospital in Omagh: PFI

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why a Private Finance Initiative is no longer a viable option for the financing of the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh.
(AQW 7559/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The final decision on the preferred method of procurement will not be decided until final approval of the business case, which is currently being assessed by my officials.

As I have previously advised you, the Omagh Hospital project has been and remains a key priority of mine since I took up office.

The Western Local Commissioning Group received a copy of the business case for Omagh Hospital from the Western Trust on 22 March 2010. The response will be made to the Trust before final submission of the business case to my Department.

New Local Enhanced Hospital in Omagh: Priority Capital Build

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety where the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh is placed on his priority list of capital builds.
(AQW 7560/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The final decision on the preferred method of procurement will not be decided until final approval of the business case, which is currently being assessed by my officials.

As I have previously advised you, the Omagh Hospital project has been and remains a key priority of mine since I took up office.

The Western Local Commissioning Group received a copy of the business case for Omagh Hospital from the Western Trust on 22 March 2010. The response will be made to the Trust before final submission of the business case to my Department.

New Local Enhanced Hospital in Omagh: Business Case

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on what date the business case for the revenue costings for the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh was submitted to the Health Board Commissioning Group; and when he expects a response.
(AQW 7561/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The final decision on the preferred method of procurement will not be decided until final approval of the business case, which is currently being assessed by my officials.

As I have previously advised you, the Omagh Hospital project has been and remains a key priority of mine since I took up office.

The Western Local Commissioning Group received a copy of the business case for Omagh Hospital from the Western Trust on 22 March 2010. The response will be made to the Trust before final submission of the business case to my Department.

Compensation Claims for Medical Negligence

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of compensation claims for medical negligence, against Health Boards and the Health and Social Care Trusts, which have not been settled or closed after (i) 5 years; (ii) 10 years; and (iii) 15 years of going through the legal process.

(AQW 7595/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested has been set out in the table below. The figures include claims relating to the legacy health and social care organisations, which existed prior to the Review of Public Administration.

	No. of Claims not settled or closed that have been going through the legal process for:		
	5-10 years	11-15 years	15+ years
HSC Board	56	34	56
Northern HSC Trust	64	10	0
Southern HSC Trust	45	17	1
Belfast HSC Trust	227	54	8
South Eastern HSC Trust	85	20	0
NI Ambulance HSC Trust	2	0	0
Western HSC Trust	83	7	0

Out-of-hours GP Services

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to 6998/10, to detail the criteria used to differentiate calls to an out-of-hours GP services as (i) emergency; or (ii) urgent.

(AQW 7623/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The criteria for Emergency and Urgent calls are set out in the Regional Out-of-Hours Guidance Manual; the relevant extract is attached.

Extract from Regional Out-of-Hours Guidance Manual

Emergency Calls

The following constitute Emergency Calls:

- Sudden collapse associated with patient being unresponsive
- Sudden collapse associated with patient not breathing
- Choking episode followed by collapse

- Heavy blood loss sufficient to cause loss of consciousness
- Collapse preceded by facial swelling and wheeze (probable anaphylactic shock).

Urgent Calls

The following constitute urgent calls.

- Floppy baby
- Baby with a tense or bulging fontanelle (soft spot on head)
- Child with shortness of breath and recent onset of excessive drooling
- Fit or seizure
- Any loss of consciousness other than faints
- Collapse but patient responsive/breathing
- Shortness of breath such that the patient cannot talk in sentences (all causes including asthma)
- Diabetic with loss of consciousness/hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)
- Chest pain with a history of heart disease
- Chest pain associated with arm, throat/neck or jaw pain
- Chest pain of more than 20 minutes but less than 24hrs duration
- Palpitations associated with either chest pain or feeling faint
- Upper abdominal pain in patient with recent history of heart disease
- Abdominal pain associated with light-headedness / feeling faint on trying to stand
- Overdose
- Lip or tongue swelling
- Exposure to an allergen in a patient who previously suffered an anaphylactic reaction
- High temperature associated with any of the following
- Headache
- Neck stiffness
- Unable to tolerate light
- Rash which doesn't fade on performing the glass test
- Vomiting of fresh (red) blood
- Blood loss from any source which is described as heavy
- Patient who cannot get up following a fall.

Accident and Emergency Unit at the Antrim Area Hospital: Pressure on Staff

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment has been made of the increasing pressure on staff in the Accident and Emergency Unit at the Antrim Area Hospital, following the closure of accident and emergency services at Whiteabbey and Mid-Ulster hospitals.
(AQW 7643/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Staffing and patient flow are continually monitored and assessed within the Accident and Emergency Department at the Antrim Area Hospital. Since the implementation of the changes on 24 May, performance has been steadily improving. This is as a consequence of the changes the Trust has made to the physical layout of the A&E Department, the additional 21 beds opened to support the changes and the larger team of doctors and nurses now available to provide care.

Since 24 May just over 4000 patients have attended the A&E department in Antrim Area hospital. Performance against the 4 hour target for discharge or admission from A&E has steadily improved since the change to service which indicates the effectiveness of the arrangements put in place by the Trust to manage demand.

Travel and Allowances for Staff

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department spent on travel and allowances for staff in the (i) 2005/06; (ii) 2006/07; (iii) 2007/08; (iv) 2008/09; and (v) 2009/10 financial year.

(AQW 7644/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total Administration expenditure on travel and allowances for staff over the last five years is set out in the following table

Financial Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Expenditure	711,640	658,658	664,256	536,514	506,746

The costs include mileage allowances, airfares, public transport costs, subsistence/allowances and car parking.

I have asked my department to continue to exercise constraint in relation to expenditure in this area. Travel will only be undertaken for essential business purposes.

Administrative Staff Employed by the Northern Health and Social Services Trust

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of administrative staff employed by the Northern Health and Social Services Trust at 1 April 2010, broken down by (i) gender; and (ii) religion.

(AQW 7645/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There were 2,142 administrative staff employed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on 15 June 2010. (i) 211 of these are male and 1,931 female. (ii) The community background recorded under the requirements of the Fair Employment legislation shows that 1,406 of these administrative staff are from the Protestant community, 633 from the Roman Catholic community and 103 from neither.

Travel and Allowances for Staff

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the Northern Health and Social Services Trust spent on travel and allowances for staff in the (i) 2005/06; (ii) 2006/07; (iii) 2007/08; (iv) 2008/09; and (v) 2009/10 financial year.

(AQW 7646/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Details of payments to staff for travel connected to their work are only available from 1 April 2007 when the Northern Health and Social Care Trust came into operation. These are as follows: (iii) 2007/08 year, £9.611m; (iv) 2008/09 year, £10.32m and (v) 2009/10 year, £10.39m.

These payments mainly reflect the cost of reimbursements to staff for using their own car to undertake travel connected to their work. The geographical area covered by the Trust and the policy of increased care in the community are major factors which give rise to this level of expenditure. You will wish to note that the national mileage rates were increased in July 2008 by 10% and despite this the Trust has managed to contain increased expenditure between 2007 and 2008 to 7.4%; this was achieved by restricting travel to all but necessary travel within the Trust area.

Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics: Joined-up Services

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he intends to take to ensure that services provided by a GP and a GUM clinic are joined-up in order to improve co-operation and services for patients, given that a GP cannot currently refer a patient to a GUM clinic for a check-up.

(AQW 7652/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics are generally run on a self referral and walk in basis for first appointments as this is preferred by patients who may not wish to approach their own GP. GPs can provide assessment and care for routine conditions and can also refer patients to the GUM clinic if necessary. This referral may involve attendance at a walk in clinic with a referral letter or, in non-routine cases, the GP can write directly to the Consultant and a fixed appointment time can be issued.

Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics: Unanswered Calls

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is aware that GUM clinic phones lines are frequently unanswered due to the pressure of work on staff; and what steps he plans to take to address this.

(AQW 7653/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The only Trust which has indicated a problem in this area is the Belfast HSCT where the current phone system requires updating in order to handle the volume of calls. The Trust has made a bid for capital monies to upgrade the phone system which will improve access for patients. The new system will allow patients to access clinical staff directly instead of all calls going through receptionists.

Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics: Patients Turned Away

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times in the last year a patient has been turned away from a GUM clinic, and asked to return another day, due to the long queues.

(AQW 7654/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Belfast HSCT – the Trust currently turns away on average ten patients per day who are asked to return another day - an audit of patient access to the GUM clinics showed that 70% of patients were seen within 48 hours.

Northern HSCT - During holiday periods, the Northern Trust may have reduced capacity and reduced number of patient slots at a clinic. If a walk-in patient cannot be fitted into a clinic on such an occasion he/she is offered an alternative appointment within 48 hours. This would be an infrequent occurrence.

Southern HSCT - The GUM Service for the Southern Trust in Daisy Hill Hospital operates an appointment system where all patients are triaged and offered appointments accordingly. All walk-in patients during clinic hours are triaged to ensure that emergency cases are seen.

Western HSCT – The Western Trust does not as yet operate a walk-in clinic thus all appointments are scheduled. The Trust is currently in the midst of a redesign process where they will be considering the potential for drop in clinics.

Children with Downs Syndrome

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the personal needs provision, such as incontinence pads, that are available for children with Downs Syndrome, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 7666/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Services are provided on the basis of individually assessed need, not on the basis of a diagnosis. The full range of children's Health and Social Care Services, including learning disability services, are therefore available to children with Down's Syndrome and are provided in accordance with their individual assessment.

Services Available for Children with a Disability

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) specific services; (ii) after-school services; and (iii) respite services available for children with a disability, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 7667/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Details of the services requested, within each Health and Social Care Trust area, are outlined in the attached table.

Health and Social Care Trust	Specific Services	After School Services	Respite Services
South Eastern Trust	Direct Payments, Domiciliary Service, Social Work Service, Psychology, Psychiatry, learning disability nursing, community children's nursing, cedar foundation support service	Sponsored childminding, Positive Futures, Footprints, PHAB, Direct Payments, Angel Eyes (visual impairment) NI Deaf Youth Organisation (hearing impairment)	Lindsay House, Forest Lodge, Beechfield, Hospice, Barnardos, Fostering
Northern Trust	Child Development Clinic, Multi Disciplinary Assessment, Paediatrics, Speech and Language therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Community Nursing, Social Work, Community Based Services and Hospital Based Services	No specific Afterschool services but possible to participate in general afterschool activity alone or with support	Family based respite, Direct Payments, Residential Respite, social and leisure opportunities by means of Service Level Agreements,
Belfast Trust	Residential care, community nursing service, Group/ recreational activities, Domiciliary care, Overnight at home (All of these services also provide respite for parents)	Trust funds after school places with some voluntary/community organisations ie Artability, Ardmonagh and SENSE. The Trust has Day Care Schemes within Children's Services but this is not a dedicated disability service.	Residential Care in Forest Lodge and Lindsay House, Short Breaks, both day time and overnight provided by the Trust and Barnardo's, Community respite e.g. Cedar Foundation, Crossroads and Autism Initiatives, Direct Payments.

Health and Social Care Trust	Specific Services	After School Services	Respite Services
Southern Trust	Community children's nursing service, Specialist Nurses for Children, Children's Epilepsy Nurse, Children's Learning Disability Nurses, ADHD Specialist nurse, Child Development Nurse Liaison Nurse, Child Development Centre, Community Child Health Clinics, Special Schools and Support Centres, Learning Support Centres, Language Units, Education Centres for Physically disabled children, Community (Domiciliary) AHP Services, Autism Specialist Services, ACE Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Surestart Programmes, Social Work, Community Access, Transition Service and Family Support Services.	Summer Schemes (including SHINE, Chips and Creative 1), Funzone, Respite to Children within their own home	ACE Team, Residential Respite, Orana Respite Centre, Oaklands Respite Centre, Family Based Care, Foster Placements, Saturday Link Scheme, Overnight respite in the Child's own home, Sponsored Child Minding, Day Care Placements, Playgroup placements, community respite, Enable NI, Cedar Outlook Flexible Respite Scheme, Direct Payments, Summer Schemes, Horizon House, Community Care Teams, Hospice at Home, Support Services such as Autism NI, Homestart etc, Sixth Sense, The Parent's Council and Wraparound
Western Trust	Host care and family aide, summer schemes, direct payments, cash grants, social outreach programmes, hospice at home service, family support through the Family Support Panel	The Trust is not commissioned to provide after-school services to children with a disability.	Shepherd's Way Respite, Beltany House, Summer Schemes, Hospice at Home, Direct Payments, Social Outreach Programmes, Family Aide Services, Family Support Workers

Ambulance Call-out Time

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why it took an ambulance 30 minutes to attend a call-out in Mount Eagles on Tuesday 2 June 2010.

(AQW 7668/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has advised me that it has no record of an emergency response to the Mount Eagles residential area on 2 June 2010 which took over 30 minutes. However, the management of emergency response is an operational matter for which the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) is responsible and the Member may wish to contact NIAS directly about this specific query.

Ataxia by Age Group

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have Ataxia, broken down by age group.

(AQW 7670/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of people who have Ataxia is not available.

Ataxia: London Treatment

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of sending patients with Ataxia for treatment in London in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7671/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: During the last three years only one patient with Friedreich's Ataxia was transferred for treatment to London. This occurred in the 2009/10 financial year.

The HSC Board has not yet received an invoice for the treatment of this patient. The nature of the condition means that a multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted treatment regime is anticipated and it is not possible to estimate a cost at this time.

£201 was spent on the travel costs associated with the treatment to date.

Directly Enhanced Services

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he is aware that (i) Directly Enhanced Services are optional for GPs participation and offer a financial incentive; (ii) GPs can fulfil the requirements of DES without having to see the patient and send Personalised Asthma Action Plans to patients in the post to fulfil DES requirements; and (iii) for his assessment of PAAPS being of limited assistance to patients as they are not discussed face-to-face or reviewed and therefore have limited assistance in helping patients manage their Asthma.

(AQW 7673/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Directed Enhanced Services (DESs) are indeed voluntary for GP practices and there is a financial incentive for practices to provide them. However, the HSC Board has an obligation to secure provision of the service to all patients and hence if a practice does not sign up to take part in any DES, the Board must provide the DES to that practice's patients from another provider.
- (ii) The approved procedures for this DES do not require a face to face consultation between the GP and the patient. However, as part of the service description, a GP has to provide each patient aged 15 or over with step 2 asthma and above, on discussion with a health professional, a written self-management plan and a patient held action plan on an annual basis. Patients ideally should contribute to their own written plans over time.
- (iii) In order for a GP practice to receive an achievement payment they are required to provide information to the HSC Board on the number of patients for whom they have completed a written self-management plan. The Board carry out verification checks and if a GP practice has not provided correct information the Board can withhold all or some of the achievement payment.

Out-of-hours Services by the General Medical Services

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) if he is aware that out-of-hours services provided by the General Medical Services contract only respond to emergency calls and do not provide primary care services; (ii) why patient's own GPs do not provide this service, given the lack of patient information locum out-of-hours doctors hold; and (iii) for his assessment of whether 24 hour access to primary care should offer a range of services, including (a) additional services in

GPs surgeries during out-of-hours; (b) access to urgent care services; (c) rapid response on-line self-management facilities; and (d) telemedicine.

(AQW 7675/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Emergency calls are those that are deemed to be immediately life threatening; these calls are passed to 999 and on to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. GP Out of Hours (OOHs) services provide medical cover for urgent conditions that cannot wait until a patient's own GP practice next opens.
- (ii) Prior to the introduction of the GMS Contract in April 2004, GPs were required to provide 24 hour care for their patients. Under the new contract this obligation transferred to the Boards and practitioners were able to opt out of providing OOHs care. I recently launched the regional roll-out of the Emergency Care Summary Record which, with patients' consent, will provide key information on current medication and allergies to treating clinicians in OOH services and A&E Departments.
I do not at this stage intend extending services normally provided during in-hours to the OOHs services as there is no perceived need:
- (iii) some 86% of patients are content with their GP practice opening hours. Moreover, any such proposal would require renegotiation of the present GMS contract and given the pressures on my budget would be unaffordable.

Hospital-Acquired Infections

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the high standard of hygiene measures used in infection control wards in Health and Social Care Trusts, whether he would consider implementing the same measures in all wards in order to reduce hospital acquired infections.

(AQW 7695/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts do not have wards designated as infection control wards.

Ambulances Covering the Mid-Ulster Area

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number and type of ambulances currently covering the Mid-Ulster area.

(AQW 7697/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Ambulance services in the Mid-Ulster area are generally provided from Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) ambulance stations at Magherafelt and Cookstown. The current fleet profile at those stations is shown in the following table:

Magherafelt Ambulance Station	
A&E ambulances	2
Rapid Response Vehicle	1
Patient Care Services vehicles	2
Cookstown Ambulance Station	
A&E ambulances	4
Intermediate Care Vehicles	2

It should be noted that NIAS deploys its emergency response fleet on the basis of a tactical deployment plan which means that the nearest available resource will be dispatched to an incident. It

is, therefore, quite possible that the response to an emergency incident in the Mid-Ulster area could be provided by an ambulance based at another station.

Birth Defects Associated with Valproic Acid

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimate of the number of people who have been affected by birth defects associated with valproic acid.

(AQW 7713/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information relating to the number of people who have been affected by birth defects associated with valproic acid is not available.

Maghaberry Prison: Provision of Healthcare

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the funding allocated by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust for the provision of health care for prisoners in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 7714/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I will answer questions AQW7714/10, 7715/10 and 7716/10 together. The provision of services to the prison community across Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the South Eastern Trust. In the last three financial years funding has been split across the sites as follows.

Financial Year	Magaberry Prison £m	Magilligan Prison £m	Hydebank Prison £m
2008/2009	3.4	1.3	1.3
2009/2010	3.8	1.3	1.4
2010/2011	3.6	1.3	1.3

Costs associated with Prison Dental Services and management at the South Eastern Trust have been apportioned across sites.

Magilligan Prison: Provision of Healthcare

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the funding allocated by the Western Health and Social Care Trust for the provision of health care for prisoners in Magilligan Prison, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 7715/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I will answer questions AQW7714/10, 7715/10 and 7716/10 together. The provision of services to the prison community across Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the South Eastern Trust. In the last three financial years funding has been split across the sites as follows.

Financial Year	Magaberry Prison £m	Magilligan Prison £m	Hydebank Prison £m
2008/2009	3.4	1.3	1.3
2009/2010	3.8	1.3	1.4
2010/2011	3.6	1.3	1.3

Costs associated with Prison Dental Services and management at the South Eastern Trust have been apportioned across sites.

Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre: Provision of Healthcare

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the funding allocated by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for the provision of health care for prisoners in Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 7716/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I will answer questions AQW7714/10, 7715/10 and 7716/10 together. The provision of services to the prison community across Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the South Eastern Trust. In the last three financial years funding has been split across the sites as follows.

Financial Year	Magaberry Prison £m	Magilligan Prison £m	Hydebank Prison £m
2008/2009	3.4	1.3	1.3
2009/2010	3.8	1.3	1.4
2010/2011	3.6	1.3	1.3

Costs associated with Prison Dental Services and management at the South Eastern Trust have been apportioned across sites.

Deaf-Blind Children and Adults

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if and when statutory guidelines for deafblind children and adults will be issued to local authorities.

(AQW 7726/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are no plans to issue such guidelines. However, a wealth of existing legislation already ensures that Health and Social Care Trusts identify and assess the individual needs of all service users with a disability, including those with dual sensory loss. In addition, my Department is currently developing a draft Disability Strategy, which will focus on a “person-centred” approach to treatment, care, and support for all those with a long term disability or sensory impairment, including those who are DeafBlind.

Deaf-Blind Children and Adults

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of deafblind children and adults.

(AQW 7727/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information provided by the five Health and Social Care Trusts is detailed below:

NUMBER OF DEAFBLIND CHILDREN AND ADULTS, BY HSC TRUST¹

HSC Trust	Number of deafblind children	Number of deafblind adults
Belfast	102	5
Northern	*	4
South Eastern	1	6
Southern	18	121
Western	0	7

- 1 The information recorded by HSC Trusts is not a register of all deafblind people as some may refuse to have their names added to relevant HSC Trust records.
- * The NHSCT does not routinely collate this information however they suggested that the number would be relatively small.

Alcohol Legislation

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has any plans to bring forward legislation similar to the Alcohol Bill introduced in Scotland.
(AQW 7744/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Young People's Drinking Action Plan which I launched last year highlights the issue of the supply of alcohol, including price, promotions and advertising. A small subgroup of my Department and the Department for Social Development, which has responsibility for alcohol licensing, has been established to look at these issues in more detail. This is a complex area - there may also be issues in relation to EU Legislation and Competition Laws, and the ongoing progress of the Alcohol Bill in Scotland is therefore being closely monitored by my Department.

Deaf-Blind Children and Adults

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) when updated guidelines for deafblind children and adults will be issued to local authorities; and (ii) to detail the number of deafblind children and adults.
(AQW 7747/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to my answers to AQW 7726/10 and AQW 7727/10 on 29 June 2010.

Forum for Action on Substance Abuse Facility in Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on funding for the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse facility in Bangor.
(AQW 7748/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Forum for Action on Substance Abuse / Forum for Action on Suicide Awareness (FASA) is currently operating the "one-stop-shop" pilot in the Bangor area. The PHA has informed me that it will continue to fund all the pilots until March 2011. Subsequently, subject to positive evaluation, it is anticipated that this initiative will be rolled out across Northern Ireland.

Press, Media or Communication Staff in Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of press, media or communication staff employed in each Health and Social Care Trust; and the annual cost of employing these staff.
(AQW 7756/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health & Social Care Trust Staff in Press or Communications offices at June 2010

Trust	Number in Post		Cost (Including Employers Cost)
	Headcount	Wte	
Belfast	16	15.95	£593,872
Northern	8	8.00	£306,816

Trust	Number in Post		Cost (Including Employers Cost)
	Headcount	Wte	
South Eastern	5	4.55	£182,303
Southern	7	6.27	£272,962
Western	7	6.50	£241,636

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time equivalent

Trusts have stated that their communications function covers all media enquiries, Assembly/Health Committee business, MLA/local government enquiries, Freedom of Information requests, all Private Office Business. Also, internally this function covers all corporate communication with the Trust's staff and all external communication including consultations, Departmental meeting, official visits, events/conferences, public meetings, website content and e-communications. In some Trusts this function covers publications and printing.

Compensation Claims for Medical Negligence

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) successful; and (ii) unsuccessful compensation claims for medical negligence made against each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7765/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Ambulance Response Times

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment has been made of the changes in ambulance response times in the (i) Carrickfergus; (ii) Larne; and (iii) Newtownabbey areas, following the centralisation of accident and emergency services at the Antrim Area Hospital.

(AQW 7779/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 7072/10 on 9 June 2010.

Waiting Times in the Accident and Emergency Unit at Antrim Area Hospital

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the performance figures for waiting times in the Accident and Emergency Unit at the Antrim Area Hospital since the reconfiguration of accident and emergency services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7780/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is published in the monthly 'Emergency Care Waiting Times' bulletin, and is available online at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/emergency_care.htm.

Whiteabbey Minor Injury Unit

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of patients treated at the Whiteabbey Minor Injury Unit; (ii) how this figure compares with estimated levels of treatment; and (iii) the waiting times experienced by patients, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7782/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Information on the number of patients treated at the Whiteabbey Minor Injury Unit, in each of the last three years, is available online at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/hospital_statistics.htm

- (ii) Information on how the number of patients treated at the Whiteabbey Minor Injury Unit compares with estimated levels of treatment is not available.

- (iii) Information on the waiting times experienced by patients, in each of the last three years, is available online at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/emergency_care.htm

Emergency Contraceptive Pills

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7156/10, to detail the number of emergency contraceptive pills supplied to patients without a prescription from (i) Accident and Emergency Units; (ii) family planning clinics; and (c) pharmacies, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7797/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available

Out-of-hours Availability of GPs

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of GPs available 'out-of-hours' in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7804/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The 'out-of-hours' period in Northern Ireland is defined as being from 6.30pm until 8.00am on weekdays and all day on weekends and public holidays. The number of GPs available varies according to the rotas developed by the out-of-hours providers in response to changes in demand at different times of the day. Typically there are more GPs available at peak times such as midday on Saturdays and Sundays, and fewer GPs available during the midnight to 8.00 am shift. The maximum and minimum number of GPs available 'out-of-hours' in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years, is shown in the table below. The figures do not include additional GPs 'on call' and do not account for the numbers of other out of hours staff such as triage nurses.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF GPS AVAILABLE OUT-OF-HOURS BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST.

		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Belfast HSC Trust	Min	3	2	2	2	2
	Max	11	12	12	12	12
South Eastern HSC Trust	Min	3	3	3	3	3
	Max	8	8	8	9	9
Northern HSC Trust	Min	4	4	4	2	2
	Max	11	11	11	11	11

		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Southern HSC Trust	Min	3	3	3	3	3
	Max	11	16	16	16	13
Western HSC Trust	Min	5	5	3	3	3
	Max	14	14	13	13	13

Figures were provided by the Health and Social Care Board.

Missed Hospital Appointments

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of missed hospital appointments in each of the last 12 months; and (ii) an estimate of the costs.

(AQW 7805/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Outpatient activity performed in HSC hospitals in Northern Ireland during 2009/10 will be published in 'Northern Ireland Outpatient Statistics 2009/10' in August 2010. This publication will contain data relating to new and review outpatient appointments, as well as DNAs and cancelled appointments.

The cost of patients failing to attend is not available centrally.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Adults with Learning Disabilities

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many contracts with independent providers have been commissioned by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for daytime provision for adults with learning disabilities; and (ii) how many residential placements for adults with learning disabilities, both long-term and respite, are provided by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7806/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) has commissioned –

(i) 9 contracts with independent providers for daytime provision for adults with learning disabilities; and

The Trust currently provides residential placements for adults with a learning disability, both long-term and respite, as follows –

(ii) family based respite –

- Positive Futures - 34 placement providers offering respite to 45 families,
- Share the Care - 28 small homes providing short-term respite for 144 clients and 56 residential placements,
- Registered Beds (residential and nursing) - 19 beds dedicated to respite provision across the Trust,
- Permanent Care Places - nursing 232 and residential 235,
- Adult Placement Care 12,
- Supported Living 211 people in supported living

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Adults with Learning Disabilities

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the companies and organisations in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust which facilitate day-care placements for adults with learning disabilities.

(AQW 7807/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust the companies and organisations listed below facilitate day-care placements for adults with learning disabilities:

- InVOLve
- Greenlight Gateway
- Mencap
- Triangle
- Magherafelt and Cookstown Volunteer Centre
- Compass Advocacy
- Accept Care
- Bridge Association
- Kilcreggan Homes
- Northern Regional College

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Adults with Learning Disabilities

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) day time; and (ii) evening provision of services for adults with learning disabilities by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust itself.

(AQW 7808/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Day Time service provision for adults with learning disabilities in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust includes -
 - Adult Centres across 11 locations,
 - Maghera Day Centre,
 - 3 Changing Needs Group.
 - Base Drop In Provision across 8 sites to facilitate leisure and friendships,
 - Supported Employment Provision (Trust wide),
 - Social Enterprise Provision across 6 sites,
 - Accredited Independent travel training (Trust wide),
 - Accredited vocational training (Trust wide),
 - Volunteering (Trust wide).
- (ii) Evening service provision for adults with learning disabilities in the Trust includes -
 - Supported Employment and Volunteering (Trust wide),
 - Base Drop In Provision (across 6 sites),
 - A wide range of leisure and social activities is provided as part of individual programmes in residential, nursing care and supported living facilities,
 - A wide range of voluntary sector groups e.g. Gateway and Special Olympics are also available to people with a learning disability.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: 'Get on Track'

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the tendering process used for the production of the 'Get on Track' DVD as part of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's Day Opportunities programme.

(AQW 7809/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: 'Get On Track' is a CD Rom that provides clients and their carers with accessible information on the options available to them through the full range of daytime opportunity services. Quotations were not sought for the service as it was produced by people with a learning disability through the non-profit making Alternative Angles social enterprise provision.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust's Day Opportunities Programme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many (a) day; and (b) evening placements are available under the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's Day Opportunities programme; (ii) to list the organisations providing the placements and the percentage of the overall placements provided by each; (iii) how many of these placements are provided by the matched funded schemes for adults with learning difficulties; and (iv) how many of these placements were being used by adults with learning difficulties on 1 April 2010.

(AQW 7811/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Day and evening placements
 - (a) There are 453 adults in receipt of 1232 different community-based day opportunities per week.
 - (b) Detailed data is not available on evening placements but around 60-70 adults are in receipt of evening-based provision.
- (ii) Organisations providing the placements and the percentage of the overall placements provided

Organisation providing placement	% of overall placement provided by each organisation
InVOLve – 22 clients	2.88%
Greenlight Gateway – 13 clients	1.70%
Mencap – 16 clients	2.09%
Triangle – 357 clients	46.67%
Magherafelt and Cookstown Volunteer Centre – 48 clients	6.27%
Compass Advocacy – 47 clients	6.14%
Accept Care – 14 clients	1.83%
Bridge – 24 clients	3.14%
Kilcreggan Homes – 30 clients	3.92%
Northern Regional College (DEL) - 112 clients	14.64%
South West College (DEL) – 22 clients	2.88%
Volunteer Centres (DSD) – 60 clients	7.84%

Each client could be with 2/3 providers a week in a package

Official Notifications for People with Visual Impairments

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions his officials have had with representatives of people with visual impairments in relation to ensuring that official notification of appointments, test results and diet sheets are issued in a format which is user friendly and which respects the privacy and dignity of the recipient.

(AQW 7816/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Each Health and Social Care Trust has their own procedures for communicating hospital appointments, test results etc, in the most accessible and suitable way to meet the individual needs and preferences of patients who are blind or partially sighted.

The NI Vision Strategy Implementation Group is considering a range of issues emanating from the UK Vision Strategy including ensuring that all written materials are presented in an accessible format.

In addition to the above, my Department is developing a new Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland. Officials are currently engaged in a pre-consultation process and have held 'listening and consultation' events with representatives from the Royal National Institute for Blind People and people with sight loss in Belfast, Cookstown and Omagh. Departmental officials have also held a pre-consultation event Angel Eyes, a group representing parents of children and young people with visual impairments. Feedback from attendees at these pre-consultation events has identified the need for some HSC Trusts to review and update the process for notification of appointments and test results, in some instances, for people with sight loss.

International Patients at the Mid-Ulster Hospital

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of international patients treated in the Accident and Emergency Unit at the Mid-Ulster Hospital, each year between 2005-2010; (ii) the number of these nationals classed as tourists; and (iii) to list the type of injuries that were treated.

(AQW 7819/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

Antrim Area Hospital Risk Assessment

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any risk assessments that have been carried out at the Antrim Area Hospital in relation to the ability of the hospital to absorb an extra 60,000 plus patients each year, following the centralisation of accident and emergency services.

(AQW 7820/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A risk assessment regarding the implementation of DBS in 2005, gave a clear message that the maintenance of A&E units within Antrim, Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey Hospitals as they then stood was not sustainable.

The changes that took place on 24th May have enabled the Trust to make some interim changes to improve that situation. With greater physical capacity, additional beds and a larger team of doctors and nurses on site at Antrim A&E and a nurse led Minor Injuries Unit at Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey hospitals the Trust is now in a position to provide more effective A&E care and help sustain high quality, safe services across the Trust. Moreover the Minor Injuries Units at the Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey hospitals will continue to meet the needs of around 70% of patients who attended the A&E units there.

Since the reconfiguration, performance at Antrim's A&E department continues to improve. This improvement is evidence that the acute reform has indeed lowered risks associated with patient care.

Antrim Area Hospital Health and Safety

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any health and safety measures have been put in place at the Antrim Area Hospital, following the centralisation of accident and emergency services, considering that the hospital was initially built to cater for 35,000 patients each year.

(AQW 7821/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A risk assessment regarding the implementation of DBS in 2005, gave a clear message that the maintenance of A&E units within Antrim, Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey Hospitals as they then stood was not sustainable.

The changes that took place on 24th May have enabled the Trust to make some interim changes to improve that situation. With greater physical capacity, additional beds and a larger team of doctors and nurses on site at Antrim A&E and a nurse led Minor Injuries Unit at Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey hospitals the Trust is now in a position to provide more effective A&E care and help sustain high quality, safe services across the Trust. Moreover the Minor Injuries Units at the Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey hospitals will continue to meet the needs of around 70% of patients who attended the A&E units there.

Since the reconfiguration, performance at Antrim's A&E department continues to improve. This improvement is evidence that the acute reform has indeed lowered risks associated with patient care.

Savings Made by Downgrading Accident and Emergency Units at Whiteabbey Hospital and the Mid-Ulster Hospital to Minor Injury Units

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much will be saved by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust as a result of downgrading Accident and Emergency Units at Whiteabbey Hospital and the Mid-Ulster Hospital to Minor Injury Units.

(AQW 7822/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The conversion of Accident and Emergency services at Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey hospitals to Minor Injuries Units.

This is expected to deliver overall efficiencies in the region of £3.7 million subject to the confirmation of bed numbers and service models retained at the two sites.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Waiting List for Day Opportunities Placements

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many adults with learning difficulties are on the waiting list for a Day Opportunities placement in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area; and to detail the reasons why they have not been allocated a placement.

(AQW 7839/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently approximately 50 clients known to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, with learning disabilities, who have been identified for, and have the potential to move to, day opportunities; these clients are awaiting assessment by day opportunities staff.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Day Opportunities Programme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many adults with learning difficulties have been deemed ineligible for the Day Opportunities programme in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area; and to detail the reasons for this decision in each case.

(AQW 7840/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trust: Training Programmes for Adults with Learning Disabilities

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) what current training programmes the Northern Health and Social Care Trusts matched funded organisations provide for adults with learning disabilities; and (ii) the level of accreditation that can be achieved in each programme. **(AQW 7841/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The Northern Trust has training programmes on a match-funded basis with European Social Fund and the Department of Employment and Learning through Mencap, Triangle and the Bridge Association; and
- (ii) Accredited outcome is part of the delivery with the Bridge Association, which offers the Certificate in Skills for Work Life at entry levels 2 and 3, and Triangle, which offers Open College Network accreditation.

Review of Public Administration: Redundancies and Retirements

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7182/10, to detail the number of (i) redundancies; and (ii) retirements as a result of the Review of Public Administration. **(AQW 7861/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: 727 staff have left the HSC under the Review of Public Administration Voluntary Redundancy/Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme. All of these staff have volunteered for redundancy or early retirement and have been entitled to payments in line with statutory and contractual entitlements.

Review of Public Administration Spending

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7182/10, to provide a full breakdown of his Department's spending on the Review of Public Administration. **(AQW 7863/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: To date, the Department has spent £81.34m on the Review of Public Administration. Of that, £70.33m has been spent on voluntary early redundancy/early retirement for HSC staff affected and £11.01m designing and implementing the structural change. These are one off costs but new simplified and focussed structures introduced by the Review of Public Administration will deliver £53 million annually in savings that can be directed back into front line services.

Vandalism of Public Art

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of recorded incidents of vandalism of public art owned or paid for, in full or in part, by his Department in each of the last five years; and (ii) the cost of repairing this damage. **(AQW 7865/10)**

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Art within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is paid for by the Department of Finance and Personnel so DHSSPS itself does not own art and has not paid for any.

Response Times for Emergency Ambulance Calls

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the target response times for emergency ambulance calls, in light of the death of a person in the Foyle

constituency on 20 June 2010, when an ambulance took 16 minutes to arrive; and whether he plans to investigate the circumstances of this case.

(AQW 7904/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am concerned to learn of the incident you describe, a fast response to the most urgent life threatening calls remains the highest priority of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). NIAS has in place well established arrangements to fully investigate concerns of this nature and in the first instance it is for the ambulance service to take this investigation forward. The Member may wish to contact NIAS directly to give fuller details of the incident to which this question refers.

Assembly Question AQW 6596/10

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he expects to be in a position to respond to AQW 6596/10, which was due for answer on 19 May 2010.

(AQW 7965/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: An answer has now been provided to this Assembly Question.

Department of Justice

District Policing Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the timescale for the completion of the review of new structures for District Policing Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships.

(AQW 7481/10)

Minister of Justice (Mr D Ford): The consultation period on the future of local partnership working on policing and community safety closed on 3 June 2010. I have been extremely encouraged by the response rate which has exceeded 70. I am currently considering the responses with a view to finalizing policy. I shall engage further with stakeholders over the coming weeks on the way forward. It is my intention to include provision for new arrangements in the forthcoming Justice Bill, for introduction in the Autumn.

Ratio of Prison Officers to Prisoners

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Justice to detail the ratio of prison officers to prisoners in each detention facility.

(AQW 7554/10)

Minister of Justice: Operational prison officers are made up of a number of grades, from governor grades to Operational Support Grades including Night Custody Officers. The figures shown in the table below include all of those grades. As the prisoner population can fluctuate quite significantly, the ratio varies over time.

On Monday 14 June the ratio was:

CNA	Maghaberry	Magilligan	Hydebank Wood
Staff	903.5	424	339
Prisoners	786	468	230
Ratio	1.15:1	0.91:1	1.47:1

Prostitution or Soliciting Offences

Mr T Burns asked Minister of Justice (i) how many offences relating to prostitution or soliciting, or other similar offences, were recorded in each of the last five years, broken down by the gender of the offender; (ii) for a breakdown of the specific types of offences; (iii) the number of cases which resulted in a conviction; (iv) the sum total of any fines which were imposed; and (v) for a summary of any other sanctions which were imposed.

(AQW 7705/10)

Minister of Justice: During the five-year period 2005/06 to 2009/10 there were 15 offences recorded by PSNI of 'exercising control over prostitute', 'controlling prostitution for gain' and 'paying for sexual services of a child'. Of the 15 offences recorded during this time period, 8 offences have since been cleared by means of charge or summons. Eleven persons were identified as being involved in these 8 offences and have been charged or summonsed. Four of these 11 persons were male and seven were female.

In terms of convictions, the table below documents the disposals given to those convicted at court and the total sum of any fines imposed for 'prostitute – soliciting' and 'brothel keeping' – the offences for which there were convictions during the five years assessed. Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included. All of those offenders convicted were female.

It is not possible to reconcile PSNI data on the number of offences recorded directly with conviction data, as the former are offence-based whereas conviction data are offender-based. In addition, PSNI denote the offence as it has been initially recorded and for which an individual will be initially charged or summonsed; this may differ from the offence for which a suspect (or suspects) is subsequently proceeded against.

DISPOSALS GIVEN TO THOSE CONVICTED OF THE OFFENCES 'PROSTITUTE – SOLICITING' AND 'BROTHEL KEEPING' AND THE TOTAL SUM (£) OF FINES IMPOSED 2002-2006

Year	Number convicted	Disposals		
		Conditional discharge	Fine	Total sum (£) of fines imposed
2002 ¹	1	1	-	-
2003	0	-	-	-
2004 ²	2	0	2	350
2005 ³	3	0	3	1500
2006	0	-	-	-

- 1 One conviction was for 'prostitute – soliciting'.
- 2 One conviction was for 'prostitute – soliciting' and one was for 'brothel keeping'.
- 3 The three convictions were for 'brothel keeping'.

Lateral Entry into the PSNI from an Garda Síochána

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Justice what action he will take to resolve the ongoing difficulties regarding lateral entry into the PSNI from an Garda Síochána.

(AQW 7730/10)

Minister of Justice: Legislation exists to facilitate lateral entry, underpinned by the Inter Governmental Agreement on Police Cooperation signed in April 2002. The key outstanding barrier allowing further development of lateral entry is the differences in public sector pension terms, and the non-portability

of accrued pension between the two jurisdictions. A Working Group is considering lateral transfers between the police services, and a broad-based Working Group set up by the NSMC is considering superannuation and pension transfer issues across the public sectors.

Access NI

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the performance of Access NI against its objectives.

(AQW 7733/10)

Minister of Justice: AccessNI met all of its published service standards for the delivery of certificates in 2009/10, as per the table below. This was a significant improvement over 2008/09.

Type of Disclosure	Published Service Standard	Achieved
Basic	To deliver 90% within 2 weeks of receipt	96.88% delivered within 2 weeks
Standard	To deliver 90% within 2 weeks of receipt (3 weeks between April 2009 and January 2010)	98.77% delivered within 2/3 weeks
Enhanced	To deliver 90% within 4 weeks of receipt	95.74% delivered within 4 weeks

Service Standards have also been fully met during April 2010, the last month for which figures are available.

A customer survey in 2009/10 indicated that 87% of all customers were satisfied with the service provided, with only 3% expressing dissatisfaction.

Domestic Abuse

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice how many incidents of domestic abuse, involving an ex-partner of the victim, were recorded in (i) H District; and (ii) Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7735/10)

Minister of Justice: 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Dublin Government's Justice Minister

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Justice what work he plans to undertake in conjunction with the Dublin Government's Justice Minister.

(AQW 7757/10)

Minister of Justice: An Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation on Criminal Justice Matters provides for regular meetings with the Minister for Justice and Law Reform, as well as a Working Group of officials that identifies areas in which criminal justice cooperation could be enhanced or initiated, as appropriate. The Working Group is currently preparing a future work programme which Dermot Ahern and I will consider. The programme will build on the existing areas of cooperation including support for victims, public protection, management of sex offenders, youth justice, forensic science services and social diversity within the criminal justice system.

The Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) and DoJLR will jointly host the annual Cross Border Organised Crime Seminar later this year, providing an opportunity further to strengthen partnerships between law

enforcement agencies on both sides of the border by evaluating current strategies and seeking areas for improvement.

The two departments will jointly produce the Bi-Annual Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment this year outlining serious and organised crime in both jurisdictions. Work will also continue between the OCTF, DOJLR and law enforcement agencies in relation to cross border issues such as drugs, fuel fraud, human trafficking, illegal dumping and money laundering.

Close Protection Unit Protection

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many people were offered Close Protection Unit protection in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7762/10)

Minister of Justice: The provision of protective security measures to individuals living in Northern Ireland is an excepted matter. Decisions in relation to the provision of PSNI Close Protection are a matter for the Northern Ireland Committee for Protection, a body established by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Any further queries in relation to this matter should be directed to the Secretary of State.

New Police Station in Cookstown

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice when work will commence on the new police station in Cookstown.

(AQW 7766/10)

Minister of Justice: Management of the Police estate 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

New Training College for the Police, Prison and the Fire and Rescue Services at Desertcreat, Cookstown

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the proposed start date for the new training college for the Police, Prison and the Fire and Rescue Services at Desertcreat, Cookstown.

(AQW 7769/10)

Minister of Justice: Plans are at an advanced stage for a public services training college for the police, fire and rescue, and prison services that will ensure that they can provide the highest level of service to the public.

The site is prepared and all survey work has been carried out. A business case review is being carried out jointly by the DOJ and the DHSSPS.

No opening or start date has been determined.

Burglaries in H District

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) recorded incidents of; and (ii) convictions for, burglary in (a) business; and (b) domestic premises in H District, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7773/10)

Minister of Justice: For the purpose of recording statistics in relation to the type of premises attacked, the Police Service of Northern Ireland maintains records of recorded burglary incidents in two primary categories. The first is domestic burglary, which relates solely to premises used as a dwelling. The second category is non domestic burglary, which encompasses all other premises. This includes, but is not restricted to, commercial premises; it also includes premises such as garden sheds or detached

garages. Table 1 below gives the number of recorded offences for non domestic and domestic burglary in H District for the financial years 2005/06 to 2009/10.

In terms of convictions, I regret the information is not available in the format requested. Some burglary offences identify a dwelling or non-dwelling in their offence definition, however, other burglary offences do not. While convictions for these offences may relate to domestic burglary it is not possible to determine the number of such convictions as court conviction data do not contain background information in relation to offences committed.

Table 2, therefore, gives the number in H District convicted of burglary in a non-dwelling, burglary in a dwelling and other burglary offences which do not specify either. Convictions for going equipped offences are also included for information.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

It is not possible to reconcile PSNI data on the number of offences recorded directly with conviction data, as the former are offence-based whereas conviction data are offender-based. In addition, PSNI denote the offence as it has been initially recorded and this may differ from the offence for which a suspect (or suspects) is subsequently proceeded against.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF RECORDED OFFENCES OF NON DOMESTIC AND DOMESTIC BURGLARY – H DISTRICT¹ 2005/06-2009/10

	Non-domestic	Domestic
2005/06	714	517
2006/07	614	544
2007/08	511	546
2008/09	624	617
2009/10	623	612

Source: PSNI

1 Based on the district in which the offence was recorded.

TABLE 2: NUMBER CONVICTED OF BURGLARY IN A NON-DWELLING, BURGLARY IN A DWELLING, GOING EQUIPPED AND OTHER BURGLARY OFFENCES - H DISTRICT¹ 2002-2006

	Non-dwelling	Dwelling	Going equipped	Other burglary offences
2002	32	23	5	2
2003	28	23	4	2
2004	24	25	6	3
2005	23	23	2	3
2006	22	16	0	4

Source: Department of Justice

1 Based on the district in which the offender's address falls.

Domestic Abuse Prevention Initiatives

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice how much funding was allocated to domestic abuse prevention initiatives in (i) H District; and (ii) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7776/10)

Minister of Justice: “Tackling Violence at Home” launched in October 2005, is a cross Departmental Strategy which aims to tackle domestic abuse and violence by addressing the three key strands of Prevention, Protection and Justice and Support and a fourth strand focusing on other priorities.

Policy lead currently rests with the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Justice. The table below shows the monies allocated by DHSSPS and NIO to address Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland from the launch of the Strategy until March 2010. Column 2 provides the funding across all strands with column 3 detailing monies allocated to initiatives solely within the prevention strand.

DHSSPS:

Year	Total Funding	Funding dedicated to prevention initiatives*
06-07	£491,000	£150,000
07-08	£714,000	£153,000
08-09	£1,001,993	£110,000
09-10	£1,262,868	£113,000

* DHSSPS funding for prevention initiatives relates to media advertising and training initiatives

NIO:

Year	Total Funding	Funding dedicated to prevention initiatives**
06-07	£303,000	£53,193
07-08	£350,000	£228,000
08-09	£390,000	£4,717
09-10	£310,000	NIL

** NIO funding for prevention initiatives relates to media advertising and the production and distribution of information leaflets explaining how the civil and criminal law systems can help victims of Domestic violence.

The four strands of the strategy are very much interlinked. In the Department of Justice while the majority of monies are allocated to key actions under the Protection and Justice strand of the Strategy there is often an overlap with the prevention initiatives. For example, the Department allocated £95,115 to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC). MARAC is an initiative under the Protection and Justice strand but is very much a preventative measure as it is aimed at reducing the risk of serious harm or homicide for those victims of domestic abuse who are at highest risk.

While it is not possible for Departments (DHSSPS & DOJ) to extrapolate monies dedicated to domestic abuse solely for H District the PSNI can confirm the amount of funding that has been allocated from the Policing with the Community (PWC) fund for H district. Figures, however, are not available prior to the launch of the “Tackling Violence at Home” strategy”.

In addition to the Departmental funding and up until 31 March 2010 a total of £321,419 has been allocated from the Policing with the Community Fund (PWC) to initiatives relating to victims of domestic abuse across Northern Ireland, £74,400 of this was allocated to H District.

In addition to PWC funding, Community Safety Branch of the Police Service for Northern Ireland spent the following amounts for initiatives relating to Domestic Abuse across Northern Ireland:

06 - 07	07- 08
£32,376.40	£137,080.49

Figures for 08-09 and 09-10 are not yet available.

Small Claims Court

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cases (i) lodged; (ii) contested; and (iii) settled without being heard, in the small claims court in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7800/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below sets out the information sought in respect of small claims cases for each of the last five years.

Year	Cases lodged	Cases contested	Settled without being heard¹
2005	12,619	1,614	9,061
2006	11,711	1,731	8,158
2007	12,938	2,241	8,972
2008	13,409	1,873	8,995
2009 ²	13,839	1,962	10,142

- 1 Small claims that are settled without being heard include default judgments, office disposals and withdrawn cases.
- 2 Data for 2009 is provisional.

Criminal Cases in Magistrates' Courts

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many criminal cases were (i) contested; (ii) pleaded to without a contest; and (iii) withdrawn in magistrates' courts in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7801/10)

Minister of Justice: Full year data on the information sought are only available for 2008 and 2009. The tables below contain details of all criminal cases in the Magistrates' Courts and Youth Courts.

TABLE 1: ADULT CASES

	2008	2009¹
Contested cases (Defendants who pleaded not guilty to at least one charge)	18,899	18,832
Pleaded guilty (with no listing for contest or prior to contest)	17,507	18,413
Pleaded guilty (listed for contest, but pleaded guilty on day of, or after, start of contest)	1,281	1,280
Withdrawn	10,563	11,447
Other ²	3,135	3,018
Total number of defendants	51,385	52,990

- 1 Data for 2009 is provisional
- 2 Includes cases withdrawn on committal to the Crown Court and fixed penalty defaults

TABLE 2: YOUTH CASES

	2008	2009¹
Contested cases (Defendants who pleaded not guilty to at least one charge)	855	808
Pleaded guilty (with no listing for contest or prior to contest)	1,100	1,154
Pleaded guilty (listed for contest, but pleaded guilty on day or after start of contest)	108	85
Withdrawn	949	1,015
Other ²	79	67
Total number of defendants	3,091	3,129

- 1 Data for 2009 is provisional
- 2 Includes cases withdrawn on committal to the Crown Court and fixed penalty defaults

Non-Molestation Orders

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the operation of non-molestation orders.

(AQW 7824/10)

Minister of Justice: The Northern Ireland Office launched the 'Tackling Violence at Home Strategy' in October 2005. In February 2006 a publicity campaign was undertaken to inform the public that the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 enabled victims of domestic violence to apply to the court for protective civil orders; i.e. non-molestation orders and occupation orders, and to clarify the process to be followed in order to obtain such orders.

The Northern Ireland Courts Service has provided the following statistics which detail the number of applications made and orders being granted for the years 2007 and 2008 (latest year for which statistics are available):

NON-MOLESTATION ORDERS: APPLICATIONS AND ORDERS MADE

Year	Number of Applications	Number of Orders made	% of applications for which an Order was made
2007	2,505	1,253	50.02
2008	4,601	2,856	62.07

The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) has also provided the following details on the recorded number of breaches of non-molestation Orders including details on the number of breaches of non molestation orders that PSNI cleared with a charge or summons:

NON-MOLESTATION ORDERS: RECORDED BREACHES AND CHARGES

Year	Number of breaches recorded by PSNI	Number of breaches cleared by PSNI with a charge or summons	% of recorded breaches cleared by PSNI with a charge or summons
2007	1026	725	70.66
2008	1182	719	60.83
2009	1074	723	67.32

In general the main reason given by PSNI for non clearance is that the evidence cannot overcome the “reasonable excuse” element under Article 25 of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 which states that for an offence to be committed the person must not have a reasonable excuse. Another reason may be that the alleged perpetrator cannot be located. Work is ongoing between the PSNI and PPS to address the non clearance percentage.

Public Order Offences

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of public order offences in relation to parades through Stoneyford village in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7847/10)

Minister of Justice: I regret the information requested is not available. Court conviction data do not contain background information in relation to offences committed, and it is therefore not possible to determine the number of convictions for public order offences that related to parades through Stoneyford village.

PSNI Officers: Disciplinary Measures

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Justice how many PSNI officers in the (i) West Belfast; and (ii) Lisburn District Command Units have been disciplined in each of the last five years; and to outline the disciplinary measures they received,

(AQW 7849/10)

Minister of Justice: The conduct and discipline of police officers 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable who will respond to you directly.

People Trafficking Offences

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) how many offences relating to people trafficking, or other similar offences, were recorded in each of the last five years, broken down by the gender of the offender; (ii) the specific types of offences; (iii) the number of cases which resulted in a conviction; (iv) the sum total of any fines which were imposed; and (v) any other sanctions which were imposed.

(AQW 7854/10)

Minister of Justice: People trafficking is a serious crime which is the subject of concerted action by law enforcement agencies. The 2010 Organised Crime Task Force report published on 24 June 2010 summarises the successful detection, disruption and charging of individuals not just in Northern Ireland but in Great Britain also.

In relation to the specific points raised, during the five year period 2005/06 to 2009/10 there were 6 offences recorded by PSNI involving trafficking for sexual exploitation and one conviction, although the conviction was subsequently over-turned on appeal.

In addition to the information recorded by PSNI a further two people have since been charged with this offence. In relation to convictions, I am informed that these cases have not yet concluded the court process.

Prostitution

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 7705/10, how many of these people were foreign nationals.

(AQW 7855/10)

Minister of Justice: Further to AQW 7705/10, eight of the eleven persons identified as being charged or summonsed for the prostitution related offences have a nationality given as UK. The remaining three have a nationality given as non-UK.

Of the six persons identified in AQW 7705/10 as convicted for the offences of 'prostitute – soliciting' or 'brothel keeping', four have a nationality given as UK and two have a nationality given as Non-UK

Drugs-Related Offences

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of drugs related offences in North Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7872/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number in North Down constituency convicted of a drug related offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

NUMBER CONVICTED OF A DRUG RELATED OFFENCE – NORTH DOWN¹ 2002-2006

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number Convicted	15	28	27	39	26

1 Based on the constituency in which the offender's address falls.

Youth Conferencing with the Youth Justice Agency

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many young people are currently engaged in youth conferencing with the Youth Justice Agency in the (i) Larne; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey areas.

(AQW 7874/10)

Minister of Justice: At the end of May 2010 (i) 3 young people in the Carrickfergus area, (ii) 15 young people in the Newtownabbey area and (iii) 12 young people in the Larne area were engaged in youth conferencing with the Youth Justice Agency. Each of these young people have met their victims at a youth conference and having agreed a reparative action plan are subject to youth conference orders/ plans.

Drink-Driving Offences

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice how many drink driving offences have been recorded in East Antrim in each of the last two years.

(AQW 7876/10)

Minister of Justice: The number of drink driving offences recorded 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Breathalyser Checks in East Antrim

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice to detail the average number of times per month that the PSNI set up breathalyser checks in East Antrim.

(AQW 7877/10)

Minister of Justice: The use of preliminary breath checks 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

People Trafficking

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the seriousness of the people trafficking-problem.

(AQW 7888/10)

Minister of Justice: The secret and hidden nature of this crime makes it difficult to assess accurately, however, reported figures for the last year do give some indication of the scale of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. During 2009/2010 the PSNI identified 25 victims of Human Trafficking. Of the victims identified, 5 were trafficked for the purpose of Forced Labour, 17 were trafficked for Sexual Exploitation, and one was trafficked for Domestic Servitude exploitation. The remaining two victims absconded prior to being interviewed.

Marriages Annulled

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how many marriages have been annulled in each of the last five years; and to provide a summary of the reasons for the annulments.

(AQW 7891/10)

Minister of Justice: The tables below detail the numbers of Decree Absolute (Nullity) granted in the High Court and County Court for each of the last five years.

TABLE 1: DECREES ABSOLUTE (NULLITY) – HIGH COURT

Year	Number	Grounds
2005	4	3 non-consummation 1 bigamy
2006	5	4 non-consummation 1 person under 16
2007	4	3 non-consummation 1 bigamy
2008	4	4 non-consummation
2009	2	2 non-consummation

TABLE 2: DECREES ABSOLUTE (NULLITY) – COUNTY COURT

	Number	Grounds
2005	1	non-consummation
2006	1	non-consummation

	Number	Grounds
2007	2	2 non-consummation
2008	3	3 non-consummation
2009	0	

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Justice how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been issued in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7896/10)

Minister of Justice: The Department of Justice has been notified by the relevant authorities that there were the following numbers of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) issued in each of the last five calendar years:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
9	32	24	32	25

These statistics record the year in which the ASBO was first issued.

Notes

The Anti-social Behaviour (NI) Order 2004 defines relevant authority as district councils, PSNI or Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Solicitors, Solicitor Advocates and Barristers

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many (i) solicitors; (ii) solicitor advocates; and (iii) barristers currently practice in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7897/10)

Minister of Justice:

- (i) There are 2,436 practising solicitors in Northern Ireland.
- (ii) All solicitors can act as an advocate in the lower courts, tribunals and the Crown Court. Approximately 240 have an advanced advocacy qualification.

I intend, subject to Executive Committee agreement, to include provision in the Justice Bill which will extend, to solicitors who are qualified as solicitor advocates, additional rights of audience in the High Court and Court of Appeal. It is not yet known how many solicitors will wish to qualify as solicitor advocates.

- (iii) There are 606 practising barristers in Northern Ireland.

Solicitor Advocate Training

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the training necessary to qualify as a solicitor advocate.
(AQW 7898/10)

Minister of Justice: A solicitor can act as an advocate in the Magistrates' Courts, County Courts, tribunals and in the Crown Court upon qualification as a solicitor and enrolment on the Roll of Solicitors.

I intend, subject to Executive Committee agreement, to include provision in the Justice Bill which will extend, to solicitors who are qualified as solicitor advocates, additional rights of audience in the High Court and Court of Appeal. The education and training required to qualify as a solicitor advocate will be a matter for the Law Society to prescribe in Regulations.

Solicitor Advocate Exams

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice how long after qualifying as a solicitor a person can take exams to become a solicitor advocate.

(AQW 7899/10)

Minister of Justice: A solicitor can act as an advocate in the Magistrates' Courts, County Courts, tribunals and the Crown Court upon qualification as a solicitor and enrolment on the Roll of Solicitors.

I intend, subject to Executive Committee agreement, to include provision in the Justice Bill which will extend, to solicitors who are qualified as solicitor advocates, additional rights of audience in the High Court and Court of Appeal. The education and training required to qualify as a solicitor advocate will be a matter for the Law Society to prescribe in Regulations. Until the Regulations are in place it is not possible to say how long the process will take or whether it will require taking an exam.

Solicitor Advocate Payment

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice whether a solicitor advocate is paid more, less or the same as a barrister for court appearances.

(AQW 7902/10)

Minister of Justice: The remuneration of solicitors and barristers, in civil proceedings in the County Court is prescribed in the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) 1981. Under those Rules a solicitor who conducts a hearing without the use of counsel is entitled (in addition to the solicitor's fee) to fifty per cent of the fee to which counsel would have been entitled.

The remuneration of solicitors and barristers in legally aided Crown Court cases is prescribed in the Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2005. Under those Rules a solicitor who acts as an advocate is paid at the same rate as a junior counsel conducting a case without other counsel.

The remuneration of solicitors and barristers in legally aided criminal cases in the Magistrates Courts and County Courts is prescribed in the Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009. There is no specific provision for solicitor advocacy under those Rules. The amounts payable depends on a number of variables including the nature and complexity of the case. This may result in a solicitor being paid more or less than Counsel including in a case where he or she has acted as an advocate.

Currently solicitors have very limited rights of audience in the High Court or Court of Appeal so no comparison at those court tiers is possible.

Restraining Orders

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total number of restraining orders issued by the courts in each of the last 5 years, broken down by the gender of the individual on whom the order was imposed; and for a summary of the reasons for these orders.

(AQW 7912/10)

Minister of Justice: The tables below detail the number of restraining orders made in the Magistrates' Courts and Crown Court broken down by gender. The information is only available in this format from 2007.

Restraining orders are issued for the protection of victims from harassment or fear of violence.

TABLE 1: RESTRAINING ORDERS IN MAGISTRATES' COURTS 2007-09¹

Year	Male	Female	Total
2007	4	0	4
2008	13	2	15

Year	Male	Female	Total
2009	13	1	14

1 Data for 2009 is provisional.

TABLE 2: RESTRAINING ORDERS IN THE CROWN COURT 2007-09¹

Year	Male	Female	Total
2007	0	0	0
2008	2	0	2
2009	4	0	4

1 Data for 2009 is provisional.

People Trafficking

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the level of people-trafficking into Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7920/10)

Minister of Justice: The secret and hidden nature of this crime makes it difficult to assess accurately, however, reported figures for the last year do give some indication of the scale of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. During 2009/2010 the PSNI identified 25 victims of Human Trafficking. Of the victims identified, 5 were trafficked for the purpose of Forced Labour, 17 were trafficked for Sexual Exploitation, and one was trafficked for Domestic Servitude exploitation. The remaining two victims absconded prior to being interviewed.

It is often the case that the victims themselves, for a variety of reasons, are unable to identify details of their journey to Northern Ireland.

Drugs-Related Offences

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of drugs related offences in North Antrim in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7921/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number in North Antrim constituency convicted of a drug related offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

**NUMBER CONVICTED OF A DRUG RELATED OFFENCE – NORTH ANTRIM¹
2002-2006**

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number Convicted	37	30	42	37	38

1 Based on the constituency in which the offender's address falls.

People Trafficking

Mr D Simpson asked Minister of Justice for his assessment of the level of people-trafficking into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 7922/10)

Minister of Justice: The secret and hidden nature of this crime makes it difficult to assess accurately, however, reported figures for the last year do give some indication of the scale of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. During 2009/2010 the PSNI identified 25 victims of Human Trafficking. Of the victims identified, 5 were trafficked for the purpose of Forced Labour, 17 were trafficked for Sexual Exploitation, and one was trafficked for Domestic Servitude exploitation. The remaining two victims absconded prior to being interviewed.

It is assessed that a small number of the 25 victims entered Northern Ireland through the Republic of Ireland. It is often the case that the victims themselves, for a variety of reasons, are unable to identify details or their journey to Northern Ireland.

Discussions with Counterpart in the Republic of Ireland

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland since coming to office.

(AQW 7924/10)

Minister of Justice: I met with Dermot Ahern during my first week of office and discussed a range of issues including cross border security and co-operation in the fight against organised crime.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to receive a briefing on the extent of progress on work streams being taken forward on public protection, management of sex offenders, youth justice and forensic science.

Drugs-Related Offences

Mr S Moutray asked Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of drugs related offences in Upper Bann in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7926/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number in Upper Bann constituency convicted of a drug related offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

NUMBER CONVICTED OF A DRUG RELATED OFFENCE – UPPER BANN¹ 2002-2006

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number Convicted	19	26	32	28	49

1 Based on the constituency in which the offender's address falls.

Firearms Offences

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of firearms offences in Upper Bann in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7928/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number in Upper Bann constituency convicted of a firearms offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

NUMBER CONVICTED OF A FIREARMS OFFENCE¹ – UPPER BANN²
2002-2006

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number Convicted	3	10	5	3	2

1 Includes offences related to possessing firearm(s)/ammunition with intent to endanger life or property; possessing firearm/ammunition in suspicious circumstances; possessing handgun/ammunition without certificate; possessing prohibited weapons/ammunition; and possessing firearm or imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.

2 Based on the constituency in which the offender's address falls.

Counterfeiting Operation in the Republic of Ireland

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had, or intends to have, any discussions with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland regarding (i) the recent uncovering of a counterfeiting operation in the Republic of Ireland and its implications for crime levels in Northern Ireland; and (ii) the people whom he believes are behind the operation.

(AQW 7966/10)

Minister of Justice: I will be meeting with Minister Ahern in July 2010 to discuss a range of issues including a number of organised crime related matters. I understand that the incident referred to is currently under investigation by An Garda Síochána.

Attacks on GAA Premises, Orange Halls and Masonic Halls

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total number of (i) arson attacks; and (ii) vandalism attacks on (a) GAA premises; (b) Orange Halls; and (c) Masonic Halls, in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 7980/10)

Minister of Justice: The provision of statistical information in relation to attacks on GAA premises, Orange Halls and Masonic Halls 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Cost of Food for Prisoners

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice what is the average amount of money spent, per day, on food for a prisoner.

(AQW 8051/10)

Minister of Justice: The average amount of money spent, per day in 2009/10, on food for a prisoner is £2.95.

Review of the Conditions of Detention, Management and Oversight of Prisons

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice for a detailed breakdown of the budget required for the review of the conditions of detention, management and oversight of prisons.

(AQW 8063/10)

Minister of Justice: Officials are still working through the details and the budget has not yet been agreed as the level of the work required to meet the terms of reference for the review has still to be finalised. Further information will be provided when it is available.

Speeding Tickets

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how many speeding tickets were issued in each of the last five years to drivers who exceeded the speed limit by (a) 1mph; (b) 2mph; (c) 3mph; (d) 4mph; (e) 5mph; (f) 6-10mph; (g) 11-15mph; (h) 16-20mph; (i) 21-30mph; and (j) more than 31mph.

(AQW 8100/10)

Minister of Justice: The detection and processing of speeding offences 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Policing the Twelfth of July Bonfires

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the cost of policing the Twelfth of July bonfires in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8114/10)

Minister of Justice: I would refer the Member to the previous reply that I gave to him in response to AQW 7837/10 which was for answer on 2 July 2010.

PSNI Officers Trained in Tactical Support

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) how many PSNI Officers are currently trained in tactical support; (ii) whether these officers will be taken from other duties to assist in the event of disturbances or unrest; and (iii) for his assessment of the adequacy of the tactical support provision available to ensure public safety and welfare.

(AQW 8141/10)

Minister of Justice: The allocation of policing resources 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Security for Visiting Dignitaries

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the total number of visits by dignitaries where security was provided by the PSNI in each of the last five years; (ii) who the visiting dignitaries were; (iii) when the visits took place; (iv) the duration of each visit; (iv) and the cost of providing this security.

(AQW 8142/10)

Minister of Justice: The provision and cost of security by the PSNI to visiting dignitaries 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Special Domestic Violence Courts

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice if he has any plans to introduce special domestic violence courts; and whether his Department has given any consideration to the benefits and cost implications of such a programme.

(AQW 8179/10)

Minister of Justice: My officials in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service are currently considering the feasibility of introducing a Specialist Domestic Violence Court. They will work with the Public Prosecution Service, other Departments and voluntary sector partners on the Domestic Violence Regional Steering Group to explore the potential scope, costs and benefits for such an initiative with a view, if justifiable, to establishing a pilot by March 2011.

Maghaberry Prison: Ombudsman's Report

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Justice what action the Prison Service is taking on recommendations in the latest report by the Prison Ombudsman into a complaint by a prisoner in Roe House at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQO 1490/10)

Minister of Justice: The management of the Northern Ireland Prison Service has accepted the Ombudsman's evidence-based report which describes the position at Roe House where separated republican prisoners are located, the sequence of events leading up to it and the 16 recommendations made therein.

These challenging recommendations include:

- a review of regime restrictions;
- operating current controlled movement levels to the full;
- separated conditions being included in the forthcoming prison review;
- a change in dining arrangements for separated prisoners;
- an independent review of full search procedures;
- a system of random selection of prisoners to receive a full body search;
- a 3 month pilot of a revised search methodology; and
- a line being drawn on all outstanding charges relating to Roe House for the period 4 April to 11 June on the basis that, in effect, the prisoners have served the punishments that would be awarded.

The Prison Service has published an Action Plan, which also applies to loyalist separated prisoners located in Bush House, detailing its response to the Report, the actions to be undertaken to implement each of the recommendations, the allocation of particular tasks to individuals and specific target dates for completion of the actions.

Work is already underway to implement all the recommendations accepting that some of these are predicated on the fact that there must be a return to normal regime, following a return to normal discipline, and others will fall to be considered as part of the wide-ranging review of the conditions of detention, management and oversight of prisons, on which I made a Ministerial Statement on 21 June.

In particular a system has been developed whereby the identities of prisoners to be full searched on any given day are generated at random by a computerised prisoner records system and this will be in place by 30 June.

Work has also begun to enhance the facilities in the dining halls in both of the separated houses and will be completed by 11 July. This will enable prisoners to eat their meals together in their respective houses and provide more association.

The Ombudsman's report provides a basis for moving forward and I can assure you that the Service is determined to move actively to ensure full implementation of all the recommendations. The Service and I recognise that it is important that the present difficulties are put behind us and I very much hope that the other parties will work with us to effect that.

Offenders: Literacy and Numeracy

Rev Dr R Coulter asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with the Minister of Education about addressing low literacy and numeracy levels among offenders in order to reduce re-offending.

(AQO 1491/10)

Minister of Justice: I am totally committed to reducing reoffending by working in partnership with other departments. Reducing offending is a key objective for the Executive in both the Programme for Government and a Shared Future. Making our communities safe requires a joined-up approach. I want to see closer cooperation between departments and partner bodies to address reoffending. I wrote to Executive colleagues on 8 June 2010, proposing a series of bilateral meetings to identify how we can work collaboratively in this area.

My Department has been liaising with the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning through a cross-departmental Learning and Skills Forum. The Forum is considering how we can work more closely together in terms of addressing prisoners' educational deficits. I met with Sir Reg Empey on 19 April 2010, to discuss how Executive colleagues might work together on issues of cross-departmental interest and look forward to further developing effective working arrangements across the Executive on areas of joint interest.

Education, training and employment are recognised as a key Pathway to preventing reoffending. The prison population has a disproportionate level of essential skills deficits in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and a sharper focus on these needs will help us more effectively address some of the causes of reoffending. The Prison Service Learning and Skills Strategic Plan 2010-13 rightly focuses on addressing essential skills deficits and on providing prisoners with externally accredited education and training courses that increase employment potential and ability to participate fully in a range of offending behaviour programmes.

I recognise that there is only so much that the criminal justice system can do unilaterally to further reduce offending behaviour. Reducing crime is not a matter solely for the criminal justice system and the research indicates that early and appropriate intervention is essential to success in preventing offending. Reducing offending is a complex issue but there are real benefits to building closer working partnerships.

The true cost of crime to our economy greatly exceeds the cost of the criminal justice system and is estimated at around £2.9bn. There are cheaper and more effective ways to prevent and reduce offending than sending people to prison. It is estimated that approximately 70% of offenders in custody have an essential skills literacy deficit. This is considerably higher than the general population where it is suggested that approximately 24% would be at a similar level. Dyslexia screening at Hydebank Wood Prison indicates that almost 30% of young offenders and juveniles demonstrate some Dyslexic tendencies compared with a general population rate of approximately 10%. Many offenders have dropped out of school and have reading and numeracy levels assessed below Entry level and many have no or limited experience of employment. Tackling these fundamental issues demands closer partnerships across departments to target young people at risk of offending.

Legal Aid

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice what steps he is taking to ensure prompt payment to people who are entitled to legal aid.

(AQO 1492/10)

Minister of Justice: The legal representatives acting for individuals in receipt of legal aid are paid directly by the Legal Services Commission for the services provided.

The Commission has a range of performance targets covering payments in respect of all areas of work. These are monitored on a monthly basis and formally reported on a quarterly basis.

If the services provided by legal representatives are covered by standard fees the Commission processes and pays these fees very promptly.

If, however, the fees have to be assessed as to the work undertaken then this necessarily takes longer to complete before payments can be made.

The Commission's approach to setting fees is to increase the number of areas covered by standard fees to streamline the administrative processes and ensure prompt payment to legal representatives.

Programme for Government: Addendum

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the development of an addendum to the Programme for Government.

(AQO 1493/10)

Minister of Justice: Good progress has been made on the development of an addendum. Officials have in recent weeks consulted counterparts in other Departments, and the Justice Committee discussed a draft last week. Having provided further briefing to them and reflected on their views, I intend to seek the approval of the Executive before presenting the addendum formally to the Assembly as soon as possible.

The addendum reflects the areas identified in the Hillsborough Castle Agreement as well as other priorities, covering reducing offending and dealing with its consequences (particularly the consequences for victims); building safer communities; ensuring access to justice; justice's role in building a shared future; and ensuring efficient and effective use of resources.

I am determined that it should provide the Department and the justice system with a challenging agenda which will make a real difference in areas like reducing offending, speeding up justice, improving services for victims, reforming publicly-funded legal services, and building confidence, including in sentencing.

Women's Prison

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Justice to give his assessment of the need for a purpose built women's prison to ensure better care for female prisoners and to outline any plans for such a facility.
(AQO 1494/10)

Minister of Justice: As Minister I am committed, as is the Northern Ireland Prison Service, to ensuring that women prisoners are treated and managed in a women's prison which is fit for purpose and indeed meets all international obligations and best practice.

The Prison Service has accepted that Ash House is not a suitable long term solution and to that end has prepared a Strategic Outline Business Case to look at the options for a new facility.

I should add that I intend to release later this year the final Strategy on the management of Women Offenders and our responses on the consultation on Gender-specific Standards for working with Women Prisoners in conjunction with the standards, and a guide for staff.

Department for Regional Development

Churchfields in Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development why Churchfields in Rasharkin has not been adopted by Roads Service.
(AQW 7751/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that the streets in Churchfields, Rasharkin, are not yet to a standard suitable for adoption by Roads Service. The most recent inspection has identified a number of defects, including road surfacing, kerbing

and drainage issues. Inspections are also required to check the water, sewage and street lighting installations.

I understand that bonds of surety have been secured to cover these streets. However, as the developer is still active on the site, Roads Service has not yet initiated any enforcement action. Roads Service will continue to meet with the developer to discuss progress on the outstanding issues.

Vandalism Against Roads Service Equipment

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of recorded incidents of vandalism against Roads Service equipment and the costs incurred by his Department, broken down by type of vandalism, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7755/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not maintain details of any incidents of vandalism against Roads Service equipment. I am therefore unable to provide the information requested by the Member.

Misuse of Disabled Parking Bays

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of tickets issued for the misuse of disabled parking bays in the (i) Donaghadee; (ii) Millisle; (iii) Bangor; and (iv) Hollywood area in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7838/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued to vehicles parked illegally in disabled parking bays in Donaghadee, Millisle, Bangor and Hollywood, in each of the last three years, are detailed in the table below:-

	Donaghadee	Millisle	Bangor	Hollywood
2007/08	9	1	172	14
2008/09	8	0	236	28
2009/10	5	0	261	30

Park-and-Ride Scheme for Residents in South Belfast

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to introduce a park and ride scheme for residents in South Belfast.

(AQW 7842/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Park and Ride provides a more sustainable alternative for part of the journey into urban areas for those commuters who do not have ideal public transport access from their journey origin. In line with that Park and Ride locations are typically located on the urban fringe with the aim of reducing traffic moving into the urban area and the associated demand for more central parking provision. The provision of park and ride within urban areas is not recommended as it may encourage car use for part of the journey at the expense of existing public transport provision and more sustainable alternatives such as walking and cycling. In line with that, at present there are no plans for Park and Ride facilities for residents in urban areas as the focus of policy in those areas is the provision of a high quality public transport service.

In recognition of the important role of Park and Ride in promoting sustainable transport and to inform the review of the Regional Transportation Strategy, my Department is presently carrying out a strategic review of Park and Ride facilities, taking account of progress to date in delivery, best practice, and the implications of current and future traffic flows.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the income generated by Translink from marketing and advertising in each of the last five years, including details of how the income was generated.

(AQW 7889/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink/NITHC receive a substantial level of income (£1M+) each from non fare-box revenue generation activities such as third party advertising on fixed site property and on buses both internally and externally.

Translink/NITHC procure the services of a specialist company in order to capitalise on the available opportunities through these channels. The engagement of the specialist company is undertaken through an open tender process.

Under the Advertising Agreement with the specialist company there is a clause in the contract that states that each party shall treat as strictly confidential all commercial information. It is, therefore, not possible to release the revenue amounts generated through third party advertising activity.

Translink/NITHC's group turnover for the last five years is as follows:

Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Turnover (£m)	155	168	175	183	186

It is not possible to calculate how much of this income was generated by Translink's own advertising and marketing campaigns.

Irish Language Courses

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on Irish language courses since he came to office; and whether a business case has been produced in relation to these courses.

(AQW 7905/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have spent £1,500 on beginner and refresher Irish language classes for my staff. The training was arranged in accordance with departmental guidelines for the procurement of supplies and services. The skills acquired by staff have helped the Department to provide services to Irish language speakers and fulfil its commitments under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Southwell Road in Bangor

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the parking restrictions his Department intends to introduce to aid the residents of Southwell Road in Bangor, prior to the introduction of residents only parking schemes.

(AQW 7911/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it considers the provision of parking restrictions at those locations where there are consistent traffic progression problems or road safety concerns. With limited exceptions, methods to restrict parking, such as by the use of single or double yellow lines, restrict available parking for all, including residents, and can therefore be contentious within residential areas.

Roads Service is not aware of any particular traffic progression difficulties at Southwell Road, Bangor, and has not identified any road safety concerns at that location. There are no plans to provide additional waiting restrictions in advance of any potential residents' parking scheme.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development if any discussion has taken place between his Department, or its agencies and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of the Environment, or their agencies, in relation to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; and to outline how many meetings have taken place and the outcome of these meetings.

(AQW 7935/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it was involved in discussions about Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of a Steering Group chaired by the NI Environment Agency of the Department of the Environment. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development was also represented on the Steering Group, which met on a regular basis during 2008 and 2009. The Group produced a draft SuDS Policy, which was later issued for public consultation and to all relevant agencies and bodies.

Sewage Pollution

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development have many incidents of sewage pollution have occurred in Upper Bann rivers, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7937/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that pollution incidents attributed to sewage pollution are classified by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as high, medium or low according to the severity of the incident.

The table below indicates the number of incidents in Upper Bann rivers over the past three years.

Year	High	Medium	Low	Total
1 Apr 2007 – 31 Mar 2008	0	4	10	14
1 Apr 2008 – 31 Mar 2009	0	2	5	7
1 Apr 2009 – 31 Mar 2010	0	2	7	9

Translink

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development what Translink intends to do with the 80 trains once they are replaced with new trains.

(AQW 7940/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In answering this question Translink have assumed that you are referring to the Class 80 trains rather than the number of trains.

Translink have informed me that Class 80 trains will be removed from passenger service as soon as NI Railways new Class 4000 trains are commissioned into service. On removal from service, passenger carriages will be scrapped as they will be life expired. However, a number of Class 80 power cars are likely to be retained for use by Translink for non-passenger duties.

Sewage Pollution in North Antrim Rivers

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development have many incidents of sewage pollution have occurred in North Antrim rivers, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7941/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that pollution incidents attributed to sewage pollution are classified by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as high, medium or low according to the severity of the incident.

The table below indicates the number of incidents in North Antrim rivers over the past three years.

Year	High	Medium	Low	Total
1 Apr 2007 – 31 Mar 2008	0	1	8	9
1 Apr 2008 – 31 Mar 2009	0	0	14	14
1 Apr 2009 – 31 Mar 2010	0	2	15	17

Backlog in Disabled Parking Bay Provision

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the backlog in disabled parking bay provision, broken down by Roads Service division; and what action he is taking to address the backlog. **(AQW 8034/10)**

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that disabled parking bays are authorised by means of a Statutory Rule and over a number of months, it has experienced some difficulties in securing clearance of the draft Statutory Rules from the Department of Finance and Personnel's Departmental Solicitor's Office.

However, this issue has now been addressed and in future the process will be more expeditious. Regrettably, there remains a considerable backlog of such cases, which Roads Service officials are seeking to clear as quickly as possible.

I can advise that part of Roads Service's response to this issue has been to consolidate five proposed Disabled Bay Orders into one draft Order. The statutory notice, in respect of this Order, was published on 23 June 2010. If no objections, or representations, are made within the statutory period, the Order can be made and will create 146 new disabled parking bays, as detailed in the following table:

Division	Northern Division	Eastern Division	Southern Division	Western Division
No of Disabled Parking Bays	26	44	50	26

Department for Social Development

Social Housing Waiting List

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how many people aged 55 years and over are currently on the social housing waiting list; and what this figure was for each of the last five years. **(AQW 7634/10)**

Minister for Social Development (Mr A Attwood): There were 9149 applicants aged 55 years and over on the social housing waiting list at 31 March 2010, which is the latest information available. The figures are not available for the last five years as the Housing Executive only holds statistical data about this for the last four years. The details are shown in the table below:-

Position at:-	31 March 2010	31 March 2009	31 March 2008	31 March 2007
Applicants 55 and over*	9149	9330	9596	8792

* The figures represent the number of applicants as head of households and therefore include a range of household types.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the up-take of the Warm Homes Scheme in the East Antrim constituency in each of the last 24 months; and how this compares with the other constituencies.

(AQW 7763/10)

Minister for Social Development: The new Warm Homes Scheme commenced on 1 July 2009. Prior to that, the scheme was delivered by EAGA plc. When their contract for Warm Homes ended, EAGA handed over to my Department all the records they held relating to the scheme. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as Scheme Administrator, holds those records on behalf of the Department. It is not possible to analyse those records in the manner requested. In any event, the new Warm Homes Scheme is a different scheme, with different eligibility criteria and a different targeting focus and comparisons with the previous scheme are misleading.

I have provided the numbers of eligible referrals received and the number of completed installations. An eligible referral is an application from a client who appears to be eligible for the scheme, on the basis of the information they have provided, prior to that information being verified by the Scheme Manager.

The Warm Homes Scheme is a demand led scheme. However, East Antrim has been identified by the relevant Contract Scheme Manager as an area of low uptake compared with other parts of this contract area. The Scheme Manager has actively targeted the area since January 2010 with the help of the local MP, community workers and other local representatives to encourage uptake. The attached figures indicate that the increased marketing activity in the area is beginning to have a positive impact on uptake in the area.

THE TABLE DETAILS WARM HOMES SCHEME UPTAKE IN EAST ANTRIM SINCE 1 JULY 2009.

Completed Installations *					
Month	Eligible Referrals	Insulation Only	Heating Only	Combined Heating & Insulation	Total
July 09	3	0	0	0	0
August 09	36	3	0	0	3
September 09	11	24	0	0	24
October 09	56	15	0	2	17
November 09	19	39	0	3	42
December 09	15	16	0	1	17
January 10	70	43	1	3	47
February 10	107	51	0	2	53
March 10	118	103	1	8	112
April 10	77	89	2	12	103
May 10	49	50	1	2	53
Total	561	433	5	33	471

* The completed installations each month do not necessarily relate to the Eligible Referrals received in that month.

Small Pockets of Deprivation Programme in the Rathgill Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what his plans are for the continuation of funding for the Small Pockets of Deprivation programme in the Rathgill Estate, Bangor, in the 2011/12 financial year.

(AQW 7884/10)

Minister for Social Development: The outcome of the Spending Review 2010 exercise will not be known until December 2010. Plans and priorities for the 2011/12 financial year will then be established and agreed. At present I am unable to commit to an extension of this programme and a decision will only be taken when budgets and priorities are agreed.

Benefit Fraud Unit

Mr J Craig asked Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7487/10, (i) whether the Benefit Fraud Unit is responsible for collecting money lost due to staff error in the administration of benefits; (ii) how much money has been lost due to staff error in each of the last five years; and (iii) how much of this has been recovered.

(AQW 7895/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Agency's Benefit Fraud Unit is responsible for investigating fraud and does not collect money lost due to staff error.

The Agency estimates the value of incorrect benefit payments arising from fraud, customer error and official error. Estimates of the value of all error are based on the results of a sample of cases extrapolated across the benefit caseload. Figures for the amount of money lost due to official error for the last five years are shown in the table below together with their value as a percentage of benefit expenditure.

Delivery Year	Value	Percentage of Benefit Expenditure
2005	£23.4m	0.69%
2006	£27.9m	0.80%
2007	£23.9m	0.70%
2008	£18.4m	0.50%
*2009	£16.7m	0.40%

The Agency carries out a range of activities to prevent, detect and correct official and customer error in the caseload. The Agency cannot extract those benefit adjustments arising from activities which relate solely to official error.

* Final 2009 figures are not yet available. Quoted above is an early indicative figure.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 7958/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department reviews the use of consultant's on an ongoing basis and currently only makes use of external consultant's in areas where expertise is not available in-house, but is critical to the successful delivery of projects. Procurement of consultancy for time limited assignments is carried out in accordance with strict guidelines, that apply to all Northern Ireland Civil Service departments, agencies, non-departmental public bodies and other sponsored bodies in order to

ensure greatest value for money. The need for external consultancy is reviewed regularly in all business cases on an individual basis.

Maximum Value of a One-Off Payment

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development what is the maximum value of any one off payment, that can be issued as a single giro payment, from his Department to an individual; and for what should that payment be used.

(AQW 7974/10)

Minister for Social Development: The maximum value for which a cheque can be issued is £4,999.99. Cheques of this size must be lodged to an appropriate Bank or Building Society account. Payments of this magnitude are rare and are made on the basis of a customer's entitlement to a specific benefit, pension or allowance. The Social Security Agency's normal method of payment is by Direct Credit to a bank, building society or Post Office card account 97% of payments are made via this method. High value cheques are only issued on an exceptional basis and usually at the customer's request.

Housing Executive Employees

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7510/10, to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of (a) Protestant; (b) Roman Catholic; and (c) non-determined people who began employment with the Housing Executive in each calendar year since 2004.

(AQW 7991/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below provides the information requested regarding new entrant staff employed by the Housing Executive during each calendar year since 2004:-

Year	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Non Determined	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2004	117	36.6	168	52.5	35	10.9
2005	101	41.2	120	49.0	24	9.8
2006	82	33.7	138	56.8	23	9.5
2007	101	34.3	164	55.8	29	9.9
2008	52	40.9	51	40.2	24	18.9
2009	60	33.7	95	53.4	23	12.9

Note: Figures include permanent and temporary appointments

Mortgage Defaulters

Mr J Bell asked the Minister for Social Development if he has had any discussions with the judiciary regarding the guidance of the Lord Chief Justice on a sympathetic approach to people who default on their mortgages.

(AQW 7992/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Pre-Action Protocols, introduced last year by the Lord Chief Justice, are a much needed boost for those people who at present get into mortgage difficulties and then suffer the shock of a repossession order landing on their doormat. The Courts should be very much a last resort for lenders to seek repossession and I welcome that these protocols are in place. Neither myself or my officials have sought to influence the judicial process.

Helping those in genuine mortgage debt is a priority for me. That is why the money available for Housing Rights Service has been increased significantly to ensure they have advisers who specialise in helping those in mortgage debt.

Community Worker Position for Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on funding for the community worker position for Kilcooley Estate, Bangor for the 2011-12 financial year.

(AQW 8019/10)

Minister for Social Development: The position on the funding of these posts beyond 31 March 2011 will not be known until the outcome of the 2010 Spending Review is determined.

New Homes for Ballymacash in Lisburn

Mr P Givan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the proposed housing scheme to provide 150 new homes for Ballymacash in Lisburn.

(AQW 8020/10)

Minister for Social Development: Ulidia Housing Association has submitted an Economic Appraisal detailing proposals that have the potential to deliver 146 new homes at Ballymacoss in Lisburn. That Economic Appraisal has already been assessed within my Department and is now being considered by DFP.

I will be happy to advise the Member once that is complete.

Redevelopment of Curran Street in Portadown

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the current status of the proposed redevelopment of Curran Street in Portadown.

(AQW 8073/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department is currently in the process of obtaining full planning permission for the redevelopment of the Curran Street Site. An application was submitted to Planning Service in December 2009 and I anticipate that a decision will be made in the near future. The process to appoint a developer to acquire the site and deliver the scheme formally commenced in June 2010 with an advertisement placed in the Official Journal of the European Union. A short-list of interested developers will be drawn up and each will be asked to submit bids to purchase and develop the site. This process will take a number of months; however, I am hopeful that a Preferred Developer will be appointed by the beginning of 2011.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Ormiston House

Mr P Butler asked the Assembly Commission to provide a breakdown of the costs of maintaining Ormiston House in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7740/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The following is a breakdown of costs attributable to maintaining Ormiston House in each of the last five years:

Year	Maintenance & Repairs	Professional Fees
2005-2006	£5,482.22	£1,788.40
2006-2007	£30,341.04	£5,728.80
2007-2008	£16,073.50	£1,503.50
2008-2009	£20,419.58	£16,398.25
2009-2010	£45,973.36	£4,630.50

Year	Maintenance & Repairs	Professional Fees
Total	£118,289.70	£30,049.45

Union Jack at Parliament Buildings

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission whether it has carried out any research into the impact, on people from the nationalist community visiting the Assembly, of flying the Union Jack at Parliament Buildings.

(AQW 7785/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission is designated as a public authority under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, 1998 and its Equality Scheme was approved by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission on 27 February 2008. Under Section 75(2) of the legislation the Commission has a statutory duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

In order to progress this area of work the Assembly Commission approved a Good Relations Action Plan and consultation arrangements on 21 January 2010. Public consultation ended on 4 June 2010.

This plan also contributes to the corporate objective ‘to promote good relations’ as stated in the Commission’s 2008-2011 (Revised 2009) Secretariat Corporate Plan.

Aim 1, under the plan sets out how the Commission will “promote equality of opportunity and good relations in all aspects of its work by ensuring that all its services are delivered impartially and effectively.”¹

In order to achieve this outcome a range of contributory actions were approved by the Commission. The first of these actions is to conduct an internal good relations audit amongst Secretariat staff and Members to identify all good relations issues to be addressed by the Commission and through this to design an implementation plan for the mainstreaming of good relations.

Following a procurement exercise Holywell Consulting Limited were appointed in June 2010 to conduct the internal good relations audit.

The Assembly Commission, through the Good Relations Action Plan also wishes to, through the completion of an external good relations audit, and consultation with relevant groups, identify if barriers exist, or have been encountered in accessing services. Through this action the Commission wish to identify issues and approaches to actively remove or reduce barriers if these are apparent. A procurement exercise in relation to this action is due to commence in August 2010.

Laptops in Committee Meetings

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission whether any consideration has been given to allowing Members to use laptops in committee meetings.

(AQW 7793/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): As Committee rooms are refurbished, infrastructure is being upgraded to facilitate the future use of technology within Committee rooms. However, the use of current laptops is constrained by a number of practical and technical issues. Difficulties include access to power supplies and interference with the functioning of the audio recording systems when the computers are in use, as microphone switching is triggered automatically by speech or equipment noise, including keyboard typing. It will also be necessary to develop appropriate protocols on the use of technology during committee meetings.

The IS Office is aware of lessons learnt by other legislatures in supplying and supporting such facilities during committee meetings and is examining ways to facilitate the use of computer equipment

¹ Assembly Commission – Good Relations Action Plan 2010

in Committee meeting rooms. Potential options to facilitate the use of appropriate technology in Committee rooms will be presented to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group in the Autumn.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Assembly Commission what steps it is taking to review the use of consultants in the Assembly.

(AQW 8070/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission reviews its use of consultants on an ongoing basis. Requests for consultancy support are subject to justification via a business case. In addition, those of an expected value greater than £50,000 are notified to the Assembly Commission.

Detailed internal guidance on the use of consultants is presently being reviewed. The major thrust of this guidance is to ensure that there is a real and valid need to use consultants and, secondly, to ensure that consultants continue to be engaged in a wholly transparent manner.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 23 July 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Community Relations Work

Lord Browne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the total expenditure by their Department on community relations work during this year to date.

(AQO 142/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): We have invested £29m in good relations work in the current CSR period – to build a shared and better future.

Expenditure to date by the Department for 2009/10 on good relations work is £15.8m (which includes PEACE III monies).

This money is invested in sponsorship of the Community Relations Council, which delivers our grant funding through several strategic schemes to community and voluntary groups, funding of the District Councils Community Relations Programme, direct funding of groups by OFMDFM, summer interventions programme work and funding to minority ethnic groups.

We provide match funding to EU funding under the PEACE III Programme. As the Accountable Department for three Priorities within the Programme, we are strategically placed to ensure co-ordination of local activities at the local level.

Civic Forum

Mr T Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many letters the Department has received in the last three months requesting the re-establishment of the Civic Forum.

(AQO 149/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Department received no correspondence in the three-month period preceding the tabling of the question, nor subsequently, requesting the re-establishment of the Civil Forum. Persons with views on the future of the Civic Forum had an opportunity to submit them to the Civic Forum Review during a three-month consultation period in 2008.

Programme for Government's Child Poverty Targets

Mr F Cobain asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the Programme for Government's child poverty targets.

(AQO 242/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Since 1998 there has been a downward trend in the numbers of children living in relative income poverty here in Northern Ireland. However, over the most recent period for which statistics are available the figures have remained fairly static at around 24% in 2007/08, on a par with the rest of the UK.

We fully recognise that the targets we have set ourselves in respect of eradicating child poverty here are extremely challenging, particularly in light of the current economic downturn.

The Executive, however, remains totally committed to meeting this challenge by working across government to ensure long-term sustainable progress. Through the workings of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion, we have asked our officials to undertake work with colleagues from the other Northern Ireland Departments to progress priority actions that will benefit those groups, including children, who are currently in greatest objective need.

Within this process, officials will seek to ensure that current initiatives which contribute to tackling child poverty are properly targeted and effective and also look to identify further opportunities for cross-cutting actions.

The Northern Ireland provisions of the Child Poverty Act will also be a significant step towards focusing efforts within government to meet our challenging PfG commitments of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The provisions of the Act specifically require us to produce and present to the Assembly, by 25 March 2011, a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. There will be an ongoing requirement for strategies to be produced every three years and for annual reports to the Assembly.

Cross-cutting Matters

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) what steps their Department intends to take to engage with a future devolved Department of Justice on cross-cutting matters; and (ii) what contribution can their Department make to cross-cutting justice and community safety issues such as reducing levels of offending.

(AQW 2682/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Now that devolution of policing and justice powers has been effected, OFMDFM will collaborate with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on all relevant cross-cutting issues, particularly through DOJ involvement in inter-departmental working groups led by OFMDFM.

We have arranged to meet soon with the Minister for Justice to discuss reducing offending. Although this is the responsibility of the Department of Justice, we share Minister Ford's view on a closer inter-departmental approach to reducing offending and we will continue to work with him to contribute to improving the lives of all people here.

International Relations Strategy

Mr S Hamilton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the development of an International Relations Strategy.

(AQO 581/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Programme for Government identified an action to develop an International Relations Strategy with OFMDFM being the lead department. This is currently under consideration by us and will, of course, be subject to consultation with Departments and Departmental Committees in advance of consideration by the Executive. It will also reflect the current fiscal environment.

The absence of a formal International Relations Strategy has not, to date, restricted the development of our international priorities. In the US, Europe and Asia, our Executive colleagues have been proactive in raising our international profile and creating opportunities for trade, investment, tourism and skills development. We will continue our international activity to support and promote economic growth.

Child Poverty

Mr D Hilditch asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on eradication of child poverty by 2020 and what cross-departmental strategy has been devised to achieve this goal.

(AQO 586/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The three statistical measures which have been used to assess child poverty here are firstly the relative income poverty measure; secondly the absolute income poverty measure; and a third measure which combines both low income and material deprivation. These three measures reflect slightly different aspects of poverty and together provide a more comprehensive picture than could be achieved using only one measure of child poverty.

Since 1998, there has been a downward trend in the numbers of children living in relative income poverty here in Northern Ireland. However, over the most recent period for which statistics are available the figures have remained fairly static at around 24%, on a par with the rest of the UK.

In terms of absolute income poverty, 29% of children were in poverty in 1998/99 with the most recent estimate for 2007/08 being 16%. However, as with relative income poverty over more recent years, the figures have remained fairly static.

The mixed income and material deprivation measure was first recorded in 2004/05. At that time it estimated 21% of children to be poor compared to 20% in 2007/08.

We fully recognise that the targets we have set ourselves in respect of eradicating child poverty here are extremely challenging, particularly in light of the current economic downturn.

The Executive, however, remains totally committed to meeting this challenge by working across government to ensure long-term sustainable progress. Through the workings of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion, we have asked our officials to undertake work with colleagues from the other Northern Ireland Departments to progress priority actions that will benefit those groups, including children, who are currently in greatest objective need.

Within this process, officials will seek to ensure that current initiatives which contribute to tackling child poverty are properly targeted and effective and also look to identify further opportunities for cross-cutting actions.

The Northern Ireland provisions of the UK Child Poverty Act will also be a significant step towards focusing efforts within government here to meet our challenging PfG commitment of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The provisions of the Act specifically require us to produce and present to the Assembly, by 25 March 2011, a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. There will be an ongoing requirement for strategies to be produced every three years and for annual reports to the Assembly.

Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 3615/10, to list the participants in the current review of the Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags.
(AQW 4195/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The working group set up to look at the current Flags Protocol and to review it has met on two occasions on 7th October and 23rd November 2009. The group does not have a set membership and participants included OFMDFM, DRD, DSD, DOE, NIO, PSNI, Equality Commission, Community Relations Council, Housing Executive, BT, NIE, Queen's University Belfast, Ballymena and Larne Borough Councils.

Initiatives to Improve the Lives of Older People

Mr W Irwin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what initiatives they are undertaking to improve the lives of older people.
(AQO 784/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We are continually seeking to improve the lives of all older people as detailed in PSA 7 of our Programme for Government. Here we have committed to promote social inclusion and specifically to delivering a strong independent voice for older people.

To that end, our officials are currently working to bring forward the legislation necessary to establish an Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland. Policy proposals and the draft Bill have been consulted on widely, responses gathered and OFMDFM published its response in May this year. The legislation was introduced to the Assembly on 24 May and it was debated and supported by the Assembly on 7 June 2010. The Bill is now being considered by the OFMDFM Committee.

To ensure momentum in this important arena prior to introducing legislation, Ministers asked OFMDFM officials to appoint an Interim Advocate for Older People and Dame Joan Harbison took up this position on 1st December 2008.

As Older People's Advocate, Dame Joan is helping to identify problems faced by all older people and providing us with independent advice on a range of issues that impact on all older people here, including how these might be addressed.

OFMDFM is currently reviewing the older people's strategy "Ageing in an Inclusive Society". We are doing this with the help of the Older People's Advisory Panel (the Panel) which is chaired by the Older People's Advocate.

Following preliminary advice from the Panel, we have agreed to a revision of the existing action plan, pending the development of a new strategy. The revised action plan is expected to be completed by early next year with the revised strategy expected to be completed by autumn 2011.

In addition to the work being taken forward by OFMDFM, the Executive have also brought forward a number of other measures aimed at benefiting vulnerable groups including older people.

These measures include actions on fuel poverty, benefit uptake, free fares on public transport and of course free prescriptions.

Visit to the USA

Mr P J Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQO 1176/10, (i) for a breakdown of the £58,455 cost incurred by their Department on the recent visit to the USA; (ii) how many people, including Ministers, travelled to and from the USA; (iii) how many of the group flew (a) business; and (b) economy class; (iv) what was the total cost of the return flights; and (v) what was the total cost of accommodation in the USA.

(AQW 6702/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The table below addresses points i and v of the question.

Flights (Transatlantic and Internal US)	£34,521.89
Accommodation	£10,548.96
Train (DC – New York)	£744.02
Car Hire	£8,763.38
Subsistence	£1,958.15
Gifts	£729.00
Photography	£1,200.00
Total:	£58,465.40

In terms of point ii, we were each accompanied by a Special Adviser, a Principal Private Secretary and a Principal Information Officer throughout the duration of the visit. OFMDFM procured the services of a photographer who also accompanied us. All of the flights (point iii) were categorised as, or were of an equivalent standard to, business class with the exception of two internal US flights; one involving the deputy First Minister and his delegation, the other involved the two Principal Information Officers and photographer. Officials accompanying Ministers fly business class in line with NICS policy.

It is not possible to differentiate the cost of transatlantic flights (point iv) from internal US travel for some of the visit party as their flight package was booked on a single through ticket.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Document

Mrs D Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will publish the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration document for consultation.

(AQW 7823/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We agreed the core of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration on 23rd February 2010.

Public consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration will be launched as soon as possible. The consultation exercise will consist of a range of public meetings held across a number of locations in addition to a round of more focused sectoral-specific events.

Once the responses to the consultation have been collated they will be taken on board within the context of a revised text as appropriate.

The redrafted programme will be considered by the Assembly Committee and the Executive before it is formally launched.

It is anticipated that the final agreed Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration will be published before the end of the year.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps they are taking to review the use of consultants in their Department.

(AQW 7993/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Department reviews the use of consultants on a continual basis in line with guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

The term 'consultancy' can cover a wide variety of suppliers who offer professional and specialist expertise. External consultants are employed only when it is necessary and when it will provide value for money. External consultants are employed with a view to transferring, when appropriate and to the greatest extent possible, their knowledge and skills to the department's staff, thereby reducing any future need to engage external consultants.

All procurement for external consultancy services is managed through Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). CPD provides the Department with advice relating to applicable legislation, inviting tenders, agreeing contracts and briefing consultants. CPD has developed Framework Agreements for consultancy services with external suppliers in line with the European Union Procurement regulations. Appropriate use of the Framework Agreement offers the Department the benefits of compliance with EU regulations, reduced internal processing costs and access to competitive fee rates.

Immigration Subgroup of the Racial Equality Panel

Mr J Shannon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the progress of the Immigration Sub-Group of the Racial Equality Panel.

(AQW 8029/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Forum agreed at its meeting on 24 November 2009 that a thematic sub-group should be established to consider immigration-related issues within the local context. This sub-group, chaired by the Law Centre (NI), has met on two occasions, most recently on 8 June.

The sub-group includes representatives from key statutory and voluntary agencies, including the UK Border Agency, with an interest in immigration-related issues.

The sub-group members have agreed a number of key areas of work. There has been an initial focus on issues around destitution and No Recourse to Public Funds and the related difficulties faced by both the statutory and voluntary sector. It is expected that the group will report back to both the Racial Equality Panel and the wider Forum by early autumn as this work develops.

The group will, of course, take an interest from the devolved perspective in immigration policy that is developed by the new Coalition government in Westminster, in particular the potential impact on the region of proposals for an immigration cap.

Further sub-groups may be established as agreed by the Panel and the Forum.

Block Grant

Mr J Shannon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the need to consider a reduction in bureaucracy as a means of ensuring that reductions to the block grant, as a result of the budget and Comprehensive Spending Review, do not damage the local economy and front-line services.

(AQW 8038/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The spending plans of NI departments for the years 2011-12 to 2014-15 will be set as part of the local Budget 2010 process.

The total amount of funding available to the Executive for allocations to local public services will only be confirmed when the outcome of the 2010 UK Spending Review is announced on 20 October 2010. However, Treasury forecasts suggest that there will be a real terms reduction in both current expenditure and capital investment funding.

In response, local departments will need to deliver significant savings over the next four years. Although it is expected that these will come from reductions in bureaucracy and improvements in efficiency in the first instance, there will also be a need for a broader consideration of how all public services and programmes to support the economy are provided. Ultimate responsibility for the planning and delivery of savings resides with individual Ministers.

Departments here are currently working to develop both spending proposals and savings plans to be considered by the Executive. The Executive's draft Budget 2010 document will be published for consultation in the autumn, in order to have final spending plans in place before the start of 2011.

Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Mr T Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to explain the delay in approving the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund's ongoing work programme.

(AQW 8175/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Discussions are continuing between the Department and the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund to finalise its budget and work programme for 2010/11. We have asked the Memorial Fund to provide us with more information about proposed changes to its grant schemes and we are seeking to agree revised governance arrangements in line with increased budget responsibilities. Whilst these discussions continue, we are continuing to provide funding to individual victims and survivors through the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund.

Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Mr T Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the funding allocated to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund in each year since 1999; and the total funding allocation for the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 8177/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Responsibility for the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund transferred to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister with effect from September 2006. All the funding for the period 2007/08 onwards, is shown in the table below

Year	Total Victims Allocation	Allocation to NI Memorial Fund
2007/08	£5.47 million	£800,000
2008/09	£8.05 million	£2,039,000
2009/10	£12.4 million	£3,574,500

The fund has been awarded £1,137,500 in year 2010/11 already but the total full allocation will not be known until later in the financial year.

Bills

Mr S Hamilton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which of the Bills announced in the Queen's Speech are likely to apply to Northern Ireland; and which of those Bills would require a legislative consent motion to be passed by the Assembly.

(AQW 8413/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Secretary of State has notified us of five Bills which are likely to require legislative consent motions to be passed by the Assembly for some or all of their provisions if they are to apply here:

- Welfare Reform Bill;
- Freedom Bill;
- Pensions and Savings Bill;
- Energy Security and Green Economy Bill; and
- Health Bill

In addition, he has informed us that the following 10 Bills will also apply to Northern Ireland but as they are likely to deal with excepted and/or reserved matters should not require a legislative consent motion.

- Parliamentary Reform Bill;
- Equitable Life Payments Bill;
- National Insurance Contributions Bill;
- Office of Budget Responsibility and National Audit Office Governance Bill;
- European Communities (Amendment) Referendum Lock Bill;
- Public Bodies Bill;
- Financial Services Regulation Bill;
- Postal Services Bill;
- Draft Parliamentary Privilege Bill; and
- Identity Documents Bill.

Before bringing forward a legislative consent motion to the Assembly, the Minister responsible will seek advice from the relevant statutory committee or committees and agreement from the Executive. The number of legislative consent motions required may vary depending upon amendments to Bills during their passage or as a result of further measures being brought forward in addition to those already announced.

Commission for Victims and Survivors: Replacement Commissioner

Mr D Kennedy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on any plans they have to appoint a replacement Commissioner to the Commission for Victims and Survivors.

(AQW 8449/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Commission has submitted its work plan for 2010/11 and is committed to delivering it with the existing complement of staff. Therefore, there are currently no plans to appoint a fourth Commissioner to the Commission for Victims and Survivors. The Commission is due for a review this financial year – the Department will reassess the situation following the completion of this review.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if any discussions have taken place between her Department, or its agencies, and the Department of the Environment and the Department for Regional Development, or their agencies, in relation to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; and to outline how many meetings have taken place and the outcome of these meetings.

(AQW 7929/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The issue of Sustainable Drainage Systems is being led by the Department of the Environment and my Officials in DARD Rivers are members of the cross Departmental SuDS Working Group. This group advised the creation of the DOE paper “Managing Stormwater, a Strategy for Promoting the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) within NI”. I have been advised that this paper received the endorsement of the Assembly Environment Committee and is expected to be implemented soon. My officials in Rivers Agency remain happy to work with their colleagues in DOE to progress this matter as requested.

Badger Cull to Prevent the Spread of Bovine TB

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has had any discussions with her counterpart in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to a badger cull to prevent the spread of bovine TB; and if these discussions have enabled the initiation of a cull Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7931/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I note that the new Liberal-Conservative Coalition in Britain has announced that, as part of a package of measures, they will introduce a carefully-managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine TB. I have not had any discussions with my counterpart in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in relation to a badger cull. I understand that decisions on the shape of the Defra package of measures have not yet been taken and that the Coalition wishes to consider all the issues carefully, including the scientific evidence, and to work out the detail of the package to ensure they get it right. They will be looking at vaccine and culling options as part of that package. They will also watch how Wales embarks on their planned badger cull whilst they finalise their own plans. I shall be very interested to see exactly what it is they propose and how it is to be funded.

My Department has a rigorous TB programme in place, approved by the EU, which includes a strand to address the wildlife factor. The ultimate aim of our TB strategy is to eradicate TB in cattle in the north of Ireland.

Interventions to address the wildlife issue may include improving biosecurity, as well as options for more direct intervention such as the vaccination of badgers, which may be the most feasible solution in the long-term though I recognise it could be some time before an effective oral badger vaccine becomes available. We plan to carry out a TB Biosecurity Study this year to assess what critical differences there

are between infected and non-infected herds in a TB high incidence area in County Down. Consideration of both selected cattle and wildlife factors will be key elements of this Study which will help inform new biosecurity advice for farmers. We are also seeking to see how other AFBI research and development projects can best contribute to the fight against TB.

To date, research involving badger culling elsewhere presents a mixed picture of its cost benefit and effectiveness in reducing disease levels in cattle. It would appear that the cost exceeds the benefit by 2-3 times. There are no plans for any cull of badgers here. As the badger is a protected species, any direct interventions in the badger population would be subject to the agreement of the Environment Minister, and also to the availability of the substantial additional funding that would be needed.

My officials will continue to maintain contact with the work that is on-going in the south of Ireland and in England to develop a viable vaccine for badgers, which can be deployed in a cost effective way. We will also track the progress of the Welsh cull as well as the delivery of the Defra package of measures in England.

Action to deal with cattle to cattle transmission of TB will also continue to be an important element of our TB strategy as we move forward.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she is taking to review the use of consultants in her Department.

(AQW 7954/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I believe that it is important that Consultants are only used when and where necessary. I am therefore currently reviewing the use of consultants within my Department.

Funding for Fencing of New Woodland Areas

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she would consider allocating funding for fencing of new woodland areas, similar to the Woodland Creation scheme in Scotland.

(AQW 7972/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Last year Forest Service reviewed the standard cost models for eligible operations associated with woodland establishment. These models already include a sum for fencing and therefore an additional payment for fencing is inappropriate.

Woodland Creation

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with her counterpart in Scotland in relation to Woodland Creation and rolling out a similar scheme in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7976/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have not discussed Woodland Creation Schemes with my counterpart in Scotland and have no plans to introduce a similar scheme here. However, Forest Service and Forestry Commission Scotland officials discuss aspects of their respective schemes on a regular basis.

Movement of a Cattle Herd Infected with Brucellosis from Keady to Caledon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why her Department allowed a herd of cattle from Keady, known to be infected with brucellosis, to be moved for wintering to the Caledon area last autumn, resulting in cattle in the neighbouring area having to undergo three separate

tests for the disease, all of which had to be clear; and for the estimated cost of this action, including veterinary fees for the tests.

(AQW 8056/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Veterinary Service aims to deal with disease breakdowns through sound risk assessment of the disease threat and by applying relevant controls. This may include removal of the herd, restrictions on movements of cattle within the herd and possible segregation of groups of cattle within the herd. Restrictions and testing of neighbours thought to have been at risk is another element of our control measures. When we detect disease, we frequently apply measures retrospectively. Without further details of the herds involved it is not possible to discuss the actual circumstances of this case. If further details were provided in the question, it would be possible to give a more specific and detailed response.

Grants Available in Strangford

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what grants are available for farming and business programmes in the Strangford constituency.

(AQW 8059/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Grants are currently available for farming and business programmes across the north, including the Strangford constituency under the following measures of the Rural Development Programme:

Axis 1

- Measure 1.1 Vocational Training and Information Actions
- Measure 1.4 Supply Chain Development Programme

Axis 3

- Measure 3.1: Diversification into non-agricultural activities;
- Measure 3.2: Support for business creation and development; and
- Measure 3.3: Encouragement of tourism activities.

In addition, four measures are currently open under the European Fisheries Fund:

- Measure 2.1: Measures for productive investments in aquaculture;
- Measure 2.3: Investments in processing and marketing;
- Measure 3.1: Collective actions; and
- Measure 3.3: Fishing ports, landing sites and shelters.

Rural Development Programme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the events taking place under the Rural Development Programme in Strangford and all other constituencies in 2010/11.

(AQW 8060/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: No ministerial events promoting the NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 (RDP) have taken place in the Strangford constituency or elsewhere thus far in this financial year, although I can confirm that a number took place in February and March. The Member will appreciate that it is not ministerial practice to divulge details of scheduled events in advance. However, I am pleased to report that I hope to attend several RDP-related events across the north of Ireland over the coming months, depending on the receipt of suitable invitations.

Staff from my Department have attended a number of events across the north promoting the RDP during 2010/11, the most notable being the Balmoral Show in May.

They have also promoted the RDP at Ballymena, Ballymoney, Armagh and Omagh agricultural shows and are due to attend Derry-Limavady, Castlewellan, Clogher Valley and Enniskillen Shows before the end of the summer.

Tayto Factory in Tandragee

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many times she has visited the Tayto factory in Tandragee since becoming Minister and the dates of any visits.

(AQW 8096/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I visited the Tayto factory in Tandragee once, this was on 30 October 2007. During the visit I received a tour of the factory and was impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff.

Meat Plants

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the current price being paid by meat plants to beef producers.

(AQW 8097/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am aware of the current instability in relation to beef prices and understand the frustration among producers regarding the price paid for their cattle. We would all want to see better and more stable prices.

Whilst the price paid to producers and the establishment of pricing structures is strictly a commercial matter, I believe that I have a role to encourage and facilitate dialogue to help make the supply chain work as effectively as possible for everyone.

In view of the present harsh financial operating conditions, I would also encourage producers to avail of the benchmarking services provided by CAFRE's Greenmount Campus which should help identify farm business strengths and weaknesses and thereby enable producers to maximise profit margins on the back of what the market can offer.

Cross-Border Agricultural Issues

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the lack of progress being made on cross-border agricultural issues.

(AQW 8098/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Significant progress has been made across a wide range of formal and informal cross-border activities. Some examples of progress within the forum of the North South Ministerial Council include:-

The agreement of the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy at the North South Ministerial Council Agriculture Sectoral meeting in Hillsborough in March 2010.

On-going all Ireland co-operation on animal health and welfare issues has the potential to help reduce and prevent the spread of animal disease as well as facilitate trade and improve the sustainability of farming. The positive outcomes already achieved as a result of the close co-operation on animal health and welfare through the North South Working Groups that were established under the Good Friday Agreement includes:

- the development of a largely similar system of sheep identification;
- co-operation in relation to the exchange of data to facilitate trade in bovine animals following the lifting of the BSE export ban;
- broad alignment of border control policies aimed at preventing the introduction of animal disease;

- co-operation on contingency planning for exotic disease outbreaks, including agreement on a common chapter in the respective epizootic contingency plans for Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza and Bluetongue;
- agreement of a protocol on welfare during transport breaches; and
- co-operation on testing regimes for TB and Brucellosis in border areas.

As we go forward, the all Ireland strategic approach will enable the achievement of further positive outcomes. We will continue with our Fortress Ireland approach to protect the whole island from the threat of serious animal diseases, such as Bluetongue. I hope that at an early stage we will gain EU recognition of freedom from Aujeszky's Disease throughout the whole island, which will open up a number of export opportunities for the pig industry. We are continuing to take steps to reduce Brucellosis in the north of Ireland and I hope that we can achieve Brucellosis free status throughout all of Ireland in the near future, which will benefit everyone and lead to a reduction in testing and the associated costs for both farmer and tax-payer. We will continue to work together towards having mutual recognition of genotype programmes during 2010. This will permit trade movements in breeding sheep from the north to the south and vice versa without the need for further genotyping. We will continue to work together on strategies to tackle TB, on data sharing and on animal identification. In addition, we are continuing to work towards broadly similar primary legislation on diseases of animals and welfare of animals.

All of this work will help contribute towards the ultimate aim of the free movement of animals on the island of Ireland.

A comprehensive report on a joint strategic approach to plant health and pesticides has been developed which identified a number of areas of mutual interest that would benefit from an agreed framework for co-ordination and delivery. This is being taken forward by the Plant Health & Pesticides Steering Group and includes work on contingency plans; the efficient use of laboratory facilities and resources; exchange of best practice; joint campaigns on alerting and educating the industry on plant health issues; co-operation on the Protected Zone surveys; and co-operation on Pest Risk Analysis of new threats;

Regular reports have been delivered to the North South Ministerial Council on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) issues including the CAP Health Check, CAP post 2013, WTO negotiations, the EU response to the poor returns received by milk producers during most of 2009 and developments concerning climate change and agriculture.

Progress has also been made in strategically directing the Steering Committee for Cross Border Rural Development to support sustainable social and economic development including facilitating cooperation on a range of strategy and delivery issues such as shared positive impacts from EU-funded rural initiatives.

Officials in both Administrations also remain in close contact and participate in a range of meetings where co-operation takes place at a less formal operational level. This enables a valuable exchange of knowledge and experience on issues such as flood risk management; education in the agriculture sector and sustainable forest management and operational forestry matters.

Forest Service has in the past year established a forestry forum with Coillte, aimed at dealing with matters of common purpose, for example, the promotion of Woodland expansion in the north & south.

I have also established a north south unit within the Department to monitor progress on cross-border issues and report to me on a regular basis. I believe that activities such as those highlighted above demonstrate my commitment to promote an all Ireland approach.

European Commission Fine

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department will pay the £60m European Commission fine without impacting on its statutory duties and service provision.
(AQW 8130/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I would refer the Member to the answer I provided to AQW 7609/10 tabled by Mr Alex Easton MLA and published in the Official Report of Written Answers to Questions dated Friday 25 June 2010.

Imported Foodstuffs

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the percentage of foodstuffs (i) imported and consumed in Northern Ireland; and (ii) imported, further processed and exported from Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8134/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: DARD does not collect information on foodstuffs imported into and consumed in the north of Ireland. We have estimates of the value of semi-processed foodstuffs purchased from outside the north of Ireland (including from Britain) for further processing by the food and drinks processing sector. These values for the three most recent years available are as follows:

2005	2006	2007
£176 million	£187 million	£209 million

We do not hold any data on the final market destination of products derived from this component of the intake of the food and drinks processing sector.

Scout Troops

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's policy on scout troops using Forest Services land for camping.

(AQW 8203/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: DARD Forest Service manages Youth Camping sites at several forest areas across the north of Ireland. These sites are frequently utilised by youth organisations, including Scout troops, and the organisations are representative of a wide range of community backgrounds and cultures.

Payment charges for using the sites comply with Department of Finance & Personnel guidelines, and the rationale for these charges is more fully explained in Forest Service's document 'Fees and Charges: Operational Strategy for the Provision of Recreational Services'. It is intended that the nightly fees on camping sites should fully cover the operating costs.

My Department's officials recognise that there is also some demand for a more basic type of camping provision to help young people develop skills in field craft and other outdoor activities. Forest Service managers have recently been in discussion with representatives from the Scouts, including some from within the Member's own constituency, to agree the most appropriate way forward to facilitate this type of request while meeting our wider management responsibilities.

Fresh Water Levels

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps he is taking to ensure that fresh water levels are maintained, in light of the recent dry spell.

(AQW 8217/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As the statutory flood defence and drainage authority DARD Rivers Agency has permissive powers under the Drainage Order (NI) 1973 to inspect and maintain as necessary all designated watercourses to ensure they are free flowing and clear from any obstruction likely to create a significant flood risk or drainage impediment.

The Agency is also responsible for the control, so far as is practicable, of water levels on Upper and Lower Lough Erne, the inter Lough channel, Lough Neagh and along the Lower Bann. In some of these

locations statutory maximum and minimum levels are stipulated and Rivers Agency staff ensure, as far as possible, that levels do not fall outside these specified levels. At present water levels in these locations are above any minimum statutory level that exists.

Scottish Fisheries Council

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what contact she has had with the Scottish Fisheries Council in relation to fishing for clams and the methods used.

(AQW 8219/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have not had any contact with the Scottish Fisheries Council on this matter. My officials will be participating in a series of meetings over the summer months with their counterparts from other fisheries administrations to discuss a range of shellfish issues including the approaches being taken to scallop management.

Online VAT Return Facility

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what representations she has made, on behalf of farmers, to the Treasury in relation to the ease of use of the on-line VAT return facility.

(AQW 8222/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have not made any representations to the Treasury in relation to the use of the on-line VAT return facility.

I am not aware that this is an issue which has been raised by farmers with the Department and, in any case, it would be for individual farmers to complete their own VAT returns.

European Commission Fine

Mr J Bell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the £60m fine imposed by the European Commission on her Department for the maladministration of farming subsidies from 2004 to 2006, if she has any concerns over the administration of European Commission subsidies for the period 2007 to 2009; and if she can provide an assurance that farmers will not be unfairly targeted and penalised as a result of this fine.

(AQW 8250/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Commission's procedures lead it to apply a 5% correction when it concludes that all the key control checks have been applied, but not to the extent required to provide sufficient assurance of the regularity of claims. In these circumstances, the Commission views the risk of loss to the Fund as significant.

I have concerns over the amount of disallowance proposed and I am currently challenging this. However, the probability is that until this situation is resolved to the Commission's satisfaction, we will continue to face ongoing disallowance. In view of the Commission's position, I have asked my officials to undertake a project to systematically review, and where necessary, amend every field within the DARD system.

It is the farmers' responsibility to ensure that they comply with the rules of the subsidy scheme being claimed. If my Department finds an irregularity, for example a claim being made on land that is clearly ineligible, it has to apply penalties in line with the EU regulations, and if it is subsequently determined that a fraudulent claim has been made, will actively consider prosecution.

Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of people who have signed up to the delayed cutting and grazing option of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme in each of the last five years; and the area of land involved for each year.

(AQW 8300/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The new Countryside Management Scheme (CMS) agreements started on 1 January 2009 and therefore I can only provide figures for that calendar year. Scheme payments are issued following the end of each calendar year. The previous CMS did not offer the delayed cutting and grazing option. Table 1 shows participants who have undertaken to manage this habitat and gives the total area of land involved.

Table 1: Participants who have undertaken delayed cutting and grazing habitat enhancement option and the area of land involved (ha).

Year	Participants undertaken delayed cutting and grazing habitat enhancement option	Area of land involved (ha)
2009	81	382.67

A number of other options within agri-environment (AE) schemes can benefit the Irish hare, such as ungrazed grass margins. Ungrazed grass margins are available to recipients of the current CMS and are also available under old CMS and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) schemes. In the 2009 calendar year there were 303 ha of ungrazed grass margins included in 728 agreements with farmers.

Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what correspondence she has had with the Department of the Environment on the delayed cutting and grazing option of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme since the scheme was launched.

(AQW 8301/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since the New Countryside Management Scheme (CMS) was launched, DARD has had no correspondence with the Department of the Environment (DOE) on the delayed cutting and grazing option. However, prior to the New CMS launch DARD consulted widely with stakeholders, including the Irish Hare Species Action Group in which DOE representatives participated.

European Common Fisheries Policy

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 2934/10, for her assessment of the approximate market value of (i) cod; (ii) haddock; and (iii) whiting landed that had to be thrown overboard as it was below or above minimum landing size.

(AQW 8377/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Fish that are caught and discarded subsequently because they are below the minimum landing size have no market value because they cannot be legally landed or sold. The market value of the 2008/9 discard estimates for fish above minimum landing size stated in the AQW 2934/10 is as follows –

	Tonnes	Avg. price kg	Value
Cod	0.6	£2.00	£1,200
Haddock	2.0	£1.50	£3,000
Whiting	17.8	£1.25	£22,500

European Commission Fine

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her understanding of her accountability obligations to the Assembly in light of her decision not to make a statement to the Assembly on the £60m disallowance.

(AQW 8397/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am well aware of my obligations both as a Minister and as a Member of the Assembly.

I have discharged my obligations fully through the provision of information and clarification on the 'disallowance' issue in the course of Assembly Written and Oral questions and ensured that this issue was brought to the attention of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee. I have also contributed to the further dissemination of this information through media coverage aimed at ensuring that the industry and wider rural community were also kept fully informed.

I will consider making a statement to the Assembly if there are significant developments with this issue.

Compensation in Lieu of Lost Crops

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the request from farmers and growers for compensation in lieu of crops lost in last winter's inclement weather. (AQW 8425/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A funding bid for potato losses following the severe January 2010 frost and also for sheep losses due to the ice storm of 31 March was submitted as part of the June monitoring round. The outcome of this is still awaited.

Should funding be made available, an announcement about a scheme will be made in due course.

Single Farm Payment

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications for the Single Farm Payment were granted following appeal in each constituency in each of the last three years. (AQW 8435/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I refer the member to my answer of 5 May 2010 (AQW 6560/10 refers).

I am unable to provide the information you have requested by constituency. My Department does not hold information relating to SFP applications by constituency. I am able to provide you an update to the information I provided on 5 May 2010, by postcode.

From 1 May 2010 until 2 July 2010 my Department has changed 14 of its decisions following a Review of Decisions application.

The table below sets out the information by postcode.

Single Farm Payment Review of Decisions (Appeal) cases that resulted in a change to DARD's original decision.

	Post Code	Number Cases resulting in a changed decision
1 May 2010 – 2 July 2010	BT22	2
	BT34	1
	BT44	1
	BT57	1
	BT60	1
	BT62	1
	BT71	1

	Post Code	Number Cases resulting in a changed decision
1 May 2010 – 2 July 2010	BT77	1
	BT80	1
	BT94	4
	Total	14

Single Farm Payment

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications for the Single Farm Payment were turned down in each constituency in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8441/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: To date, 374 applications to the 2009 Single Farm Payment Scheme have been turned down and consequently no payment was due. The numbers for scheme years 2008 and 2007 are 273 and 313 respectively.

The Department does not hold Single Farm Payment details on a constituency basis. The data is currently held by county and postcode where known.

A list of the total numbers of unsuccessful applications received for years 2007, 2008 and 2009, as at 7 July 2010, for each postcode area is attached at Annex A.

Annex A

SINGLE FARM PAYMENT APPLICATIONS TURNED DOWN 2007 TO 2009

Postcode	2007		2008		2009	
	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 11 June 2007	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2008	100% Penalty applied & Ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2009
BT1	0	0	0	0	3	1
BT2	0	0	1	0	2	0
BT3	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT4	0	1	0	0	1	1
BT5	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT6	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT7	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT8	2	0	2	1	3	0
BT9	1	0	0	0	1	0
BT10	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT11	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT12	0	0	0	0	0	1
BT13	0	0	0	0	0	0

Postcode	2007		2008		2009	
	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 11 June 2007	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2008	100% Penalty applied & Ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2009
BT14	1	0	1	0	1	0
BT15	1	0	0	0	0	0
BT16	1	0	2	0	0	0
BT17	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT18	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT19	1	0	0	0	0	0
BT20	2	0	1	0	0	0
BT21	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT22	1	3	1	0	1	0
BT23	8	4	2	1	5	2
BT24	2	2	4	1	6	1
BT25	2	1	2	0	4	3
BT26	1	0	0	0	1	0
BT27	3	2	2	1	0	0
BT28	3	1	2	2	3	3
BT29	1	1	3	0	5	0
BT30	8	0	2	2	9	1
BT31	1	0	0	0	0	0
BT32	2	0	4	0	7	1
BT33	1	0	0	0	0	0
BT34	17	1	8	1	12	1
BT35	7	3	9	3	14	3
BT36	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT37	0	0	0	0	0	1
BT38	1	0	0	0	1	0
BT39	4	4	2	0	1	2
BT40	2	1	3	0	0	1
BT41	3	1	3	0	3	1
BT42	6	6	5	2	4	1
BT43	1	0	2	0	3	1
BT44	8	2	6	1	6	0

Postcode	2007		2008		2009	
	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 11 June 2007	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2008	100% Penalty applied & Ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2009
BT45	5	2	5	2	4	0
BT46	4	1	4	0	3	1
BT47	8	1	6	3	12	1
BT48	1	0	0	0	1	0
BT49	6	2	4	2	3	1
BT50	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT51	5	2	5	3	8	1
BT52	2	1	0	1	0	0
BT53	4	2	6	2	7	1
BT54	0	0	0	0	1	1
BT55	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT56	4	1	1	0	1	1
BT57	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT58	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT59	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT60	4	0	5	1	6	3
BT61	1	0	5	0	4	2
BT62	6	2	8	3	1	1
BT63	3	0	3	1	2	0
BT64	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT65	1	0	0	0	0	0
BT66	5	1	6	0	4	1
BT67	1	1	0	1	1	0
BT68	0	0	0	1	1	0
BT69	3	0	3	0	2	0
BT70	9	2	6	2	9	1
BT71	10	5	6	2	13	2
BT72	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT73	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT74	5	3	7	0	20	2
BT75	2	0	1	1	4	2

Postcode	2007		2008		2009	
	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 11 June 2007	100% penalty applied & ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2008	100% Penalty applied & Ineligible claims	Inadmissible claims i.e. received after 9 June 2009
BT76	0	0	2	0	2	0
BT77	2	0	2	0	3	1
BT78	12	1	12	2	24	1
BT79	12	3	9	1	13	1
BT80	6	2	5	3	9	1
BT81	5	0	3	0	6	0
BT82	4	0	4	0	6	0
BT83	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT84	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT85	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT86	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT87	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT88	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT89	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT90	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT91	0	0	0	0	0	0
BT92	6	0	13	4	20	2
BT93	2	3	6	2	15	1
BT94	3	2	8	1	12	1
No BT Postcode Held	9	2	8	0	6	1
Totals	241	72	220	53	319	55
	313		273		374	

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Public Museums and Art Galleries

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail for each of the last ten years (i) the total number of items from public museums and art galleries that were (a) lost or misplaced; and (b) stolen; (ii) the types of items missing; (iii) the length of time for which each item was missing; (iv)

whether each item was found or is still missing; (v) the value of these items; and (vi) the costs incurred in replacing these items.

(AQW 7739/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): The attached Appendix A contains the details in answer to the above questions.

YEAR 2010

ANNEX A

	No of items	Description	Time recorded as missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	American Eight Day Gingerbread Clock	02.04.2009	No	£300	
	1	Pair of wire rimmed spectacles	00.06.2009	No	£20	
	1	Staffordshire earthenware ornament	04.06.2009	No	£500	
Lost						
Misplaced	1	species: Melitaea didyma	2010 Audit	No	£15	
	1	species: Chesias rufata	2010 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: ICHNEUMON	2010 Audit	No	£2.50	
	1	Photograph; Glass plate negative; species: Nymphaea alba Stamp from South Australia: 6 pence, surcharged 5 pence	2010 Audit	No	£10	
	1	Fire Dog	2010 Audit	No	£3.75	
	1	Shoemaker's knife	2010 Audit	No	£70-£100	
	1	Shop's advertisement	2010 Audit	No	£40	
	1	Draw knife	2010 Audit	No	£40-£50	
	1	Cardboard Tags	2010 Audit	No	£40-£55	
	1	School book	2010 Audit	No	£15	
	1	Doll	2010 Audit	No	£30-£40	
	1	Handle	2010 Audit	No	£60-£125	
	1		2010 Audit	No	£3	

YEAR 2009

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	Library Book-Edwardian Belfast: A Social Profile (Explorations in Irish History)	2009 Audit	No		£10
	1	Doll's Clothes	2009 Audit	No	£40-£50	
	1	Tea cosy cover	2009 Audit	No	£125	
	1	Patchwork bedcover	2009 Audit	No	£300-£500	
	3	Augers	2009 Audit	No	£40-£60	
	1	Canal lock gate equipment	2009 Audit	No	£150	
	1	Silversmith's sandbag	2009 Audit	No	£50-£80	
	1	Mason's stone hammer	2009 Audit	No	£50-£80	
	1	String holder	2009 Audit	No	£60-£80	
	1	Basket makers cleaver of 'splitter'	2009 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Green-glass hanging lamp	2009 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Piece of bog butter	2009 Audit	No	n/a	
	1	Crimping tongs	2009 Audit	No	£40	
	3	Jelly moulds	2009 Audit	No	£60-£100	
	1	Black leather pocket book	2009 Audit	No	£25	
	1	Auger	2009 Audit	No	£20	
	1	Weighing machine	2009 Audit	No	£200	
	1	Bottle, medical	2009 Audit	No	£5	
	1	Washing board	2009 Audit	No	£20	
	1	Helmet; Civil defence	2009	No	£25	
	1	Card Game	2009	No	£10	
	1	C.D Brassard [Civil Defence Armband]	2009	No	£10	

YEAR 2008

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	turf barrow	2008 Audit	No	£400	
	1	plane	2008 Audit	No	£20	
	1	spectacles	2008 Audit	No	£40	
	1	lamp	2008 Audit	No	£30	
	1	bottle, ink	2008 Audit	Yes 2010	£10	
	1	jam jar	2008 Audit	Yes 2010	£10	
	1	Library Book – How it is Made c.1941	2008 Audit	No	£5	
	1	Cassette	2008 Audit	No	£2	
	1	Baby brush and comb set	2008 Audit	No	£70	
	1	Fleece	2008 Audit	No	£80	
	1	Overskirt	2008 Audit	No	£60-£100	
	1	Sampler	2008 Audit	No	£250	
	1	Blouse	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Scarf Lace	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Clerical Hat	2008 Audit	No	£200	
	1	Doll	2008 Audit	No	£350	
	1	Bedsread	2008 Audit	No	£300	
	1	Baking board	2008 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Tongs (broken)	2008 Audit	No	£15	
	1	Round plane	2008 Audit	No	£60-£70	
	1	Wheelwright's hoop dog	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Object, Ballycastle glass	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Linen cart	2008 Audit	Yes 2008	£2000-£3000	
	1	2 Horse reaper	2008 Audit	No	£700-£900	

YEAR 2007

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2006

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	Disc, ground	2006	No	£10	
	1	Pointed implement, double	2006	No	£100	
	1	Axe	2006	No	£100	
	1	Facetted hammer, round	2006	No	£50	
	1	Rubber	2006	No	£100	
	6	Photographic Prints	2006	No	£5 each	

YEAR 2005

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	Gilt Pocket Watch	20/11/2005	No	£70	
	1	Decorative Watch Strand	21/11/2005	No	£30	
	1	Nickel Plated Gents Pocket Watch	22/11/2005	No	£60	
Lost						
Misplaced						

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement

YEAR 2004

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2003

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	Large Wooden Beetle	September 2003	No	£70-£100	
	1	Medium sized cast Iron Kettle	September 2003	No	£70-£125	
	2	Metal milk / Billy cans, one without a lid	September 2003	No	£30	
	1	Small American clock, in working condition	September 2003	No	£150-£200	
	1	Small white enamel candleholder	September 2003	No	£20	
	2	Pair of framed Prints (colour Portraits of King Edward VII & Queen Alexandra)	September 2003	No	£100-£250	
	1	Small hand oil lamp, clear glass reservoir	September 2003	No	£60-£70	
	1	Framed text 'The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want'	September 2003	No	£70	
Lost						

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	PRINT; The Rialto Bridge from the West, Venice	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	PRINT; David Hartley	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£250	
	1	PRINT; Abstraction	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£75	
	1	BROOCH; (copy of Tara brooch)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£400	
	1	Brooch, gilt dragon	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£100	
	1	Painting, James McQuitty, Esq. (1922)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£800	
	1	Painting, Portrait of Unknown Woman (1903?)	2003 Audit	No	£500	
	1	Drawing, At Cushendall (1858)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£800	
	1	Drawing, The land-rail or corn crake (Crex crex)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£4000	
	1	Paten	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£5000	
	1	COFFEE-POT; Coffee Pot: Bateson	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£30000	
	1	core: dual opposed	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	BELT; Sam Brown Belt with frog	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Belt	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	COIN; halfpenny	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; shilling ; forgery	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; half mark	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; two cash	2003 Audit	No	£2	
	1	COIN; penny	2003 Audit	No	£12	
	1	TOKEN; half penny	2003 Audit	No	£15	
	1	photographic lantern slide	2003 Audit	No	£20	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	photographic print	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Photographic print	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Bookplate	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Tetraxis pellucida</i> Hedw.	2003 Audit	No	£5	
	1	species: <i>Ceratodon purpureus</i> (Hedw.) Brid.	2003 Audit	No	£5	
	1	species: <i>Rubus wahlbergii</i> Arrh.	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Gibbula pennanti</i> (Philippi, 1846)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Anomia ephippium</i> Linne, 1758	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Delias doytes</i> ssp. <i>Doylei</i>	2003 Audit	No	£15	
	1	species: <i>Hypopimnas missippus</i>	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Anartia jatrophae</i> L	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Boloria selene</i> (Dennis: Schiffermueller 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	species: Euphydryas aurinia (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Euphydryas aurinia (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Euphydryas aurinia (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Euphydryas aurinia (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Pieris napi (Linnaeus 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£257.50	
	1	species: Euxoa tritici (Linnaeus 1761)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£5	
	1	species: Pyrrhia umbra (Hufnagel 1766)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Lycia zonaria (Schiff)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Epirrata dilutata (Denis and Schiffermuller)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Erebia pandrose Borkhausen 1788	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£25	
	1	species: Pyrgus alveus Huebner 1803	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Maculinea arion Linnaeus 1761	2003 Audit	No	£25	
	1	species: Gastrophysa polygoni Linnaeus, 1758	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Notiophilus germinyi Fauvel, 1863	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Platyderus ruficollis (Marsham, 1802)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Megatoma undata (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	WASP	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	FLY	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Adalia 7-punctata	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Adalia conglobata	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPHS; Glass plate negative	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPHS; Glass plate negative	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Empis (Euempis) tessellate	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Empis (Euempis) tessellata Fabricius, 1794	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Bicellaria sulcata Zett., 1842	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Barylypa insidiator (Foerster)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Hilara brevistyla Collin, 1927	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Eristalis (S. G. Eoseristalis) intricarius (Linnaeus)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Bicellaria vana Collin, 1926	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Empis S. Anachrostichus verralli Collin, 1927	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Glypta bicornis Boie, 1850	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Cleorodes lichenaria (Hufnagel 1767)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	species: Halictus S. Seladonia tumulorum (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Leucozona lucorum (Linne)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Xantholinus linearis	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Maculinea teleius Bergstrasser, 1779	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Maculinea teleius Bergstrasser, 1779	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Rhingia campestris Meigen	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Zizeeria knysna Trimen	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£30	
	1	species: Glaucopsyche alexis Poda, 1761	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Sphaerophonia menthrasti	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Sketch for Poster: Palm Trees	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Larentia flavicincta	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eupithecia pulchellata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eupithecia scabiosata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Xanthorhoe montanata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Xanthorhoe fluctuate	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eucosmia certata	2003 Audit	No	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	species: Maniola jurtina	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Tachinus signatus	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Aloconota gregaria Erichson	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Tachyporus atriceps	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Hadena serena	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Procus faruncula	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Antitype chi	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Griposia aprilina	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Agrochola lota	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Scotopteryx luridata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Lithomoia solidaginis	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Pristiphora alnivora (Hartig, 1840)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Melitaea didyma Esper, 1779	2003 Audit	No	£20	
	1	species: Mellicta parthenoides Keferstein, 1851	2003 Audit	No	£20	
	1	species: Meloboris ischnocera Thomson	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Lathrobium fennicum	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Pieris napi brittanica Verity, 1911	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Abrostula triplasia Linne	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Anticlea badiata	2003 Audit	No	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
	1	MOTH; Grey Pine Carpet	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	FLY	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	WASP	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eudoria basistrigalis Knaggs, 1866	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Alucita hexadactyla (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Euzophera pinguis (Haworth, 1811)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Acleris hastiana (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Aethes nartmanniana (Clerck, 1759)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Drymus sylvaticus	2003 Audit	No	£10	

YEAR 2002

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2001

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2000

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

Please note with the exception of a trial in 2003 at the Ulster Museum, formal physical verification exercises were not introduced until 2008 and now occur on an annual basis across all of National Museums (NMNI) sites i.e. Ulster Museum Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Ulster American Folk Park and Armagh County Museum. As illustrated, items classified as misplaced continue to be subsequently located as NMNI progresses its storage and documentation arrangements. In relation to costs incurred in replacement, as illustrated, to date they are modest and confined to one library book.

With regard to art galleries The Arts Council is not a public museum or an art gallery.

Participation in Sport

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an estimate of the number of people who currently participate in (i) soccer; (ii) rugby; (iii) hockey; (iv) cricket; (v) gaelic football and hurling; (vi) tennis; (vii) badminton; and (viii) athletics.

(AQW 8153/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The number of people estimated to participate in the sports listed above is as follows:

- (i) Soccer/Association football 196,704
- (ii) Rugby 68,010
- (iii) Hockey 34,630
- (iv) Cricket 33,802
- (v) Gaelic football and hurling 114,944
- (vi) Tennis/ Badminton 165,636
- (vii) Athletics 72,547

These estimates are based on two surveys, the Department's Continuous Household Survey 2008/09 and the Young People's Behaviour and Attitude Survey 2007.

Remuneration Paid to Board and Committee Members

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the remuneration paid to members of the boards and committees of the quangos and arms length bodies associated with his Department broken down by (i) job title; and (ii) individual payments in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8216/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The attached table illustrates remuneration paid to Non-Executive members of boards and committees of all quangos and arms length bodies associated with the Department. Remuneration is taken to include gross salary, bonuses, taxable allowance and benefits.

Arms Length Body	Fees Paid By Category				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£	£	£	£	£
Arts Council					
Chairperson	8,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00	11,500.00	10,000.00
Vice Chairperson	4,000.00	4,000.00	3,833.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
Sub-total	12,000.00	12,000.00	11,833.00	15,000.00	13,500.00
NI Screen					
Board members	14,000.00	13,000.00	13,500.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
Sub-total	14,000.00	13,000.00	13,500.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
Armagh Observatory*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Armagh Planetarium*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NI Museums Council*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NMNI					
Chairperson	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
Sub-total	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
Libraries NI**					
Chairperson	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12,000.00
Board members	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54,000.00
Sub-total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	66,000.00
Sports Council					
Chairperson	12,999.96	9,999.96	9,999.96	9,999.96	9,999.96
Vice Chairperson	3,500.04	3,500.04	2,625.03	0.00	1,749.66
Sub-total	16,500.00	13,500.00	12,624.99	16,500.00	11,749.62
Foras Na Gaelige (Euros)					
Chairperson	9,323.00	9,388.00	9,589.00	14,000.00	13,806.00
Vice Chairperson	8,253.00	9,635.00	14,317.00	11,500.00	11,340.00
Board Members	82,103.00	79,357.00	57,248.00	86,100.00	81,713.00
Sub-total	99,679.00	98,380.00	81,154.00	111,600.00	106,859.00

Arms Length Body	Fees Paid By Category				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£	£	£	£	£
Ulster Scots Agency					
Chairperson	5,199.92	5,199.92	11,034.88	9,519.96	5,012.01
Board members	24,386.58	24,386.58	29,295.83	49,978.08	48,136.85
Sub-total	29,586.50	29,586.50	40,330.71	59,498.04	53,148.86
Northern Ireland Events***	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fisheries Conservancy Board****					
Chair	3,611.62	2,997.02	2,789.20	4,102.20	N/a
Sub-total	3,611.62	2,997.02	2,789.20	4,102.20	N/a
Waterways Ireland***	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Non-executive board or committee members of Armagh Observatory, Armagh Planetarium and Northern Ireland Museums Council did not receive any remuneration in these years.

** Libraries NI was established in 2009/10 as an Arms Length body of DCAL. Prior to the existence of Libraries NI, the five Education and Library Boards were responsible for Public Libraries. As a result DCAL do not have access the remuneration information prior to 2009/10.

*** Non-executive board or committee members of Northern Ireland Events Company and Waterways Ireland did not receive any remuneration in these years.

**** The Fisheries Conservancy Board was subsumed into the Department in 2009/10 therefore was no longer an arms length body in 09/10.

I hope you find this information useful.

World Police and Fire Games in 2013

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail any plans to use sports facilities in the Mid-Ulster area for the World Police and Fire Games in 2013.

(AQW 8276/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Although no final decisions have been made in regard to the location of any sporting venue for the Games an advertisement was placed in the Belfast Telegraph by Sport Northern Ireland on behalf of the Stakeholder Group on Friday 2nd July 2010 seeking expressions of interest for venue owners wishing to host sporting events.

The selection criteria being used includes that priority will be given to venues that are nearest geographically to the Games Village. However, in exceptional circumstances where there is no suitable venue within Belfast for a particular sport or there is an exceptional venue outside Belfast, other venues will be considered.

The Games Village will be located in close proximity to Belfast City Centre.

Ulster American Folk Park: Modernisation Programme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 7642/10, to provide a summary of the reform and modernisation programme at the Ulster American Folk Park, including the amount spent on the programme to date and how it was spent.

(AQW 8291/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: National Museums' Reform and Modernization programme identifies fourteen separate projects across all locations. Their underlying aim is either to reduce current expenditure or to increase self-generated income. The projects are brigaded under four headings:

- Controlling The Pay Bill
- Maximising Capital
- Modernising the Organisation
- Increasing Self-Generated Income

A major element of this programme related to the negotiation of new terms and conditions of employment for staff. This included the introduction of new rota arrangements, revised opening hours and the removal of premium payments for staff who worked regular weekends.

The elements relating specifically to the Ulster American Folk Park are the introduction of new terms and conditions of employment, new rota systems and cessation of premium payments. These affected 72 staff at this location and cost £113,317.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration and; (b) £1 million entered into by his Department in each of the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts; (iii) whether there were break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8341/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In response to this question, those contracts in excess of 12 months duration and £1 million in value entered into the last 10 years, have been detailed below:

1 Titanic Quarter Limited

Description: Design and build of new PRONI headquarters

Overruns in project: none

Break clauses built into contract: Yes

Any break clauses exercised: No

2 Mott McDonald/HOK Sport Partnership

Description: Design of Multi Sports Stadium

Overruns in project: None

Break clauses built into contract: No

Any break clauses exercised: N/a

Records do not date back 10 years in all cases therefore the results of this question are limited to the availability of historical records.

I hope you find this information useful

AstroTurf

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many (i) water-based astro turf; (ii) sand-dressed astro turf; and (iii) sand-based astro turf pitches there are; and how many of each are available to the general public.

(AQW 8346/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. SNI has advised that the number of astro turf pitches in Northern Ireland is as follows:

■ Water-based	5
■ Sand dressed	47
■ Sand-based	11

In addition to these, there are a further 19 '3rd Generation' pitches in Northern Ireland. All of the above pitches are available for public use.

Tennis, Badminton and Squash Courts Available for use by the General Public

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many (i) tennis courts; (ii) badminton courts; and (iii) squash courts are currently available for use by the general public.

(AQW 8347/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. SNI has advised that there are 256 tennis courts, 340 badminton courts and 112 squash courts available for use by the general public in Northern Ireland.

International Matches in Northern Ireland

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions he has had with sporting bodies which organize on an 'all-Ireland' basis about staging international matches in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8349/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The staging of international matches in Northern Ireland, including those for sports organised on an 'all-Ireland' basis, is a matter, in the first instance, for the governing bodies of the sports concerned. However, under my recently published sports strategy, entitled 'Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019', Government has made a commitment to establish Northern Ireland as a world class venue for sporting events. In order to help deliver on this commitment, Sport Matters contains a number of targets and actions that are designed to bring sports facilities generally in Northern Ireland up to modern, international standards. These targets and actions are also intended to ensure that sports facilities in Northern Ireland as whole are better able to serve, in the future, as venues for international sports events and matches.

Sporting bodies in Northern Ireland, including those organised on an 'all-Ireland' basis, were extensively consulted on the development of Sport Matters. Furthermore, the commitments, targets and actions that relate to the staging of sports events and matches are now being implemented with the support and assistance, where necessary, of sporting bodies including those organised on an 'all-Ireland' basis.

2010 British Transplant Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what financial assistance his Department has provided to Northern Ireland participants in the 2010 British Transplant Games.

(AQW 8384/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. SNI advises that it received no applications for financial assistance for participants in the 2010 British Transplant Games.

British Transplant Games in 2010

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has planned any local events to coincide with the 2010 British Transplant Games.

(AQW 8387/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for planning local events to coincide with the 2010 British Transplant Games rests, in the first instance, with the organisers of the Games, Transplant Sport UK and local councils.

British Transplant Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will be promoting the British Transplant Games to transplant patients and in sports clubs and leisure centres to raise awareness of the event.

(AQW 8389/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for promoting the British Transplant Games to transplant patients rests, in the first instance, with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Responsibility for the promotion of the event in sports clubs and leisure centres rests with the owners of sports clubs and district councils. I would, however, add my own personal support for this important sporting event which I am aware will be held in Belfast in 2011.

British Transplant Games in 2011

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans are in place to maximise the benefits of hosting the British Transplant Games in Belfast in 2011.

(AQW 8390/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Belfast City Council is taking the lead in the organisation of the 2011 British Transplant Games in Belfast. Responsibility for maximising the benefits of hosting this event therefore rests with Belfast City Council.

Sport NI: Review of Funding Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 6319/10, how long the review of the equity clause in the terms and conditions of Sport Northern Ireland's funding programme has been ongoing and when it will conclude; and to outline the issues highlighted by the review to date on which his Department is seeking advice and clarification.

(AQW 8414/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The review of the equity clause in the terms and conditions set by Sport Northern Ireland has raised a number of complex and sensitive matters which are still under careful consideration and subject to further legal advice and discussion between my Department and SNI. It would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment further until the review has been completed.

Department of Education

Summer Scheme for Special Educational Needs Pupils

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to outline the rationale for the decision to reduce the summer scheme for special educational needs pupils in the South Eastern Education and Library Board from two weeks to one week; and the projected savings of this decision.

(AQW 7867/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Chuir Príomhfheidhmeannach ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt in iúl dom nach mór don Bhord, i dteannta le cuid mhór eagraíochtaí poiblí eile, coigiltí suntasacha a dhéanamh sa bhliain airgeadais 2010/11. Chun é seo a dhéanamh, chíos an Bord gach líne buiséid d'fhonn coigiltí, le híostionchar ar sheirbhísí reachtúla, a chur i bhfeidhm. Cé go bhfuil an Scéim Shamhraidh neamhreachtúil, leithdháil an Bord acmhainní dóthanacha air chun é a chumasú do dhul ar aghaidh do thréimhse laghdaithe. Sroichfidh an tiomantas seo chuig soláthar an iompair, mar a shroich sé sna blianta roimhe seo.

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board that the Board, in conjunction with many other public bodies, has to make significant savings in the financial year 2010/11. In doing so the Board examined every budget line with a view to effecting savings with the minimum impact on statutory services. While the Summer Scheme is non-statutory, the Board nonetheless has allocated sufficient resources to enable it to continue albeit for a reduced period. This commitment extends to the provision of transport as in previous years.

By running the summer scheme for one rather than two weeks savings of approximately £80,000 will be effected.

Admissions Intake for Year 8 Pupils

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education when the cap on the admissions intake for Year 8 pupils for each post-primary school in North Down was last reviewed.

(AQW 7879/10)

Minister of Education: Athbhreithníonn mo Roinn líon na n-iontrálacha de gach iarbhunscoil ar bhonn bliantúil.

The Department reviews the admissions number of every post primary school on an annual basis.

Summer School Provision at Sperrinview Special School

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Education if she is aware of the Southern Education and Library Board's plans to reduce the summer school provision at Sperrinview Special School from two weeks to one week and to withdraw transport; and for her assessment of these plans.

(AQW 7883/10)

Minister of Education: Tuigim ó Phríomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt go mbeidh an Bord ag soláthar a scéime samhraidh do dhaltá a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu ar feadh dhá sheachtain agus go soláthrófar iompar.

I understand from the Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board that the Board will now operate its summer scheme for special educational needs pupils for two weeks with transport provided.

I welcome this decision.

Fire Alarm System at Coleraine Academical Institution

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Education what consideration and priority she has given, under the current budget, to schemes already approved by her Department and tendered for in the 2009/10 financial year, such as the replacement of the fire alarm system at Coleraine Academical Institution. (AQW 7983/10)

Minister of Education: Tá laghdú suntasach ar bhuiséad caipitil na Roinne Oideachais don bhliain airgeadais 2010-11 agus tá sé ró-íseal le freastal ar na héilimh ar fad a chuirtear air. Bhí sé riachtanach mar sin de, gur cinntíodh gur tugadh tosaíocht do thionscadail mhionoibreacha a tugadh ar aghaidh don bhliain airgeadais 2010/11.

The Department of Education has a significantly reduced capital budget for 2010-11 and it is insufficient to cover all the demands placed on it. It has therefore been necessary to ensure that minor works projects brought forward in 2010/11 are prioritised. I have agreed that only those minor works necessary to meet inescapable statutory requirements such as Health and Safety, Fire Protection and statutory obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act are progressed at this time.

Schemes from 2009/10 which did not have tenders approved will be considered for funding this year if they fall into the aforementioned categories. The replacement fire alarm system for Coleraine Academical Institution will be considered alongside other competing priorities for funding in the 2010/11 financial year.

School Maintenance

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to address the current maintenance problems which exist in some schools, if new capital build projects for these schools do not go ahead. (AQW 8005/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé ar AQW 7399/10 a chuir Doimínic Ó Brolcháin agus a foilsíodh sa tuairisc oifigiúil ar 25 Meitheamh 2010.

I refer the member to my answer to AQW 7399/10 tabled by Dominic Bradley and published in the official report of 25 June 2010.

Childhood Obesity

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Education to detail any schemes which her Department has in place under the current curriculum to combat childhood obesity. (AQW 8009/10)

Minister of Education: Cuimsíonn an curaclam athbhreithnithe snáithe ar Fhorbairt Phearsanta agus Comhthuiscint do dhaltai bunscoile agus snáithe ar Fhoghlaim don Saol agus don Obair do dhaltai iarbunscoile a ligeann do dhaltai fiosrú a dhéanamh ar cheisteanna mar na tairbhí a bhaineann le bia sláintiúil agus gníomhaíocht choirp, na hiarmhairtí a bhaineann le drochroghanna cothaithe, bealaí le teacht ar aiste chothrom bia, na tionchair ar shláinte coirp agus intinne agus bealaí le féinmheas a chothú.

The revised curriculum includes a Personal Development and Mutual Understanding strand for primary pupils and a Learning for Life and Work strand for post-primary pupils which allow pupils to explore issues such as the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity, the consequences of poor dietary choices, ways of achieving a healthy diet, the influences on their physical and emotional health and ways of developing their self-esteem.

It is also a requirement of the revised curriculum for all children to undertake Home Economics at Key Stage 3. This will provide opportunities for young people to develop their understanding of a healthy diet and the hygienic and healthy use of foods in the preparation of meals.

Physical Education is a compulsory part of the revised curriculum for all pupils in Years 1 – 12 and the Department's guidance recommends at least 2 hours per week. Recognising the importance of developing children's physical literacy skills, I introduced a sports programme in 2007 to encourage children to have a healthy and active lifestyle. In 2010/11, £1.5 million is available for the Programme which is delivered by the GAA and IFA on behalf of the Department. There are currently 62 coaches working in 600 schools across the north of Ireland.

My Department recognises that a healthy, balanced diet is vital for children's growth and development, and for their long term health and well being. It has been working for some time to improve the quality of food in schools here and compulsory nutritional standards for school lunches are now in place in all our schools. Standards for other food and drinks provided in schools (breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines etc) have also been drawn up and schools are expected to adhere to them. They specify that items such as crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks should not be provided in school.

It has also been working with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to draw up a Food in Schools policy document which draws together the range of strategies and plans that are being put in place to deliver improved nutrition for our school children.

The policy aims to ensure that school food is representative of the five food groups; makes a significant contribution to childhood nutrition and enables children to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to make healthy food choices both at school and at home. The draft policy was the subject of public consultation last autumn and the Department is currently considering the responses received.

Finally, my Department is participating fully in the DHSSPS led Obesity Prevention Steering Group and advisory groups.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what steps she is taking to review the use of consultants in her Department.

(AQW 8010/10)

Minister of Education: As with all public expenditure, the decision on whether to employ external consultants within my Department is based on a full assessment of the business needs, including ensuring value for money. Business areas are required to explore all options to have work undertaken and only when it is confirmed that there is no alternative, may they submit a Business Case to the Finance Director for approval. In this way, the use of consultants is under constant review in the Department.

Eisíodh Treoir ar Úsáid Sainchomhairleoirí ar fud na Roinne ar cheithre ócáid ó mhí Márta 2009 taobh istigh de DE agus chuig comhlachtaí atá á maoiniú ag DE lena chinntiú go bhfuil gach ball foirne feasach ar na nósanna imeachta a chaithfear a úsáid agus iad ag oibriú le sainchomhairleoirí, lena n-áirítear próiseas an cháis ghnó.

Guidance on the Use of Consultants has issued across the Department on four separate occasions since March 2009 within DE and also to DE funded bodies to ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures, including the business case process, that must be used when engaging consultants.

Additionally, work has been undertaken within the Department to establish a comprehensive database of the Department's expenditure on the use of consultants. This will provide an oversight of projects undertaken which staff may consult as appropriate.

Consultancy expenditure in my Department fell by almost 21% between 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Consultancy Fees

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on consultancy fees in each of the last ten years, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 8017/10)

Minister of Education: Ní dhéantar taifead den mhéid a chaitheann an Roinn ar shainchomhairleoirí bunaithe ar limistéar an Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ach déantar taifead de bunaithe ar nádúr an chaiteachais shainchomhairliúcháin de réir na treorach ábhartha.

Expenditure by the Department on consultants is not recorded on an Education and Library Board area basis but rather is recorded on the basis of the nature of the consultancy expenditure in line with relevant guidance. The Department does not hold details of expenditure on consultancy prior to 2001-02. Details of expenditure by the Department on consultancy from 2001-02 to 2008-09 are provided in the table below. Figures for 2009-10 are currently being finalised and thus are not yet available.

Year	£
2001-02	140,869.00
2002-03	217,359.53
2003-04	510,432.00
2004-05	765,799.21
2005-06	532,244.15
2006-07	905,600.57
2007-08	1,067,704.53
2008-09	850,883.94

Priority Status for Newbuild Schools

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to outline the decision making process used to determine which schools are to receive priority status for a new build, including any consultation which takes place with other Departments.

(AQW 8018/10)

Minister of Education: Following the outcome of my review of school capital projects on the Investment Delivery Plan, announced in my statement to the Assembly on 29 June 2010, the process of determining the relative prioritisation of projects within the categories is underway. Decisions on the school building programme are a matter for the Department of Education working with our education partners.

Déanfar an obair le tosaíocht a bheartú laistigh de shrianta an bhuiséid a leithdháil an Coiste Feidhmiúcháin orm. Tá an ráta ag ar féidir liom scoileanna a thógáil ag brath ar bhuiséad a bheith ar fáil.

The prioritisation exercise will be taken forward within the constraints of the budget allocated to me by the Executive. The rate at which I can build schools is dependent on the availability of budget.

Capital Schemes Planned for Lagan Valley

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education what capital schemes are planned for the school estate in the Lagan Valley constituency, in each of the next three years.

(AQW 8025/10)

Minister of Education: You will be aware that in Autumn 2009 I instigated a review of all major capital projects currently included in the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP). On Tuesday 29 June 2010 I made a statement to the Assembly indicating that this review has now been concluded and I have now written to all those schools affected by the review informing them of the outcome and where appropriate to seek to resolve issues or concerns which may have arisen as a result of the review process.

Ag an am seo, áfach, níl go leor acmhainní caipitil agam le tús a chur le hobair tógála ar aon scoileanna nua sa bhliain airgeadais 2010/11. Chomh maith leis sin, de thairbhe nach bhfuil na buiséid do 2011/12 agus do 2012/13 ar eolas againn go fóill, ní féidir a dhearbhu cad iad na tionscadail a ndéanfar forbairt orthu sna blianta airgeadais sin, má dhéanfar forbairt ar aon tionscadal ar bith.

At this point, however, I do not have sufficient capital resources to start building work on any new schools in the 2010/11 financial year. Also as budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are not yet known it is not possible to determine which projects, if any, will be taken forward in those financial years.

Capital Build Projects

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education which school capital build projects are due to proceed to design stage in (i) the remainder of 2010; and (ii) 2011.

(AQW 8030/10)

Minister of Education: On Tuesday 29 June 2010 I made a statement to the Assembly indicating that the review of capital projects currently included in the Investment Delivery Plan has now been concluded.

Mar gheall ar na hacmhainní teoranta airgeadais atá ar fáil do mo Roinn, tabharfar tosaíocht do na tionscadail sin atá ar an Phlean Soláthair Infheistíochta faoi láthair agus dá bhrí sin níl sé beartaithe ag an am seo dul ar aghaidh chuig céim an deartha i gcás aon tionscadail nach bhfuil ar an Phlean seo go fóill.

Due to the limited financial resources available to my Department priority will be given to those projects currently in the Investment Delivery Plan and as such at this time there are no plans to proceed to design stage for any project not yet included in this Plan.

Staff Salaries in Excess of £100,000

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education how many staff in her Department, and associated quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8045/10)

Minister of Education: De ghnáth, foilsítear an luach saothair a fhaigheann feidhmeannaigh shinsearacha mo Roinne i gCuntais Acmhainní na Roinne, a bhfuil fáil orthu ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne. Bunaithe ar an eolas seo, is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuil 3 bhall foirne faoi láthair a fhaigheann luach saothair de bhreis agus £100,000 sa bhliain.

The remuneration of senior officials in my Department is routinely published in the Departmental Resource Accounts, which are available on the Department's website. Based on this information I can confirm that there are currently 3 staff members who are paid in excess of £100,000 pa.

With regard to the Department's various arms length bodies I have been advised by the Chief Executives of those organisations that there are currently two staff members who are paid in excess of £100,000 pa.

Arts and Crafts Classes

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what help or advice is available to individuals who want to set up arts and crafts classes for school aged children.

(AQW 8120/10)

Minister of Education: Ní thugann an Roinn Oideachais cuidiú ná comhairle den chineál seo, agus ní fhaomhann ná ní mholann an Roinn na hacmhainní ná na cláir a úsáidtear leis an churaclam a sholáthar.

The Department of Education does not offer such help or advice, and it does not endorse or recommend the resources or programmes to be used in the delivery of the curriculum. Individual schools determine what support they will use to deliver the curriculum, and in doing so they may wish

to engage the services of persons offering arts and crafts classes. Those who wish to offer their services will find a list of schools on the Schools + database which is available on the front page of the Department's website.

Bullying in Schools

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education what steps she is taking to address bullying in schools, particularly given the high number of suicides which are attributed to bullying.

(AQW 8137/10)

Minister of Education: Bullying, in whatever form and for whatever reason, has no place in schools. The Department has taken pro-active steps to tackle bullying through development and publication of guidance. Furthermore, the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, which came into operation on 1 April 2003, places a duty on all grant-aided schools to have an anti-bullying policy which includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. The effectiveness of these measures is monitored through the regular cycle of school inspections of pastoral care arrangements.

Chuir na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Grúpa Idir-Bhord ar bun, atá ag forbairt cur chuige comhchoiteann le dul i ngleic le bulaíocht sna scoileanna. Tá oifigeach ainmnithe ag gach Bord a oibríonn le scoileanna le dul i ngleic le bulaíocht trína bheith ag cuidiú le forbairt polasaithe na scoile uile agus trí thacaíocht a thabhairt do dhaltai aonair ar íospartaigh bulaíochta iad.

The Education and Library Boards have established an Inter-Board Group, which is developing a common approach to tackle bullying in schools. Each Board has a designated officer who works with schools to tackle bullying through assisting in the development of whole school policies and supporting individual pupils who have been victims of bullying.

In 2005, the Department, in partnership with voluntary organisations, including Save the Children, established an Anti-bullying Forum (NIABF) to enable a collaborative and coordinated approach to tackling bullying in schools. The Forum enables members to share models of best practice, disseminate information, to develop and coordinate joint initiatives and to ensure that schools and organisations working with children and young people are able to develop appropriate strategies to prevent and deal with bullying behaviours. The Forum has also established formal links with similar bodies in the South, England, Wales and Scotland.

From early 2006, the Department has been funding a regional coordinator post attached to the NIABF. The coordinator is involved delivering the 3-year Anti-Bullying Strategy which includes the development, implementation and promotion of models of good practice, developing parental partnerships, website development and an annual anti-bullying week.

In June 2007, the Department published a research report on "The Nature and Extent of Bullying in Schools in the North of Ireland". The findings show little change in the level of bullying behaviour reported by pupils compared to an earlier study completed in 2002.

The Department assists with funding Childline NI to provide telephone help to pupils and young people who are experiencing difficulties, some as a result of bullying.

The independent schools' counselling service is now available in all grant aided post-primary schools allowing pupils to speak to a trained counsellor about their concerns or fears around bullying.

Preschool Places

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education what additional provision will be made to fund pre-school places in the North Down constituency in 2010/11.

(AQW 8144/10)

Minister of Education: On 20 May I announced that I was committing up to a further £1.3m of funding to address the shortfall in pre-school places in the 2010/11 school year.

This money will fund extra places in the voluntary/private sector and has already been allocated to each of the Education and Library Boards, based on the number of unplaced children in their respective areas.

I am advised by the SEELB that, having liaised with pre-school providers, to date, an additional 18 places have been allocated to settings in the North Down constituency.

Is próiseas leanúnach é an próiseas leithdháilte agus ba chóir go gcinnteoidh sé go bhfaighidh gach páiste áit mhaoinithe réamhscoile, más féidir.

This process of allocation is on-going and should ensure that, where possible, every child receives a funded pre-school place.

Appointment of a Departmental Representative to the Board of a Voluntary Grammar School

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the criteria used by her Department when considering approval for the appointment of a nominee representative from the Department of Education to the board of a voluntary grammar school in the last round of appointments.

(AQW 8181/10)

Minister of Education: Tá na nithe seo a leanas san áireamh sna critéir atá á n-úsáid ag an Roinn agus breithniú á dhéanamh ar cheapacháin chuig Boird Gobharnóirí scoileanna deonacha gramadaí:-

The criteria applied by the Department when considering applications for appointments to the Boards of Governors of voluntary grammar schools include the following:-

- As required under the legislation, consideration of the outcome of consultation with the school's Board of Governors and the Education and Library Board for the area in which the school is situated.
- The skills and experiences of applicants that would be relevant to the work of the Board of Governors.
- Whether applicants already are serving on Boards of Governors. Three posts is normally the maximum unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The period already served as a governor. Applicants who had already served for two terms (eight years) are not considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Applicants who are serving teachers in another school are not considered on the basis of a potential conflict of interest.
- The conclusions of vetting of all new applicants.
- In addition, applicants should not be:-
 - employed by or in the school;
 - convicted within the previous five years or any time thereafter of any offence with a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine;
 - adjudged bankrupt or under a composition or arrangement with his or her creditors or subject to a bankruptcy Restrictions Order; or
 - hold any financial interest in the supply of goods or services to the school.

Appointment of a Departmental Representative to the Board of a Voluntary Grammar School

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education (i) if there has been any change, since May 2007, in the policy, practice or procedure used by her Department when considering approval for the appointment of a nominee representative from the Department of Education to the board of a voluntary

grammar school; (ii) to outline the reason for any change; (iii) when each change occurred; and (iv) who requested change.

(AQW 8183/10)

Minister of Education: Sular athbhunaíodh déabhlóid i mí Bealtaine 2007, tugadh freagracht as faomhadh ceapachán gobharnóirí chuig scoileanna deonacha gramadaí d'oifigigh shinsearach sa Roinn.

Prior to the restoration of devolution in May 2007, responsibility for approving governor appointments for voluntary grammar schools was delegated to senior departmental officials. Since then I have assumed the responsibility for the approval role given to me as Head of Department under Schedule 6 to the Education & Libraries (NI) Order 1986, as amended by the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993. The introduction of vetting arrangements for new school governors represents a change in procedures for appointments to voluntary grammar school Boards of Governors from 30 April 2007 onwards.

Appointment of a Departmental Representative to the Board of a Voluntary Grammar School

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what is the target, in days, from receipt of initial application to notification of departmental approval, for the appointment of a nominee representative from the Department of Education to the board of a voluntary grammar school in the current round of appointments.

(AQW 8184/10)

Minister of Education: Ní leagtar sprioc le haghaidh na tréimhse idir iarratas agus ceapachán. Cuireadh tús leis an chleachtas reatha anuraidh agus rinneadh earcaíocht trí fhógraíocht phoiblí.

No target is set for the period between application and appointment. The current exercise was initiated last year with recruitment through public advertising. Applications were received from May 2009 through to the autumn for posts in a range of grant-aided schools with applicants expressing their preferences as to the types and sectors of school that they wish to serve in. In the autumn, the Boards of Governors of voluntary grammar schools also had the opportunity to submit their own additional applications. Appointments to individual schools are then considered on the basis of all the applications received. The period can therefore vary quite considerably depending on the timing of the application, the preferences in the applications, the governor positions available at the schools, and the number of appointments to be made.

Appointment of a Departmental Representative to the Board of a Voluntary Grammar School

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the average number of days from receipt of initial application to notification of departmental approval, for the appointment of a nominee representative from the Department of Education to the board of a voluntary grammar school in the last two rounds of appointments.

(AQW 8185/10)

Minister of Education: Bhí meánlíon de 56 lá ann do na laethanta oibre ó fuarthas iarratas tosaigh go dtí gur fógraíodh faomhadh na Roinne do cheapachán gobharnóirí nua chuig scoileanna deonacha gramadaí le linn an athbhunaithe sa scoilbhliain 2005/6.

The average number of working days from receipt of initial application to notification of departmental approval for the appointment of new governors to voluntary grammar schools during the reconstitution in the 2005/6 school year was 56 days. The current reconstitution exercise is continuing with the majority of appointment still to be made so it is not possible as yet to provide an average. Since the last reconstitution exercise vetting arrangements have been introduced for new governors which has added a stage in the process.

Members of the Transitional Education Boards

Mr J Bell asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of the religious background of the current members of the Transitional Education Boards; and how this compares with the breakdown of the Education and Library Board's membership.

(AQW 8196/10)

Minister of Education: Ní ceadmhach dom an t-eolas a d'iarr tú a thabhairt amach. Mar gheall ar líon na gcomhaltaí ar na Boird, bheadh nochtadh an eolais a d'iarr tú, gan údarú scríofa a fháil ó na comhaltaí aonair, ina shárú ar an Data Protection Act 1998. Meastar eolas ar chreideamh duine mar 'shonraí íogaire pearsanta'.

I am unable to provide the requested information. Given the numbers of members on the Boards, disclosure of the requested information without individual members' written authorisation, would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. Information regarding an individual's religious belief is regarded as 'sensitive personal data'.

Commissioners: South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education to detail the cost to her Department of the four commissioners in the South Eastern Education and Library Board in each financial year since their appointment, broken down by (i) allowances; (ii) transport, including mode of transport; and (iii) any other expenses.

(AQW 8197/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt an t-eolas atá sa tábla thíos ar fáil do na blianta airgeadais 2006/07 go 2009/10. Níl fáil ar na costais do mhí Aibreáin, do mhí Bealtaine ná do mhí Meithimh 2010 sa bhliain airgeadais seo go fóill.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board has provided the information in the table overleaf for the financial years 2006/07 to 2009/10 inclusive. Costs for April, May and June 2010 in the current financial year are not yet available.

COSTS OF THE SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD COMMISSIONERS BY FINANCIAL YEAR

Item of Expenditure	2006/07 (£)	2007/08 (£)	2008/09 (£)	2009/10 (£)
Allowances (gross including Employers' National Insurance Contributions)	75,746	98,441	72,852	75,860
Transport - flights	1,607	2,016	1,521	1,968
taxi	188	399	291	447
ferry	0	1,110	0	0
car / mileage	2,652	4,660	3,097	3,579
bus	0	6	0	0
train	0	4	0	0
Other expenses (e.g. daily subsistence, accommodation and car parking)	1,279	2,001	1,711	1,863
Totals	81,472	108,637	79,472	83,717

Notes: -

1. 2006/07 costs reflect the Commissioners' appointment date of 6 July 2006.
2. All figures exclude VAT.

I CAN Centre at Ballynahinch Primary School

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to keep the I CAN Centre at Ballynahinch Primary School open.

(AQW 8199/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé ar a cheist phráinneach béil ar an I CAN Centre a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 28 Meitheamh 2010.

I would refer the Member to my reply to his urgent oral question on the I CAN Centre published in the Official Report on 28 June 2010.

School Maintenance Backlog

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education to detail the maintenance backlog for each school in the Lagan Valley constituency, broken down by type of maintenance required and estimated cost.

(AQW 8200/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé ar AQW 7399/10 a chuir Doimínic Ó Brocháin agus a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 25ú Meitheamh 2010.

I refer the member to my answer to AQW 7399/10 tabled by Dominic Bradley and published in the Official Report of 25th June 2010.

Bangor Grammar School

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education, in light of the categorisation of schools announced as part of the review of capital projects (i) under which category is Bangor Grammar School; and (ii) for an update on the proposed new build for Bangor Grammar School.

(AQW 8206/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010.

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Cost of reception held for School Principals in Newry on 21 June 2010.

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education to provide a breakdown of the cost of the reception held for school principals in Newry on 21 June 2010.

(AQW 8207/10)

Minister of Education: Reáchtáladh fáiltiú ar 21 Meitheamh 2010 le haitheantas a thabhairt agus le ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar rathúlacht na scoileanna agus na soláthraithe réamhscoile a mheas an Chigireacht Oideachais agus Oiliúna a bheith sármhaith nó iontach maith sa scoilbhliain 2009/10. Tugadh cuireadh do chathaoirligh bhoird gobharnóirí agus do phríomhoidí na scoileanna seo, do na ceannairí réamhscoile agus d'ionadaithe ó na forais tacaíochta oideachais agus ón Chigireacht Oideachais agus Oiliúna agus bhí 104 duine i láthair ag an fháiltiú.

The reception on 21 June 2010 was held to recognise and celebrate the success of those schools and pre-school providers evaluated as outstanding or very good by the Education & Training Inspectorate during the 2009/10 school year. The reception was attended by 104 people, who included the respective chairs of boards of governors, school principals and pre-school leaders, along with representatives of the education support bodies and the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The reception was held at a local community centre, namely Ballybot House, Newry, to support local enterprise in these difficult economic times. While the Department has yet to receive the final invoice for the reception, a breakdown of the estimated cost, excluding VAT, is detailed in the table below.

Item	Cost
Room Hire (Ballybot House, Newry)	£47.50
Food (provided by outside caterers)	£501.50
Tea and Coffee (provided in-house)	£82.50
Cost (excl. VAT)	£631.50

As a key aim was to recognise and pay tribute to the success of these schools and pre-school providers, the Department also employed professional photographic services at a cost of £736.00 excluding VAT. These costs are in line with a photography contract that all departments use. Photographs of participants in the event were sent to local newspapers across the north of Ireland and to date these have appeared around 30 times. This positive publicity helps to highlight the good work in many of our schools and other educational settings and counters the negative approach taken by some media.

Appointment of a Departmental Representative to the Board of a Voluntary Grammar School

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what criteria her Department will apply in approving the appointment of a departmental representative to the board of a voluntary grammar school in the current round of appointments.

(AQW 8210/10)

Minister of Education: Tá na nithe seo a leanas san áireamh sna critéir atá á n-úsáid ag an Roinn agus breithniú á dhéanamh ar cheapacháin chuig Boird Gobharnóirí scoileanna deonacha gramadaí sa bhabhta reatha ceapachán seo:-

The criteria being applied by the Department when considering applications for appointments to the Boards of Governors of voluntary grammar schools in the current round of appointments include the following:-

- As required under the legislation, the consideration of outcome of consultation with the school's Board of Governors and the Education and Library Board for the area in which the school is situated.
- The skills and experiences of applicants that are relevant to the work of the Board of Governors.
- Whether applicants already are serving on Boards of Governors. Three posts is normally the maximum unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The period already served as a governor. Applicants who have already served for two terms (eight years) are not considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Applicants who are serving teachers in another school are not considered on the basis of a potential conflict of interest.
- The conclusions of vetting all new applicants.

In addition, applicants should not be:-

- employed by or in the school;
- convicted within the previous five years or any time thereafter of any offence with a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine;
- adjudged bankrupt or under a composition or arrangement with his or her creditors or subject to a bankruptcy Restrictions Order; or
- hold any financial interest in the supply of goods or services to the school.

Southern Education and Library Board Staff Bonuses

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education to provide a breakdown of the bonuses paid to staff in the Southern Education and Library Board, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8212/10)

Minister of Education: Thug Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt le fios dom gur íocadh na bó nais seo a leanas don bhliain 2007/08 agus don bhliain 2008/09:

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board that the following bonuses have been paid in 2007/08 and 2008/09:

Financial Year	2007/08	2008/09
Bonus Paid	£21,055	£20,511

With regard to 2009/10 financial year, the pay remits are still being considered by my Department in light of public sector pay policy.

Southern Education and Library Board Staff Bonuses

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education whether staff in the Southern Education and Library Board will receive a bonus in this financial year; and to provide a breakdown of these bonuses.

(AQW 8213/10)

Minister of Education: Tá gné pá i gcoibhneas le feidhmíocht mar chuid de thuarastail ardbhainistíochta sna Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

The salaries of senior management in the Education and Library Boards have an element of performance related pay.

With regard to 2009/10 financial year, the pay remit for senior management in all of the Education and Library Boards is still being considered in light of public sector pay policy and the Executive decision that senior public officials here should not be awarded bonuses unless there is a clear contractual position to do so. I am however committed to concluding this process as expeditiously as possible.

Capital Projects in Upper Bann

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to list the schools in the Upper Bann area affected by her decision to cut the funding of capital projects.

(AQW 8214/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing

severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Review of Capital Projects in East Londonderry

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, to detail (i) the schools in the East Londonderry constituency which have met the criteria; and (ii) the nature of these projects and the expected start date.

(AQW 8224/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010.

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Review of Capital Projects in Mid Ulster

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, to detail (i) the schools in the Mid-Ulster constituency which have met the criteria; and (ii) the nature of these projects and the expected start date.

(AQW 8230/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Review of Capital Projects in South Down

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, to detail (i) the proposed new build (a) primary; and (b) post-primary schools in the South Down constituency for this financial year; and (ii) if she will make a statement.

(AQW 8232/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Review of Capital Projects: Lagan College

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her recent statement on the review of capital projects, if Lagan College in Belfast is one of the 13 building projects that may face delay.

(AQW 8233/10)

Minister of Education: Tá athfheistiú agus síneadh Lagan College mar chuid de thionscadal a chuimsíonn scoil nua do Tor Bank Special School. Táthar ag dúil leis faoi láthair go mbainfear amach an sprioc leis an tionscadal seo a chur i gcrích roimh fhómhair 2012. Níl an tionscadal seo san áireamh sna tionscadail caipitil ar tagraíodh dóibh sa cheist.

The refurbishment and extension of Lagan College is part of a project involving the replacement of Tor Bank Special School. This project is currently on target to deliver by autumn 2012. This project is not included within the capital projects referred to in your question.

School Inspections

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools have shown an improvement in terms of their last inspection; and how many have shown a decline.

(AQW 8237/10)

Minister of Education: Sna blianta gnó 2008/09 agus 2009/10, ní raibh titim san fheidhmíocht i gceann ar bith de na bunscoileanna ná de na hiarbhunscoileanna a ndearnadh cigireacht orthu (arbh éigean cigireacht leantach a dhéanamh orthu); bhí feabhas ar 75 de na 86 scoileanna a ndearnadh athchigireacht orthu (87%) (86% de bhunscoileanna agus 91.5% d'iarbhunscoileanna).

For the 2008/09 and 2009/10 business years, none of the primary or post-primary schools inspected (and requiring a follow up inspection) showed a decline in performance; 75 of the 86 schools re-inspected (87%) showed improvement (86% of primary schools and 91.5% of post-primary schools).

2008/09

35 primary schools had a formal follow-up inspection: 32 improved by either one or two performance levels; and three maintained their level of performance. Eighteen post-primary schools had a formal follow-up inspection: 16 improved by either 1 or 2 performance levels, and 2 maintained their level of performance.

2009/10

30 primary schools had a formal follow-up inspection: 24 improved by either 1 or 2 levels of performance, six maintained their level of performance. Three post-primary schools had a formal follow-up inspection; all 3 improved by either 1 or 2 levels of performance.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education if newly qualified teachers are given training on leadership.

(AQW 8238/10)

Minister of Education: Déanann múinteoirí nua-cháilithe oiliúint thiomnaithe agus cláir thiomnaithe tacaíochta Ionduchtúcháin agus sa Luathfhorbairt Ghairmiúil a sholáthraíonn an tSeirbhís Chomhairleach don Churaclam de chuid na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) undertake dedicated Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD) training and support programmes provided by the Education and Library Boards' Curriculum Advisory Support Service. These stages of professional development focus on learning and teaching issues relevant to teachers new to the profession and are aimed at strengthening the competences of teachers in line with those set out in the General Teaching Council's competence framework. Whilst no specific leadership training is included in the Induction and EPD programmes, professional development programmes in general promote leadership at all staff levels and individual schools can

arrange for their teachers (including their NQTs) to avail of the programmes of leadership training provided by the Regional Training Unit.

Saintfield High School: New Sports Hall and Playing Fields

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the development of a new sports hall and playing fields for Saintfield High School.

(AQW 8240/10)

Minister of Education: The rate at which my Department can progress new schemes, such as a new sports hall and playing fields for Saintfield High School, is dependent on the resources made available to it.

Tá an staid airgeadais iontach dúshlánach i mbliana agus tá srianta móra ar bhuiséad caipitil na Roinne. Ag an am seo, níl go leor cistí agam leis an scéim caipitil seo agus le cuid mhór scéimeanna eile a thabhairt chun cinn.

The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. At this time I do not have sufficient funds to progress this and many other capital schemes. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Draft Resource Allocation Proposals

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education when she will approve the Draft Resource Allocation proposals from the 5 Education and Library Boards which were received by the Department on 18 June 2010 and if the funds will be made available as a matter of urgency.

(AQW 8249/10)

Minister of Education: Commissioning of the Resource Allocation Plans or RAPs for 2010-11 was delayed this year as a result of the delay in the Assembly agreeing the budget for 2010-11. The RAPs submitted by the Boards are currently being scrutinised by the Department and my officials will be engaging with the Boards on their targets and proposed allocations. Before approving the RAPs, I will need to have assurances that the expenditure plans submitted are making the best use of public funds and will allow the Boards to meet their targets, whilst meeting their equality duties.

D'fhonn cur i gcrích an mheasúnaithe seo a cheadú, bhí sé riachtanach leithdháiltí eatramhacha a sholáthar le gurbh fhéidir caiteachas a thabhtú go deireadh mhí Iúil.

In order to allow for this assessment to be completed, it has been necessary to provide interim allocations to allow expenditure to be incurred until the end of July.

Convergence Delivery Plan

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education how many management and administrative posts will be removed in the 2010/11 financial year as a result of the Convergence Delivery Plan; and the location of these posts.

(AQW 8251/10)

Minister of Education: Tá moltaí á bhforbairt ar an dóigh le hathstruchtúrá a dhéanamh ar sholáthar seirbhísí oideachais mar chuid den Phlean Soláthair Choinbhéirseachta i gcomhar leis na forais leasmhara oideachais.

Proposals to re-structure the delivery of education services as part of the Convergence Delivery Plan are being developed in conjunction with the education bodies concerned. Proposals to suppress posts will be subject to approval by the current employers and by the Department of Education by means of a business case process in the coming months. Until this process is complete, it is not possible to identify the precise number of posts or the locations of those to be suppressed.

Convergence Delivery Plan

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education how many posts are being removed, as part of the Convergence Delivery Plan, in (i) the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards; (ii) the Youth Council; (iii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; and (iv) the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

(AQW 8252/10)

Minister of Education: Díríonn Céim a hAon den Phlean Soláthair Choinbhéirseachta ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, a sholáthraíonn formhór na seirbhísí agus a thabhaíonn formhór an chaiteachais.

Phase One of the Convergence Delivery Plan concentrates on the Education and Library Boards, from where the majority of services are delivered and the majority of expenditure is incurred. Whilst other education organisations are expected to reduce costs in 2010-11, they will participate more fully in convergence activities in Phase Two. Details of proposed restructuring for these bodies will be developed in conjunction with the organisations concerned in the coming months and will be subject to a business case approval process involving the Department of Education. It is not, therefore, possible at this stage to identify the precise number of posts that will be suppressed in each organisation.

Convergence Delivery Plan

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education how the single Strategic Planning function, outlined in the Convergence Delivery Plan, will be implemented; what are the key areas for action in 2010/11 and who will be responsible for their delivery.

(AQW 8254/10)

Minister of Education: Sainaitníonn an Plean Soláthair Choinbhéirseachta roinnt réimsí inar féidir le coinbhéirseacht éifeachtúlachtaí sa soláthar seirbhíse, comhsheasmhacht sa chur chuige agus torthaí níos fearr a chinntiú.

The Convergence Delivery Plan identifies a range of areas where convergence can bring about efficiencies in service delivery, consistency in approach and better quality outcomes. Strategic Planning for the schools estate is a key area under consideration and plans are currently being developed to identify the best way of progressing this further.

Funding of Youth Club at St Malachy's in South Belfast

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education for an update on the £900,000 funding for the provision of a youth club at St Malachy's in South Belfast; and to outline the timescale for the allocation of this funding.

(AQW 8255/10)

Minister of Education: Beidh an tionscadal seo á chómhaoiniú ag DE agus ag DSD tríd an Belfast Regeneration Office. Tá mo Roinn sásta cistí a chur ar fáil ach ní féidir iad a scaoileadh go dtí go ndeimhneofar go bhfuil an pacáiste cistithe iomlán ann. Bhí oifigigh ó mo Roinn i dteagmháil le Belfast Regeneration Office de chuid DSD maidir lena ndeonachán.

This project is to be jointly funded by DE and by DSD through its Belfast Regeneration Office. My Department is prepared to make funds available but these can only be released when it has been confirmed that the complete funding package is in place. Officials from my Department have been liaising with the DSD Belfast Regeneration Office regarding its financial contribution.

Policy Implementation Group

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education to outline the criteria used to decide when to establish a Policy Implementation Group; and whether and when such a group might be established for integrated education.

(AQW 8256/10)

Minister of Education: The Policy Implementation Groups that are being established at present reflect my policy priorities and are intended to complement the work that is underway to deliver convergence of education services. The work on convergence, and on developing a more coherent approach to delivering school improvement, reflects my priority of Raising Standards in all schools. The first group will consider how to develop strategies that will support delivery of the policy of Every School a Good School. Further consideration of how to take forward work on both the Entitlement Framework and Irish-medium education are in train. Officials are working to develop practical proposals that will assist the implementation of these policies during the forthcoming autumn term.

Níl sé beartaithe faoi láthair Grúpa Forfheidhmithe Beartais a chur ar bun le breithniú a dhéanamh ar oideachas imeasctha.

There are no plans at present to establish a Policy Implementation Group to consider integrated education.

Convergence Delivery Plan

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education to detail the salaries of the four Director Designates as outlined in the Convergence Delivery Plan.

(AQW 8257/10)

Minister of Education: Taispeánadh an scála tuarastail do Stiúrthóirí (Ainmnithe) sa fhreagra a thug mé ar AQW 7272/10 a foilsíodh ar 11 Meitheamh 2010. Ní íoctar duine ar bith de na Stiúrthóirí (Ainmnithe) ar na scálaí tuarastail seo faoi láthair.

The salary scale for Directors (Designate) was shown in my reply to AQW 7272/10 published on 11 June 2010. None of the Directors (Designate) is currently paid on these salary scales. All the Directors (Designate) are being paid by their current organisations at their existing rates of pay. In the case of four of the six Directors (Designate), their organisations are being reimbursed pro rata in respect of work which they are carrying out in planning the convergence work in preparation for the creation of the Education and Skills Authority.

Extended Schools Programme at Millington Primary School, Portadown

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Education whether her Department intends to continue funding for the Extended Schools Programme at Millington Primary School, Portadown.

(AQW 8258/10)

Minister of Education: Ní chomhlíonann Millington Primary School na critéir cháilitheachta le haghaidh lánmhaoinithe do chlár Scoileanna Sínte 2010/11. Seo a leanas na critéir cháilitheachta atá i bhfeidhm do bhunscoileanna ó chlár 2008/09:-

51% de dhaltaí nó níos mó ó Limistéar Athnuachana Comharsanachta (NRA) nó ó 30% de na bardaí/Limistéir Sár-Aschuir is mó atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste; agus/nó

37% de dhaltaí nó níos mó a bhfuil Teidlíocht Saorbhéilí Scoile (FSME) acu

For the 2010/11 Extended Schools (ES) programme Millington Primary School (PS) does not meet the eligibility criteria for full funding. The eligibility criteria which have applied for primary schools since the 2008/09 programme are as follows:-

51% or more of pupils from a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) or 30% most disadvantaged wards/Super Output Areas; and/or

37% or more of pupils with a Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)

Millington PS qualified for the first two years of the Extended School programme (2006/07 and 2007/08) but fell just short of satisfying the eligibility criteria in 2008/09 and therefore entered the 2 year "buffer zone".

The “buffer zone” allows previously eligible schools who fall a few percentage points below the qualifying thresholds to be funded at a reduced amount (50%) of what the school would have received had it remained fully eligible. If full eligibility has not been re-established after 2 years, schools will exit the programme.

For the 2010/11 programme Millington PS has 46% pupil enrolment from disadvantaged areas and 20% FSME. The school has, therefore, been unable to re-establish full eligibility and will now exit the programme.

An exiting allocation of £7,833 has issued to the Southern Education and Library Board in recognition of plans that may have been made for Extended School activities in Millington PS for the period April to June 2010.

Review of Capital Projects

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, (i) to outline the criteria used to assess the capital projects; and (ii) to detail the evaluation of each school in the Mid-Ulster constituency against the criteria.

(AQW 8259/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010, a chuimsíonn eolas ar na critéir a úsáideadh san athbhreithniú.

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010, which includes information on the criteria used in the review.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Resource Allocation Plans

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education when her Department will make a decision on the Resource Allocation Plans submitted by the Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 8261/10)

Minister of Education: Bhí moill ar choimisiúnú na bPleananna Leithdháilte Acmhainní nó RAPanna do 2010-11 i mbliana de bharr moille sa Tionól maidir le comhaontú an bhuiséid do 2010-11.

Commissioning of the Resource Allocation Plans or RAPs for 2010-11 was delayed this year as a result of the delay in the Assembly agreeing the budget for 2010-11. The RAPs submitted by the Boards are currently being scrutinised by the Department and my officials will be engaging with the Boards on their targets and proposed allocations. Before approving the RAPs, I will need to have assurances that the expenditure plans submitted are making the best use of public funds and will allow the Boards to meet their targets, whilst meeting their equality duties.

Staff Employed in Central Administration

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education how many staff are employed in central administration in each Education and Library Board; and, of these, how many are employed in (a) a temporary position; or (b) a temporary promotion position.

(AQW 8266/10)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne dom gur mar seo a leanas líonta na mball foirne atá fostaithe i riarachán lárnach agus as sin na líonta a bhfuil poist shealadacha acu nó a bhfuil arduithe céime sealadacha acu:

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards of the following numbers of staff employed in central administration and of these the numbers in temporary positions and temporary promotions:

Board Area	Staff Employed	Temporary Positions	Temporary Promotion Positions
BELB	421	59	29
NEELB	409	59	77
SELB	243	40	70
SEELB	463	90	122
WELB	306	50	46

St Paul's College, Kilrea

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education how many children living in the Kilrea and Garvagh areas failed to obtain a place at St Paul's College, Kilrea for September 2010; and what action she has taken to meet the needs of these children, including those who live within a few metres of the college and children with special educational needs.

(AQW 8267/10)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt go raibh seoltaí i gCill Ria ag seisear agus go raibh seoltaí i nGarbhachadh ag cúigear de na páistí nár éirigh leo áit a fháil ag Coláiste Naomh Pól, Cill Ria do Mheán Fómhair 2010. Thug siad le fios fosta nár diúltaíodh áit ag Coláiste Naomh Pól do Mheán Fómhair 2010 do pháiste ar bith a raibh ráiteas ar riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SEN) acu.

The North-Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that of the children who failed to obtain a place at St Paul's College, Kilrea for September 2010 six have Kilrea addresses and five have Garvagh addresses. They also advised that no child with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) has been refused a place at St. Paul's College for September 2010.

Children on the SEN register without a statement of special educational needs would be subject to the school's normal enrolment criteria.

There is adequate provision for pupils transferring to post-primary school in the Kilrea and Garvagh areas in September 2010. There are places available in the following schools which serve pupils living in the area and to which transport is available from either Kilrea and/or Garvagh:

School	Places Available
St Joseph's College, Coleraine	45
Our Lady of Lourdes High School, Ballymoney	39
St Mary's, Limavady	44

It is a matter for individual Boards of Governors to determine the admissions criteria to a school and to include, if they so wish, criteria which give priority to children who live close to the school.

Should any parent feel that their child must, for compelling and exceptional reasons, be admitted to a particular school, they can now apply to have their case considered by the new Exceptional Circumstances Body.

The purpose of this Body is to:

- consider parents' claims that their child has exceptional circumstances which mean that he/she must attend a specific post-primary school;
- decide for each application whether exceptional circumstances exist; and
- direct the necessary admission if an application is successful.

Leftover Food in School Canteens

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education whether there is any policy in place regarding left-over food in school canteens at the end of the school year; and if she is aware that a school in the Newtownards area disposed of left-over food at the end of this school year rather than exploring other options, such as distributing the food to a charity.

(AQW 8277/10)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt dom nach bhfuil siad ar an eolas faoi scoil ar bith ina limistéar a dhiúscair bia ar an bhealach sin.

I have been informed by the South-Eastern Education and Library Board that it is not aware of any school in its area disposing of food in the manner referred to.

All Education and Library Boards have policies in place to ensure the catering service effectively manages food resources. Staff are trained to plan menus and cook for the expected number of pupils. As the end of term approaches orders placed and stock held are reviewed to ensure that the closing stock of non-perishable goods is minimal and perishable foods are used up.

It is normal practice for kitchens to retain a minimum level of non-perishable stock (tinned, dried and frozen food) to assist with the start of the beginning of the new school year.

All food purchased, used or stored is in line with current food hygiene legislation.

Review of Capital Projects

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, to outline the current position on new builds for schools in the Holywood area.

(AQW 8283/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh cóip de thoradh an athbhreithnithe ar thionscadail caipitil i Leabharlann an Tionóil ar 5 Iúil 2010

The outcome of the review of capital projects has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

School Transport

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to review the £75 million spending on school transport to ensure value for money and effective use of resources.

(AQW 8305/10)

Minister of Education: Aithníonn an Roinn Oideachais go mbeadh sé riachtanach breithniú a dhéanamh ar an chaiteachas ar fad le húsáid éifeachtach acmhainní a chinntiú.

The Department of Education recognises that the need to ensure effective use of resources will require consideration of all of its expenditure. School transport, provided in line with the existing policy, is kept

under continual review by Education & Library Boards to ensure both value for money and the effective use of resources. Competitive tendering, benchmarking, performance indicators, and the setting of performance targets, are some of the means used to ensure the service is both economic and efficient.

Southern Education and Library Board

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education how much the Southern Education and Library Board spent on (i) legal fees; (ii) tribunals; and (iii) damages and compensation in each of the past two years. (AQW 8311/10)

Minister of Education: Tá eolas sa tábla thíos ar an méid a chaith Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt (i) ar tháillí dlí; (ii) ar bhinsí; agus (iii) ar dhamáistí agus ar chúiteamh i ngach bliain le dhá bhliain anuas.

The amount spent by the Southern Education and Library Board spent on (i) legal fees; (ii) tribunals; and (iii) damages and compensation in each of the past two years is provided in the table below. This includes details of spend for employment related claims as well as public and employer liability claims:

Legal Case - Type	2008-09 £'s	2009-10 £'s
Legal fees ¹	169,919	147,693
Tribunals ²	30,000	10,000
Damages and compensation ³	128,875	175,215
Total	328,794	332,908

Notes:

1. Legal fees above include legal fees for both employee related Tribunal cases and public liability cases.
2. Tribunal costs above relate to payments awarded to employees who have pursued employee related cases through Tribunals
3. Damages and compensation costs above relate to public/employer liability claims.

Post-Primary Review of Catholic Education

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education for an estimate of the costs of the Post-Primary review of Catholic education, including how much her Department has contributed to the review process. (AQW 8323/10)

Minister of Education: Ón bhliain 2005, tá acmhainní leithdháilte ag an Roinn ar Chomhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil, ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, ar an Chomhairle um Oideachas Imeachtha agus ar Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta le tacú le leasú an churaclaim iarbhunscoile, le fócas ar leith ar sholáthar an Chreata Teidlíochta (EF).

Since 2005, the Department has allocated resources to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Education and Library Boards, the Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to support the reform of the post-primary curriculum, with particular focus on the delivery of the Entitlement Framework (EF). The Department approved proposals brought forward by CCMS for the use of this funding to include the Post Primary Review of Catholic Education (PPRCE), recognising that ensuring sustainable post-primary schools is a key factor in the delivery of the EF.

The Department has allocated the following funding to CCMS to support this work:

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
£400k*	£629k*	£535k	£547k	£547k

* £108k was re-allocated from 2005/06 to 2006/07.

The level of allocation for 2010/11 is currently being finalised.

Savings in 2010/11

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what criteria she will use to make savings in 2010/11; and how she intends to apportion savings between administration and school budgets.
(AQW 8324/10)

Minister of Education: As you will be aware the impact of the £6.2 billion reduction in public expenditure announced by the Chancellor of the exchequer on 24 May on the overall Block grant is £128 million in 2010-11. The extent to which this will impact on Departmental budgets in 2010-11 is a matter for consideration by the Executive.

Mar sin de, níl mé ábalta cinneadh a ghlacadh ar chionroinnt ná ar aon cheist eile i ndáil le laghduithe sa bhuiséad go dtí go bhfuil mé feasach ar thoradh bhreithniúcháin an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin.

I am not therefore in a position to take a decision on apportionment or any other issue in relation to budget reductions until I know the outcome of the Executive's deliberations.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education how much funding has been allocated to the Middletown Autism Centre in each year since 2002.
(AQW 8325/10)

Minister of Education: Since its establishment in March 2007, the Middletown Centre for Autism has been allocated the following funding by my Department:

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
£210,282.23	£435,136.37	£641,642.50	£160,000.00 (To end of June 2010)

Tá Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin á chómhaoiniú ar bhonn 50/50 ag an Roinn Oideachais agus ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna sa deisceart.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is funded jointly on a 50/50 basis by the Department of Education and the Department for Education and Skills in the south.

New Nursery Unit: Criteria for Approval

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education (i) to outline the criteria used to approve a new nursery unit; and (ii) to detail the reasons why some development proposals, such as the Irish-medium nursery unit in Coalisland and the unit at St Colman's Primary School, Annaclone have been approved, while nursery units for Oakwood Integrated Primary School and Cranmore Integrated Primary School were turned down.
(AQW 8326/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Pre-school education is provided in both the statutory sector and in the voluntary/ private sector and each is equally valued. My Department's policy is therefore not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. In assessing proposals, consideration is given to the overall provision in an area, including the potential impact that the proposed change would have on other existing providers. Consideration is also given as to whether conversion to statutory provision will increase the possibility of places being filled with children under the age of three. For the schools listed, these factors determined whether or not the proposals were approved.

- (ii) Breathnaítear gach Moladh Forbartha ar bhonn cáis ar chás agus ina chomhthéacs uathúil féin. Mar sin de, ní féidir cinneadh amháin a chur i gcomparáid go díreach le cinneadh eile.
- (ii) Each Development Proposals is considered on a case by case basis and in its own unique context, it is therefore not possible to compare one decision directly with another.

Chairman of the South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education (i) why the Chairman of the South Eastern Education and Library Board resigned from his position and as a Commissioner; (ii) why the resignation has not been made public; and (iii) what impact his resignation will have on decisions taken by the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 8328/10)

Minister of Education: Mr Douglas Osler stood down as Chairperson of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Commissioners on 30 June citing two primary reasons for his decision. Firstly, he considered that the task for which he was appointed has been successfully completed, namely that SEELB had been placed on a secure financial footing. Secondly, he has served for four years and in the absence of a new date for the implementation of the new Education and Skills Authority felt unable to give a commitment for a further unquantifiable period.

I am very grateful for the service, commitment and leadership that Douglas Osler has provided to the Board over the past four years.

Mr Osler's decision is already in the public domain. The department does not normally make specific announcements on decisions by members to stand down from its public bodies.

Beidh mé ag déanamh machnaimh ar impleachtaí chinneadh an Uasail Osler, ach beidh duine eile de na Coimisinéirí ag feidhmiú mar Chathaoirleach idir an dá linn agus ní bheidh tionchar ar bith ar chinntí an SEELB.

I will be considering the implications of Mr Osler's decision but in the meantime one of the remaining Commissioners will be acting as Chairperson and the decisions of the SEELB will be unaffected.

Controlled/Maintained Primary Schools

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Education whether it is her Department's policy to reject any request from a Maintained Primary School for a development proposal to increase the number of places if there is a Controlled Primary School in the same catchment area with a significant number of surplus places; and if parents would then be expected to send their children to the Controlled Primary School.

(AQW 8329/10)

Minister of Education: The Department works with school owners and promoters to ensure that there are sufficient places in all areas to meet the needs of children and young people and to facilitate parental preference. When a development proposal is published to increase places in a particular school, the Department will consider the likely impact of the proposal on other schools in the local area. Each case is considered within its own unique set of circumstances before a decision is taken.

Tá sé de rún ag an Roinn cur chuige níos straitéisí a fhorbairt i leith pleanála ar bhonn an cheantair agus beidh sé seo ina fhreagracht reachtúil ag an ESA, nuair a bhunófar é. Is é an aidhm a bheas ann ná a chinntiú go mbíonn oideachas d'ardchaighdeán á sholáthar ag scoileanna atá inbhuanaithe inmharthana san fhadtéarma agus dá bhrí sin go laghdaítear dúbláil agus cur amú sa chóras.

It is the Department's intention to develop a much more strategic approach to planning on an area basis and this will be a statutory responsibility of ESA, when established. The aim is to ensure that high quality education is provided by schools that are sustainable and viable in the longer term and hence reducing the duplication and waste in the system.

Controlled/Maintained Primary Schools

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Education whether it is her Department's policy to reject any request from a Controlled Primary School for a development proposal to increase the number of school places if there is a Maintained Primary School in the same catchment area with a significant number of surplus places; and if parents would then be expected to send their children to the Maintained Primary School.

(AQW 8331/10)

Minister of Education: The Department works with school owners and promoters to ensure that there are sufficient places in all areas to meet the needs of children and young people and to facilitate parental preference. When a development proposal is published to increase places in a particular school, the Department will consider the likely impact of the proposal on other schools in the local area. Each case is considered within its own unique set of circumstances before a decision is taken.

Tá sé de rún ag an Roinn cur chuige níos straitéisí a fhorbairt i leith pleanála ar bhonn an cheantair agus beidh sé seo ina fhreagracht reachtúil ag an ESA, nuair a bhunófar é. Is é an aidhm a bheas ann ná a chinntiú go mbíonn oideachas d'ardchaighdeán á sholáthar ag scoileanna atá inbhuanaithe inmharthana san fhadtéarma agus dá bhrí sin go laghdaítear dúbláil agus cur amú sa chóras.

It is the Department's intention to develop a much more strategic approach to planning on an area basis and this will be a statutory responsibility of ESA, when established. The aim is to ensure that high quality education is provided by schools that are sustainable and viable in the longer term and hence reducing the duplication and waste in the system.

Controlled/Maintained Primary Schools

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Education whether it is her Department's policy to reject any request from an Integrated Primary School for a development proposal to increase the number of school places if there is a Controlled Primary School or a Maintained Primary School in the same catchment area with a significant number of surplus places; and if parents would then be expected to send their children to the Controlled or Maintained Primary School.

(AQW 8332/10)

Minister of Education: The Department works with school owners and promoters to ensure that there are sufficient places in all areas to meet the needs of children and young people and to facilitate parental preference. When a development proposal is published to increase places in a particular school, the Department will consider the likely impact of the proposal on other schools in the local area. Each case is considered within its own unique set of circumstances before a decision is taken.

Tá sé de rún ag an Roinn cur chuige níos straitéisí a fhorbairt i leith pleanála ar bhonn an cheantair agus beidh sé seo ina fhreagracht reachtúil ag an ESA, nuair a bhunófar é. Is é an aidhm a bheas ann ná a chinntiú go mbíonn oideachas d'ardchaighdeán á sholáthar ag scoileanna atá inbhuanaithe inmharthana san fhadtéarma agus dá bhrí sin go laghdaítear dúbláil agus cur amú sa chóras.

It is the Department's intention to develop a much more strategic approach to planning on an area basis and this will be a statutory responsibility of ESA, when established. The aim is to ensure that high quality education is provided by schools that are sustainable and viable in the longer term and hence reducing the duplication and waste in the system.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the protocols agreed with her Department and the Health and Social Care Board in relation to childcare admissions and ongoing professional supervision and development for staff employed at the Middletown Autism Centre.

(AQW 8354/10)

Minister of Education: Is saoráid oideachasúil í Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin agus beidh ceithre phríomhsheirbhís ar fáil ann nuair a bheas sé go hiomlán oibríochtúil: Seirbhís Oiliúna agus

Chomhairle, Seirbhís Thaighde agus Eolais, Seirbhís Mheasúnaithe Oideachasúil agus Seirbhís Thacaíochta Foghlama.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is an educational facility and when fully operational will offer four key services: a Training and Advisory Service, a Research and Information Service, an Educational Assessment Service and a Learning Support Service. The Centre is subject to inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). As the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting health and social care services in the north, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) will be involved in inspecting the Centre after residential accommodation is made available to children and young people. The RQIA will be required to inspect the Centre as a boarding school under Article 176 of the Children (NI) Order 1995. In carrying out such inspections, the RQIA will liaise directly and coordinate their work with the ETI.

The Centre does not currently offer residential accommodation to pupils. However, as the all-round care of the child is paramount, primary care arrangements have already been planned for and will be put in place before residential accommodation is offered on site to children and young people.

The Centre has also discussed its referral routes with staff in the Southern Health and Social Services Board/ Southern Health Trust and agreed how access to emergency health services would be managed when the services involving residential provision are opened.

The Centre has a programme of continuing professional development for all staff employed in the Centre and supervision is provided by specialist senior professional staff who are accredited by the following organisations:

- The General Teaching Council (north of Ireland)
- The Teaching Council (south of Ireland)
- The British Psychological Society
- The British Association & College of Occupational Therapists
- The Health Professions Council

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education (i) how many children with autism have been (a) excluded; or (b) suspended from school in each of the last two years; and (ii) of these, how many received interventions for complex cases at the Middletown Autism Centre.

(AQW 8357/10)

Minister of Education: Bailítear staitisticí ar fhionraithe agus ar dhíbirtí ó na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne gach bliain, ach ní shonraíonn an t-eolas seo daltaí a bhfuil uathachas orthu. Mar sin de, ní choinníonn an Roinn an t-eolas a iarradh.

Statistics on suspensions and expulsions are collected annually from Education and Library Boards, however this information does not specifically identify pupils with autism. The Department, therefore, does not hold the information requested.

To date, the Middletown Centre for Autism has worked with one child who has previously been excluded from school.

Rathgael House in Bangor

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) full days; and (ii) part days she has spent in her offices in Rathgael House in Bangor, in each calendar year from 2007 to 2010 to date.

(AQW 8360/10)

Minister of Education: Bainim úsáid as m'oiifig Aireachta i bhFoirgnimh na Parlaiminte d'fhormhór mór na ndualgas Roinne.

I use my Ministerial office in Parliament Buildings for the great majority of my Departmental duties. In consequence I spent 2 part days and 1 full day in 2007, 6 part days and 1 full day in 2008, 8 part days and 4 full days in 2009 and to date 7 part days and 1 full day in 2010 at my Departmental headquarters since taking up office.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education what research has been published by the Middletown Autism Centre in each of the last five years.
(AQW 8365/10)

Minister of Education: Ó bunaíodh Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin sa bhliain 2007, tá doiciméid taighde foilsithe acu ar na céimeanna tábhachtacha trasdula agus ar éifeachtacht aistí speisialta bia do na daoine sin ar speictream an uathachais. Rinneadh páipéar taighde eile ar mheasúnú oideachais agus foilseofar é i mí Iúil 2010.

Since the Middletown Centre for Autism was established in 2007, it has published research documents on the subject of key transition stages and on the effectiveness of special diets for those on the autistic spectrum. A further research paper on the subject of educational assessment has been completed and will be published in July 2010.

Staff Salaries in Excess of £75,000

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of staff with salaries of £75,000 or more, employed in the administration of education in (i) her Department; (ii) the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team; (iii) Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; (iv) the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education; (v) the Council for Catholic Maintained schools; (vi) the Youth Council; (vii) the Staff Commission; and (viii) the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.
(AQW 8370/10)

Minister of Education: Foilsítear an luach saothair a fhaigheann feidhmeannaigh shinsearacha i mo Roinn de ghnáth i gCuntais Acmhainní na Roinne, a bhfuil fáil orthu ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne. Bunaithe ar an eolas seo, is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuil 5 bhall foirne faoi láthair a fhaigheann luach saothair de bhreis ar £75,000 sa bhliain. Áirítear sa líon seo Foireann Feidhmithe an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna.

The remuneration of senior officials in my Department is routinely published in the Departmental Resource Accounts, which are available on the Department's website. Based on this information I can confirm that there are currently 5 staff members who are paid in excess of £75,000 pa. This number includes the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team.

With regard to the various arms length bodies I have been advised by their Chief Executives of the following numbers of staff with salaries of £75,000 or more:

Organisation	No. of staff with salaries of £75k or more
CnaG	0
NICIE	0
CCMS	1
Youth Council	0
Staff Commission	0
CCEA	0

Literacy and Numeracy Standards

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Education what measures her Department plans to take to improve literacy and numeracy standards.

(AQW 8371/10)

Minister of Education: Ó cheapadh mar Aire mé, bhí sé mar thosaíocht agam dul i ngleic leis an tearcghnóthachtáil agus comhionannas a chur chun tosaigh mar aon le caighdeáin a ardú inár scoileanna ar fad, go háirithe caighdeáin sa litearthacht agus san uimhearthacht.

Since becoming Minister I have made it a priority to tackle underachievement and promote equality and the raising of standards in all our schools, especially standards in literacy and numeracy.

In the new school year, I will publish a revised literacy and numeracy strategy. The strategy will aim to improve literacy and numeracy standards for all young people and to close the gaps in achievement between the highest and lowest achievers and the most and least disadvantaged. Ahead of the strategy, in 2009/10, I allocated £4.9m in support of the Boards' regional literacy and numeracy action plan. I will provide a similar level of funding for literacy and numeracy in 2010/11. Following the publication of the convergence delivery plan, this will be part of the overall quantum allocated to an integrated support plan, commissioned from the Boards and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA), to cover school improvement, literacy and numeracy, curriculum and assessment and the promotion of STEM subjects. This is in addition to the delegated funding provided to schools and the core funding provided to the Education and Library Boards.

The literacy and numeracy strategy is one of a range of inter-connected policies aimed at improving outcomes for our young people. These include my school improvement policy, Transfer 2010, the revised curriculum and assessment arrangements, the Achieving Belfast and Derry programmes, the review of special educational needs and inclusion, the early years strategy and my work through the North South Ministerial Council, where the focus has been on co-operation and the sharing of best practice in tackling underachievement in literacy and numeracy.

Annual Expenditure on Administration

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how much of her annual expenditure was spent on administration in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8381/10)

Minister of Education: Tugtar eolas sa tábla thíos ar mhéid an chaiteachais bhliantúil a caitheadh ar riarachán i mo Roinn, i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas.

The amount of annual expenditure spent on administration in my Department, in each of the last three years, is outlined in the table below.

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10*
Amount (£000'S)	26,190	21,612	18,525

*Unaudited.

The higher figure reported for administration in 2007-08 reflects the charging of expenditure for the Education and Training Inspectorate which was subsequently re-classified to programme expenditure in line with budgeting guidance.

Irish-medium Primary Schools

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to list the current enrolment figure and number of empty places in each Irish-medium primary school.

(AQW 8382/10)

Minister of Education: Tugtar an figiúr rollaithe agus líon na n-áiteanna a bhí ar fáil ag dáta an Daonáirimh Scoile ar 9 Deireadh Fómhair 2009 i ngach bunscoil Ghaeilge sa tábla thíos.

The enrolment figure and number of places available at the School Census date of 9 October 2009 in each Irish-medium primary school is detailed in the table below.

School Name	Enrolment	Places Available
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	56	31
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	231	175
Gaelscoil na bhFál	163	127
Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh	170	33
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	106	68
Scoil an Droichid	98	27
Gaelscoil na Móna	92	2
Gaelscoil an Lonnáin	51	24
Bunscoil Cholmcille	119	77
Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh	119	31
Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	121	24
Bunscoil an Traonaigh	36	22
Gaelscoil na gCrann	62	25
Gaelscoil na Daróige	39	17
Bunscoil an Chaistil	81	24
Gaelscoil na Speiríní	24	17
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	54	3
Gaelscoil Éanna	34	6
Scoil na Fuisgeoige	117	28
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	56	31
Bunscoil an Iúir	107	22
Gaelscoil Uí Néill	129	16

Source: School Census October 2009/School Access Team

Department Spend

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education how much her Department spent on (i) Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; (ii) the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education; and (iii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8388/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Seo a leanas na leithdháiltí a tugadh do Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas:
- (i) Allocations to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in each of the last three years are as follows:

Financial Year	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000
Recurrent Funding (including Earmarked)	591	635	637
Capital Funding	0	0	0
Total	591	635	637

(ii) Seo a leanas na leithdháiltí a tugadh don Chomhairle um Oideachas Imeacha i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas:

(ii) Allocations to Council for Integrated Education in each of the last three years are as follows:

Financial Year	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000
Recurrent Funding (including Earmarked)	680	618	650
Capital Funding	0	0	0
Total	680	618	650

(iii) Seo a leanas na leithdháiltí a tugadh do Chomhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas:

(iii) Allocations to Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in each of the last three years are as follows:

Financial Year	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000
Recurrent funding (including Earmarked)	3,929	3,685	5,772
Capital Funding	98	35	30
Total	4,027	3,720	5,802

Education and Library Boards: Staffing Arrangements

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education what guidance has been issued to Education and Library Boards regarding their future status including staffing arrangements, given the number of staff in temporary positions and the need to fill permanent posts.

(AQW 8391/10)

Minister of Education: Roimh bhunú an ESA, tá feidhm ag na socruithe reatha rialachais agus cuntasachta go fóill, agus tá na heagraíochtaí reatha go hiomlán cuntasach don Roinn as maoirseacht cistí poiblí agus as caighdeán na seirbhísí a sholáthraítear.

In advance of the establishment of ESA, the existing governance and accountability arrangements pertain, with the existing organisations fully accountable to the Department for the stewardship of public funds and the quality of services provided.

The Convergence Delivery Plan (CDP) outlined the approach for the re-shaping of services in advance of the establishment of ESA and proposals to re-structure the delivery of education services as part of the Convergence Delivery Plan are being developed in conjunction with the education bodies concerned.

As part of this process, the Vacancy Control Policy, which has been in operation since October 2006, is currently being reviewed.

£2.9 Million for New Bodies

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education how she intends to spend the £2.9 million set aside for new bodies, in addition to the £5.5 million set aside for Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

(AQW 8396/10)

Minister of Education: Mar ullmhúchán do bhunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna tá cistí curtha i leataobh agam in 2010-11 le tacú le bunú roinnt foras tacaíochta earnála, an fhorais shealbhaíochta don eastát rialaithe agus an Fhóram Chomhairligh Oideachais.

In preparation for the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority I have set aside funds in 2010-11 to support the establishment of a number of sectoral support bodies, the holding body for the controlled estate and the Education Advisory Forum. Decisions on funding of these bodies, including the detail of their roles and structures are on hold pending further progress with the Education Bill. Until such progress, CnaG, NICIE and CCMS will continue to discharge the respective roles and responsibilities and will continue to attract financial support on the terms already established.

Financial Assistance to Purchase School Uniforms

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education what level of financial assistance is currently available to people planning to purchase school uniforms for primary and post-primary school pupils.

(AQW 8401/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireann Alt 60 den Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 dualgas ar gach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne scéim a dhéanamh le costas éadaí, nó le ranníocaíocht i leith costais éadaí, a sholáthar do chatagóirí áirithe daltaí ag scoileanna deontaschúnta nó ag institiúidí breisoideachais. Tá na critéir cháilitheachta cosúil leis na critéir sin a úsáidtear faoi choinne saorbhéilí scoile.

Article 60 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 places a duty on each Education and Library Board to make a scheme for the provision of, or contribution towards the cost of, clothing for certain categories of pupils at grant-aided schools or institutes of further education. The eligibility criteria are similar to those used for free school meals.

The scheme applies to primary schools, post-primary schools, further education colleges and day pupils at special schools. Assistance is available towards the cost of school uniform and appropriate clothing suitable for physical education. Eligible students who attend FE colleges may be assisted with the cost of PE clothing. Normally only one clothing allowance per pupil will be paid during the school year.

The Clothing Allowances Scheme is not intended to cover the full cost of a uniform, rather it is designed to assist those in need with the cost of purchase.

The primary school allowance for the 2010/11 school year will be £35.75. The post-primary/special school rates are:

Under 15 years old	£51.00	15 years old and over	£56.00
PE	£22.00	PE	£22.00
Total	£73.00	Total	£78.00

Speech and Language Therapists

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education to outline the current and future employment opportunities, in the education sector, for speech and language therapists, including those who have recently qualified.

(AQW 8404/10)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne dom gur gnáthchleachtas é go gceapann agus go maoiníonn na hlontaobhais Shláinte agus Chúraim Shóisialta teiripeoirí urlabhra agus teanga a sholáthraíonn seirbhísí i scoileanna. Thug Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt le fios áfach, go bhfuil teiripeoir urlabhra agus teanga amháin fostaithe i Seirbhís Teanga agus Cumarsáide an Bhoird.

I am advised by the Chief Executives (CE) of the Education and Library Boards that it is normal practice that speech and language therapists providing services to schools are appointed and funded by the Health and Social Care Trusts. The CE of the Southern Education and Library Board advises, however, that one speech and language therapist is employed within the Board's Language and Communication Service.

For the above reason the Chief Executives advise that the Boards are not in a position to outline future employment opportunities for speech and language therapists.

Assembly Questions

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education how many written Assembly questions her Department has received since 2007 relating to (i) the controlled sector; (ii) the Catholic maintained sector; (iii) the voluntary grammar sector; (iv) the integrated sector; and (v) the Irish-medium sector.

(AQW 8407/10)

Minister of Education: Leagtar amach sa tábla thíos líon na gceisteanna scríofa Tionóil a fuair mo Roinn ó mhí Bealtaine 2007 a thagraíonn go sonrach (i) don earnáil rialaithe; (ii) don earnáil Chaitliceach faoi chothabháil; (iii) don earnáil dheonach ghramadaí; (iv) don earnáil imeasctha; agus (v) d'earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta.

The number of Written Assembly questions which my Department has received since May 2007 which specifically refer to (i) the controlled sector; (ii) the Catholic maintained sector; (iii) the voluntary grammar sector; (iv) the integrated sector; and (v) the Irish-medium sector is set out in the table below.

Sector	Number of Assembly Questions
(i) Controlled	99
(ii) Catholic Maintained	103
(iii) Voluntary Grammar	24
(iv) Integrated	130
(v) Irish-Medium	101

Note: where a question asks about more than one sector it is included in each of the relevant sector totals.

Controlled Sector

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the number of requests from Members for meetings regarding the current state of the controlled sector.

(AQW 8408/10)

Minister of Education: Le bliain anuas, fuair mé 5 iarratas ó Chomhaltaí ar chruinnithe faoi scoileanna rialaithe. Bhain na hiarratais sin le scoileanna áirithe rialaithe seachas leis an earnáil i gcoitinne.

In the past 12 months I have received 5 requests from Members for meetings about controlled schools. Those requests related to particular controlled schools rather than to the sector generally.

Tor Bank Summer Scheme Programme

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education what guidance was issued from the South Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the recent reduction to the Tor Bank Summer Scheme programme.
(AQW 8410/10)

Minister of Education: I am advised by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) that they issued a letter to all parents of pupils attending the four special schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties in the SEELB area to advise that due to financial constraints, these schools' summer schemes would only be able to operate for one week in 2010.

I bhfianaise an chinnidh a rinne Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt agus an Iarthair ar na mallaibh lena scéimeanna samhraidh do dhaltaí a bhfuil deacrachtaí troma foghlama acu a athbhunú go hiomlán, d'fhógair Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ar 2 Iúil 2010 go n-athbhunóidh siad na scéimeanna samhraidh go hiomlán agus beidh siad anois ar siúl ar feadh coicíse.

In light of the recent decision of the Southern and Western Education and Library Boards to fully reinstate their summer schemes for pupils with severe learning difficulties, the South Eastern Education and Library Board announced on 2 July 2010 that it will reinstate the summer schemes in full and they will now operate for 2 weeks.

Remuneration Costs

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the remuneration costs incurred by the South Eastern Education and Library Board and its Commissioners compared to those incurred by their counterparts in the other boards.
(AQW 8411/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir mé costais Choimisinéirí Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt (SEELB) i gcomparáid le costais na gComhaltaí ó na ceithre Bhord eile. Tá sé tábhachtach go gcuimhnítear ar an staid chriticiúil airgeadais a fuair na Coimisinéirí trí oidhreacht chomhaltaí an Bhoird. Tá comhardú agus cobhsaíocht airgeadais bainte amach acu arís agus tá mé sásta go bhfuil luach maith ar airgead á fháil ó na Coimisinéirí.

I have compared the costs of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Commissioners with those of the Members of the other four Boards.

It is important to remember the critical financial position the Commissioners inherited from the members of the Board. They have restored financial balance and stability. I am satisfied that the Commissioners represent good value for money.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education how much funding the Middletown Autism Centre has received in each of the last five years; and how many young people have attended the centre.
(AQW 8417/10)

Minister of Education: Since its establishment in March 2007, the Middletown Centre for Autism has been allocated the following funding by my Department:

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
£210,282.23	£435,136.37	£641,642.50	£160,000.00 (To end of June 2010)

Tá Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin á chómhaoiniú ar bhonn 50/50 ag an Roinn Oideachais agus ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna sa deisceart.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is funded jointly on a 50/50 basis by the Department of Education and the Department for Education and Skills in the south.

Four key services are to be delivered by the Centre; a Training and Advisory Service, a Research and Information Service, Educational Assessment Service and a Learning Support Service. The services proposed for the Centre are being phased in order to coincide with the completion of the building refurbishment programme.

The Training and Advisory Service began in December 2007, closely followed by its Research and Information Service. To date, training has been delivered to over 3,000 professionals and over 300 parents. A specialist programme of training for parents in the north commenced on 13 April 2010 and ran for five weeks in each of five locations.

The Centre's Research and Information Service has completed research bulletins covering issues such as diet and autism and also the subject of transitions for those on the Autism Spectrum. A further research bulletin in relation to educational assessment is to be published shortly.

The remaining two services to be delivered by the Centre are a Learning Support Service and an Educational Assessment Service. It was planned that these services would be commenced alongside the completion of the building project at the Centre.

The North/South Ministerial Council joint communiqué in December 2009 stated that "the Ministers of Education and Science and the Minister for Education propose to prepare an updated phased multi-annual plan for the future development of the Centre, in conjunction with the Board and taking account of international best practice and the development of autism services on the island of Ireland since the Centre was established." In light of this announcement, the Centre has been developing its provision of advice and guidance to be delivered prior to the completion of the building project.

Advice and guidance is being offered by the Centre to children and young people previously referred to the ASD Advisory Services in the north who despite focused first level intervention continue to experience difficulties within their educational setting. The Centre's staff will further assess and identify the strengths and needs of children and young people referred to the Centre and make recommendations for the implementation of relevant strategies. This process will be carried out in partnership with families and the existing first level services.

The provision of advice and guidance will provide trans-disciplinary assessments and support to schools and families in the implementation of a specialist education plan developed from a comprehensive learning support plan. The model of advice and guidance provision will operate on a rolling basis. Two young people, referred by the Interboard Autistic Spectrum Disorder Group, are currently receiving such advice and guidance from the Centre.

Dromore High School and Dromore Primary School

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her statement on the review of capital projects, whether the proposed new builds for Dromore High School and Dromore Primary School will proceed.

(AQW 8419/10)

Minister of Education: Níor fógraíodh an togra le haghaidh Dromore High School mar chuid de chlár móroibreacha na Roinne. Tá an SELB ag uasdátú breithmheasa eacnamaíochta do scéim mholta caipitil na scoile áfach agus tá siad ag súil é a chur faoi bhráid na Roinne ar ball beag.

The project for Dromore High School has not been announced as part of the Department's major works programme. The SELB is, however, updating an economic appraisal for the proposed capital scheme for the school and hopes to submit it to the Department in the near future.

The outcome of the review of capital projects, including that for Dromore Primary School, has been placed in the Assembly Library from Monday 5 July 2010.

The rate at which the Department can progress new school builds is dependent on the resources made available to it. The financial position this year is extremely challenging and the department is facing severe constraints on its capital budget. As part of the Executive's June monitoring process, I have bid for additional funds for capital projects.

Applied Behavioural Analysis

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education what consideration she has given to the advice of the Scottish Parliament in April 2009 that decisions should not be based solely on the 'Autism Toolbox', particularly the section on 'Overview of Intervention'; whether this advice influenced her approach to the use of Applied Behavioural Analysis, and if not, to explain the reasons.

(AQW 8437/10)

Minister of Education: I understand that the 'Autism Toolbox' is primarily used in schools across Scotland and is supported by Local Authorities. The 'Autism Toolbox' was written by a multi-professional writing team, overseen by a Working Group and published by the Scottish Government in 2009. The 'Autism Toolbox' has not been published for use within special education provision for children with autism in the north of Ireland.

I am advised by the Scottish Government Learning Directorate that concerns were raised by an individual in July 2009 about a section of the Toolbox – the Overview of Interventions. There has been no formal review of the Toolbox. However, I understand that the Scottish Government has taken account of the views of professionals who have developed, written and commented on the Toolbox.

Ní chuireann an Roinn Oideachais cineál amháin idirghabhála chun tosaigh thar chineál eile ach tá an Roinn den tuairim gur chóir go mbeadh an soláthar páistelárnach, dírithe ar mheasúnú cuimsitheach ar uathachas an pháiste agus ar an dóigh a théann an t-uathachas i bhfeidhm ar chumas foghlama an pháiste.

The Department of Education does not promote one type of intervention over another but maintains the view that provision should be child centred, focused on a comprehensive assessment of the child's autism and how it affects his or her ability to learn.

Sectoral Advisory Body

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education what is the annual estimated cost of each proposed sectoral advisory body.

(AQW 8439/10)

Minister of Education: In developing proposals for education reform, my Department invited submissions from those interested in creating sectoral support bodies to the various sectors in education, to come into operation following the proposed establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). A number of proposals have been received and my officials have also worked with a group of interested individuals to assist the development of a further proposal to establish a sectoral support body for the controlled sector.

As the legislation to enact the reform of education is currently awaiting agreement by the Executive, there are no plans to move forward with finalising these proposals until a date for the establishment of the ESA is confirmed. Sectoral support bodies were intended to complement the work of ESA and will only be established to support its operation.

Mar sin de, ní féidir a mheas ag an am seo, an ról beacht a bheas ag gach comhlacht tacaíochta earnála agus an costas a bhainfeas leo.

It is not, therefore, possible to estimate the precise role or the associated cost of each sectoral support body at this time.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Young People

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the areas of her current budget set aside to deal with drug and alcohol abuse among young people.

(AQW 8452/10)

Minister of Education: Faigheann Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne cistiú mar chuid dá Leithdháileadh foriomlán Acmhainní lena chur ar a gcumas oifigh oideachais drugaí agus alcóil a fhostú le hoiliúint agus tacaíocht a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí chun oideachas drugaí agus alcóil a sholáthar mar chuid den snáithe Forbairt Phearsanta den churaclam athbhreithnithe ar scoil.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) receive funding as part of their overall Resource Allocation to enable them to employ drugs and alcohol education officers to provide training and support to teachers in delivering drugs and alcohol education as part of the Personal Development strand of the revised curriculum in school. I also recently wrote to all schools reminding them of their responsibilities in relation to drugs education.

My Department also funds an Independent Counselling Service in all Post Primary Schools which is available to provide professional counselling to children and young people if needed, at vulnerable times in their lives. Funding is provided as well to each of the five ELBs and the Youth Council to support youth provision which includes addressing drugs and alcohol awareness sessions for young people.

My Department does not specifically fund individual organisations for drug and alcohol awareness and prevention programmes. Schools and ELBs are given the flexibility to respond to the needs of their school community and may, within their delegated budget, engage, as necessary, the services of organisations to assist in the delivery of the curriculum. As such it is a matter for schools and Boards within their delegated budgets to engage outside organisations to provide awareness training.

The Department of Education works closely with colleagues in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety led New Strategic Direction on Drugs and Alcohol and will implement fully actions agreed by the steering group in relation to schools.

Applied Behavioural Analysis

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education if she is aware that information provided to her Department regarding Applied Behavioural Analysis has been deemed misleading by a panel of experts advising the Scottish Government; and what steps she is taking to ensure that this does not adversely impact on her Department's policy.

(AQW 8456/10)

Minister of Education: Is eol dom gur chuir Rialtas na hAlban tuairimí na ngairmithe a d'fhorbair agus a scríobh 'The Autism Toolbox' a foilsíodh in Albain san áireamh.

I am aware that the Scottish Government has taken account of the views of professionals who developed and wrote the 'Autism Toolbox' published in Scotland.

Here in the north of Ireland there is a range of ways in which the education system currently meets the needs of children on the autistic spectrum. The Report of the Task Group on Autism, published by the Department of Education (DE) in 2002 was a major milestone in understanding the needs of children with autism in the north of Ireland. The report states, in relation to methods of intervention, that "The Task Group finds preference for no single approach but concludes that single methods by themselves may not address effectively the triad of impairments associated with ASD" (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). The Group concluded that "intervention programmes should be child-centred rather than method-centred and should address the observed and unique needs of the child." I support the Taskforce Group report and the recommendations therein.

DE does not, therefore, promote one type of intervention over another but maintains the view that provision should be child centred, focused on a comprehensive assessment of the child's autism and how it affects his or her ability to learn, and in particular to learn alongside other children.

Department for Employment and Learning

Permanent Lecturers at Queen's University and the University of Ulster

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many permanent lecturers at (i) Queen's University; and (ii) the University of Ulster have been suspended in each of the past two years; and how many were subsequently dismissed.

(AQW 7939/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): This information is not held in my Department but the two universities have provided the following information:

	2008/09		2009/10	
	Queen's	Ulster	Queen's	Ulster
Suspended	1	0	1	2
Dismissed	1	0	0	1

L2 Allowance

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail number of staff receiving a former L2 allowance in each Further Education College, as of 1 June 2010.

(AQW 7961/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The six Further Education Colleges have confirmed the number of current staff receiving a former L2 allowance, as detailed in the table below:

Further Education College	No. of current staff receiving a former L2 allowance
Belfast Metropolitan	9
Northern Regional	8
North West Regional	7
South East Regional	0
Southern Regional	10
South West	1
Total	35

Staff Salaries in Excess of £100,000

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many staff in his Department, and associated quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8046/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The remuneration of the most senior officials in each Department is published in annual Resource Accounts, which are available on all Departmental websites. In DEL's

case, the Resource Accounts may be accessed at www.delni.gov.uk. There is currently one member of staff paid in excess of £100,000 per annum in salary and/or remuneration packages.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 8068/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department undertakes a range of activities to ensure there is an ongoing review of the use of consultants. We maintain a register of consultancy assignments which is updated on a quarterly basis. We undertake internal test drilling exercises in order to monitor compliance with the Department of Finance & Personnel guidance: FD (DFP) 04/09. We continue, through the preparation of business cases, to stringently assess the need to appoint consultants ensuring full consideration has been given to the use of in-house personnel. Where a consultancy assignment exceeds £50k my approval is sought, and above £75k both my and DFP's approval is required.

Institute of Professional Legal Studies

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how many (a) solicitor students; and (b) bar students enrolled at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies; and (ii) how many (a) solicitor students; and (b) bar students received a bursary in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8078/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning:

- (i) The number of first year (a) solicitor students and (b) barrister students enrolled at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies at Queen's University Belfast in each of the last five academic years is outlined in the table below:

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Cert (PC) Professional Legal Studies (Barrister)	30	25	25	25	35
Cert (PC) Professional Legal Studies (Solicitor)	105	100	105	115	125

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
 (2) The latest available data are for 2008/09.
 (ii) (a) 0 (b) 0

My Department has not provided any funding for bursaries for solicitor students or bar students at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in each of the last five years.

Departmental funding for Northern Ireland domiciled students pursuing postgraduate diplomas and certificates, including those for legal practice, in the United Kingdom has not been available since September 2005. At that time, my Department reviewed its priorities in light of the Government's 2002 Science, Engineering and Technology Strategy "Investing in Innovation" and decided that its postgraduate support budget should be targeted at funding Masters and PhD courses at the higher levels recommended in that report.

Bursaries for Post-Graduate Law Students

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many post-graduate law students, other than those enrolled at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, received a bursary in each of the last five years

(AQW 8080/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Each year, my Department makes available funding to Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster for research (MPhil and PhD) and for certain approved courses of full-time study leading to higher degrees (Masters). The universities are responsible for administering the postgraduate awards scheme and allocating the awards within the levels of funding available.

The table overleaf details the total number of postgraduate awards in law, broken down by Masters and PhDs, which the universities made from my Department's annual postgraduate awards budget allocation, in each of the last five academic years.

Funding for bursaries at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies has not been available from my Department since September 2005.

	DEL Funded Postgraduate Awards in Law	AY 2005/06	AY 2006/07	AY 2007/08	AY 2008/09	AY 2009/10
Queen's University, Belfast	Masters	4	2	0	0	0
	PhDs	4	4	4	2	0
University of Ulster	Masters	0	0	0	0	0
	PhDs	2	1	1	0	3
	Total	10	7	5	2	3

Regional Colleges: Non-Completion of Full-Time Courses

Mr P Givan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students in each regional college have failed to complete a full-time course in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8201/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The information requested by the member is attached in the table at Annex A.

ANNEX A

Academic Year			
College	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast Metropolitan	4,685	3,874	4,918
Northern Regional	2,800	2,311	2,280
South Eastern Regional	2,609	2,165	1,785
Southern Regional	1,655	1,563	1,441
South West	1,505	1,526	1,457
North West Regional	1,760	1,500	1,965
Total*	15,014	12,939	13,846

Source: Further Education Leavers Survey

- * Information on completion is only available for those in their final year of study. Therefore, for those enrolled on a course which is longer than one year, it is not possible to identify if they have dropped out in a previous year of study.

Funding for Regional Colleges

Mr P Givan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much funding a regional college receives for each registered full-time student; and what are the financial consequences when a student drops out of a course.

(AQW 8278/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There is no set funding value for a full time Further Education student. Each eligible enrolment generates a number of Funded Learning Units (FLU) based on attendance, educational level and the economic priority attached to that particular course of study. In the 2008/09 academic year the average funding generated for a College by a full time FE student was £5,054.

A student's withdrawal will directly affect the number of FLU generated. FE Colleges are funded to deliver an agreed level of FLU and at the end of each year each a College's actual delivery is assessed against its agreed plan. This, in turn, informs negotiations on the College's funding allocation for the subsequent year.

Department of Work and Pensions Job Cuts

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what impact the announcement by the Department of Work and Pensions to cut 8,000 jobs from job centres by March 2011 will have on staffing levels locally.

(AQW 8315/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Employment is a transferred matter in Northern Ireland. The announcement by the Department for Work and Pensions to cut 8,000 jobs from JobCentres by March 2011 will have no direct impact on staffing levels in my Department.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the areas of his current budget set aside to deal with drug and alcohol abuse.

(AQW 8453/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: While not responsible for dealing directly with drug and alcohol abuse, the Department for Employment and Learning seeks to improve the employability of adults with a history of substance misuse as part of the progress2work initiative. The overall budget for progress2work is £300,000 per annum, however there is no specific portion of this budget set aside to address drug and alcohol abuse.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Ballycastle to Campbeltown Ferry Service

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the restoration of the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry service.

(AQW 7938/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): I have agreed with my Scottish Government ministerial counterpart, Stewart Stevenson MSP, to progress to the next stage of our joint

consideration of the case for the restoration of the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry service, which would involve the development of a service specification and tender.

The Scottish Government, who has lead responsibility for the ferry restoration, is giving serious consideration to the timing of further work to re-establish the ferry service, in light of the current difficult financial climate, to ensure that any new commitments could be supported by adequate funding.

We remain supportive in principle to the provision of a Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry service.

NI Electricity

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why NI Electricity staff cannot discuss customer accounts with constituency office staff on the MLA dedicated hotline.

(AQW 7964/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE), part of the Viridian Group, is a privately owned company which owns the electricity networks in Northern Ireland, and for which my Department has no direct responsibility.

NIE provides a dedicated elected representative hotline providing information only on power cuts, and therefore cannot deal with customer accounts relating to the supply of electricity by NIE Energy.

NIE Energy is a completely separate company within the Viridian Group. It holds some personal information on customer accounts, including bank details, and takes the security of this information very seriously. This is one of a number of measures to safeguard customer information which NIE Energy has in place. NIE Energy will only supply information relating to any customer to a third party with the customers consent.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she is taking to review the use of consultants in her Department.

(AQW 8011/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The use of consultants in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is reviewed on an annual basis. At the beginning of each financial year, DETI produces information on consultancy expenditure for the previous financial year and expected consultancy assignments for the current financial year. This information is shared with DFP Supply and Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), who act as DETI's Centre of Procurement Excellence (CoPE).

When the annual consultancy returns are received, the previous financial year's expenditure is reviewed to ensure compliancy with the Guidance on the Use of Consultants and for best practice. Returns are checked to ensure that a business case has been approved to establish a justifiable reason for engagement of consultants and that there is a framework for planning and managing the consultancy requirement. Checks are carried out to ensure that:

- DFP/ Ministerial approvals are in place, where necessary;
- CPD has been appointed to engage consultants;
- Any single tenders are approved by the Accounting Officer;
- Expenditure has not exceeded tendered costs;
- An implementation manager has been appointed for large projects to ensure management of the assignment and control of expenditure; and
- Post Project Evaluations (PPEs) have been completed or are due for completion to ensure that the objectives of each assignment have been met and lessons learned.

We also seek explanations from each business area if expenditure varies by 5% from the previous year.

The anticipated current year consultancy projects are also reviewed and potential increases investigated.

Invest NI and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board carry out their own annual reviews of previous year actual expenditure and current year estimated expenditure.

Slemish Mountain

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Slemish Mountain was not included in the St Patrick's Trail; and what action she will take to ensure that Slemish Mountain is marketed as part of this tourism product.

(AQW 8108/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: When St. Patrick's Signature Project was scoped it was agreed that the strongest clustering and collective linkages with St. Patrick existed in the Armagh / Downpatrick area. Nine connecting options were fully considered with the current St. Patrick's Trail becoming the preferred option which was subsequently put in place.

However, the Trail is not exclusive. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has identified Christian Heritage as a key Product Portfolio and continues to work with key stakeholders to develop the product offering. As a result, Slemish is now included on a new dedicated Saint Patrick/Christian Heritage microsite and on the new St. Patrick's Trail map. See link below (www.discovernorthernireland.com/History-and-Heritage-Downloads-A802).

Slemish also featured strongly in NITB's recent 100 Great Days Out publication and is a regular destination in terms of familiarisation visits for journalists and tour operators with an interest in Christian Heritage.

The St Patrick's Trail

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the benefit of including Croagh Patrick, Slemish Mountain and Lough Derg in the marketing of the St Patrick's Trail, in light of the success of the Camino de Santiago in France and Spain.

(AQW 8109/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: When St. Patrick's Signature Project was scoped it was agreed that the strongest clustering and collective linkages with St. Patrick lay in the Armagh / Downpatrick area. Nine connecting options were fully considered with the current St. Patrick's Trail (SPT) becoming the preferred option which was subsequently put in place.

However, the Trail is not exclusive. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has identified Christian Heritage as a key Product Portfolio and continues to work with key stakeholders to develop the product offering. As a result, Slemish is now included on a new dedicated Saint Patrick / Christian Heritage microsite and on the new St. Patrick's Trail map (www.discovernorthernireland.com/History-and-Heritage-Downloads-A802).

NITB and Fáilte Ireland commissioned a study in 2009 to investigate the feasibility of developing a long distance pilgrim walking route between Croagh Patrick and Downpatrick. The findings of the report advised that this proposal would be cost prohibitive and that there was a lack of authenticity and quality off road walking sections. The report did suggest the development of an internet based viral marketing tool that was Patrician themed. This could be expanded beyond just the St Patrick's Trail to include other Patrician sites in the Ballymena, Donegal, Mayo sites and Boyne Valley. This concept is currently being developed in the form of the St Patrick's microsite on <http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/stpatrick/>

In March 2010, NITB organised a Learning Journey for key stakeholders to Santiago de Compostela. This successful Learning Journey identified best practice across a number of product portfolios, and it is planned that through lessons identified the visitor experience of the Saint Patrick will be enhanced.

NITB will continue to support and promote all its Signature Projects through marketing campaigns, advertising and advertorials at both a local and regional level, while Tourism Ireland Limited (TIL) is currently examining opportunities market the SPT overseas with focus primarily on Counties Down and Armagh.

Most Popular Air Routes

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list the most popular air routes to and from (i) Belfast International Airport; and (ii) the George Best Belfast City Airport, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8236/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The five most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport and the George Best Belfast City Airport in each of the last five years are outlined below. This information is based on the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) UK Airport Annual Statistics (2005-2009) which include passengers carried on scheduled and chartered services.

Belfast International Airport

- In 2009 the most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport were Liverpool, Gatwick, Stansted, Heathrow and Luton.
- In 2008 the most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport were Liverpool, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Heathrow.
- In 2007 the most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport were Liverpool, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Edinburgh.
- In 2006 the most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport were Liverpool, Stansted, Luton, Gatwick and Edinburgh.
- In 2005 the most popular routes to and from Belfast International Airport were Liverpool, Stansted, Luton, Gatwick and Glasgow.

George Best Belfast City Airport

- In 2009 the most popular routes to and from the George Best Belfast City Airport were Heathrow, Stansted, Manchester, Gatwick and Birmingham.
- In 2008 the most popular routes to and from the George Best Belfast City Airport were Heathrow, Stansted, Manchester, Birmingham and Gatwick.
- In 2007 the most popular routes to and from the George Best Belfast City Airport were Heathrow, Manchester, Birmingham, Gatwick and Edinburgh.
- In 2006 the most popular routes to and from the George Best Belfast City Airport were Heathrow, Birmingham, Manchester, Gatwick and Glasgow.
- In 2005 the most popular routes to and from the George Best Belfast City Airport were Heathrow, Birmingham, Gatwick, Manchester and Glasgow.

Foreign Investment in Cookstown and Magherafelt

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the estimated amount of foreign investment in the (i) Cookstown; and (ii) Magherafelt District Council areas in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8271/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI will work with any manufacturing and tradeable services business in Northern Ireland which has the potential and ambition to export, to improve its productivity and to become more internationally competitive. Invest NI does not assist projects which only serve the local marketplace e.g. those involved in retail and distribution activities. Therefore,

information relating to investment made by externally-owned businesses in these sectors cannot be provided. This response is based on those inward-investment projects which have been assisted by Invest NI.

Table 1 shows the estimated amount of inward investment secured by Invest NI in the (i) Cookstown; and (ii) Magherafelt District Council areas in each of the last five years. The number of offers of assistance that this investment relates to and the amount of support offered by Invest NI towards these projects has also been included in the table.

The Total Assistance Offered represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. Total Planned Investment represents the expected cost of the projects to these businesses and includes Invest NI's financial support.

TABLE 1: INWARD INVESTMENT IN COOKSTOWN & MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREAS (2005/06 - 2009/10)

	District Council Area					
	Cookstown			Magherafelt		
Financial Year	Number of Offers	Total Assistance Offered (£)	Total Planned Investment (£)	Number of Offers	Total Assistance Offered (£)	Total Planned Investment (£)
2005/06	9	221,231	4,268,554	5	96,769	416,768
2006/07	9	86,313	249,744	1	27,738	110,950
2007/08	10	114,967	782,870	-	-	-
2008/09	5	7,250	10,550	1	4,500	9,000
2009/10	3	56,465	144,931	4	99,147	303,791
Total	36	486,226	5,456,649	11	228,154	840,509

Note: Total Planned Investment includes Total Assistance Offered.

First Trust Bank

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact of the sale of the First Trust Bank on small to medium-sized businesses.

(AQW 8336/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The implications of the sale of the First Trust Bank will not be known until its purchase has been agreed. However, the potential impact on credit availability for small and medium-sized businesses in Northern Ireland is obviously a key concern.

Given that the Irish Government is a significant shareholder in the First Trust's current owners, the Allied Irish Bank, Executive colleagues and I raised these concerns at a recent meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council. In particular, we stressed the importance of giving these issues due consideration in any future sale of the bank.

Furthermore, while the influence that the NI Executive can have on this commercial decision is limited, I can assure you that my Department, through Invest NI, will seek to enter into discussions as necessary with any prospective buyer to ensure sufficient credit availability in Northern Ireland.

Single Electricity Market

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the current performance of the Single Electricity Market.

(AQW 8337/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Single Electricity Market (SEM) was established on 1 November 2007. It combined the wholesale electricity markets in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and is at the forefront of regional action to develop the European Internal Electricity Market. It has encouraged greater competition, increased transparency, investment in generation, and greater price stability in electricity. The SEM has provided the basis for attracting more suppliers to enter the retail electricity market, with greater levels of customer switching at the larger business user level, and a new entrant to the domestic electricity market in Northern Ireland from 1 June 2010.

The SEM will also facilitate a significant growth in electricity generated from renewable sources over the next decade. This is key to making Northern Ireland less dependent on fossil fuels and their inherent price volatility, and delivering a more sustainable energy system.

As is required under the legislation, my prime objective is to protect the interests of consumers of electricity by promoting effective competition. In doing so, the legislation further requires that I need to ensure that there is no unfair discrimination between consumers in Northern Ireland and consumers in the Republic of Ireland. I will continue to work actively with the appropriate bodies to ensure that the SEM delivers on this.

Seventh Framework Programme Funding

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the draw-down target set for Northern Ireland in relation to the €50 billion funding available for 2007 to 2013 under the Seventh Framework Programme; (ii) how much funding has been drawn-down as a result of joint collaboration on a north-south basis; (iii) what action she is taking to secure additional funding via north-south collaboration; and (iv) what plans she has to set a joint north-south draw-down target.

(AQW 8339/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland has a target to secure €50m from FP7 between 2007 and 2013. Highly confidential data on successful FP7 participation by NI organisations is provided twice yearly from the European Commission directly to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in the UK and Enterprise Ireland in the Republic of Ireland. The most recent figures released on 1 May 2010 indicate that Northern Ireland has now drawn down €23.2m from FP7. Given that funding ramps up towards the end of the Programme, Northern Ireland is on target to reach and potentially exceed the €50m target set in the Regional Innovation Strategy.

Analysis of the latest European Commission dataset on Northern Ireland participation in consultation with Enterprise Ireland indicates that there have been 317 Collaborative Applicants (129 NI and 188 ROI) in 116 proposals to April 2010 of which 91 applicants (37 NI and 54 ROI) have proved successful securing funding of €23,296,619 for 33 proposals (€6,112,819 NI and €17,183,800 ROI). This figure is the combined total for projects involving North/South participation and should not be confused with the total for Northern Ireland on its own which, coincidentally, is also €23.2m.

Senior Management from Invest NI meet with counterparts in Enterprise Ireland on a six-monthly basis to examine opportunities where collaboration in research, development and innovation could bring mutual benefits to both economies. In relation to on-going cooperation on strategic research and development, and increasing joint applications to FP7, executives from Invest NI's Collaborative R&D Support Service are in regular contact with executives from Enterprise Ireland's National Support Network for FP7. Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland jointly promote FP7 Training and Information events to their constituencies and often delegates will travel across-border to attend and network. At a recent Bridging the Border Event hosted by Invest NI's Enterprise Europe Network in the City Hotel, Londonderry, both the UK and Ireland National Contact Points for Health were available to provide advice and guidance to companies on forthcoming calls. The event afforded a useful opportunity to

share sectoral knowledge from each geographical area in order to encourage joint FP7 applications in the future.

There are currently no plans to formally set a joint North-South drawdown target for FP7 although the practicality of this will be explored if there are additional benefits for Northern Ireland in doing so. However, it should be emphasised that the majority of funding from FP7 is available for drawdown by universities (of which Northern Ireland has the lowest number of all UK regions) and the private sector (large companies are more successful than SMEs) rather than government departments. Participation is in response to "Calls for Proposals" and the topics are, in the main, decided at the European level (not regional priorities). It would therefore be very difficult to set a target based on calls that are not yet identified and which might not fit the strategies of local companies.

It should also be noted that participation is competitive, and the cost of entry in terms of up-front resource commitment is high with no guarantee of success. Currently the average success rate for all EU applicants is only 22% and despite assurances from the Commission to improve processing times, it still takes approximately one year from application to contract approval. Taken together, this makes FP7 participation difficult for an SME-based economy like Northern Ireland.

To encourage applicants, Invest NI set up the Collaborative R&D Support Service (including a Brussels-based resource) to provide advice and guidance on FP7 and financial support for developing project proposals and partnering agreements. Through close cooperation with counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, it is hoped that the number of joint applications for FP7 will be increased.

Financial Assistance Provided by Invest NI

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the average amount of financial assistance provided by Invest NI to (i) foreign direct investors; and (ii) small and medium-sized enterprises for each job they have created in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8361/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Table 1 shows the average amount of financial assistance provided by Invest NI to (i) foreign direct investors; and (ii) small and medium-sized enterprises for each new job they have promoted in each of the last three years.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI AVERAGE ASSISTANCE OFFERED PER NEW JOB PROMOTED (2007/08 – 2009/10)

Year	Cost Per New Job (£)	
	Externally-Owned Clients	Local SMEs.
2007/08	13,743	11,590
2008/09	13,292	10,855
2009/10	21,817	14,646
3 Year Total*	15,279	12,257

Notes:

1. SMEs are locally-owned clients employing less than 250 employees.
2. Analysis relates to employment-creation projects only.
3. The higher Cost Per Job figure for externally-owned clients in 2009/10 is a result of an increased number of high quality inward investment jobs.

* The total represents the average cost per job over the 3 year period

In terms of relating this activity to actual job creation, it is too early to assess the job creation impact of these offers, as some projects can take up to 5 years to fully mature; Therefore, this answer is

based on new job promotions, which represents the number of jobs that these projects plan to create during their lifetime.

Apprenticeships

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what proportion of the population has an apprenticeship, skilled craft or technician qualification; and how this figure compares with the average in the rest of the U.K.

(AQW 8362/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey for the period January – March 2010 estimated that 12% of the working-age¹ population in Northern Ireland either have, or were undertaking, a recognised apprenticeship².

This proportion is similar to Great Britain, where 10% of the working-age population in the period January - March 2010, were estimated to have, or were undertaking, a recognized apprenticeship.

- 1 Working-age refers to females aged 16 to 59 and males aged 16 to 64.
- 2 takes into account recognised apprenticeships including trade, advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship. Please note that these estimates are sourced to a sample survey and are subject to sampling error.

Source: Labour Force Survey, January – March 2010

Belfast International Airport: £1 Pick-Up and Set-Down Levy

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she has had any discussions with Belfast International Airport regarding the impact of the £1 passenger levy for access to the set-down and pick-up area at Belfast International Airport.

(AQW 8368/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The introduction of a passenger levy is a commercial decision by Belfast International Airport (BIA). I have met representatives of BIA on a number of occasions in recent months and at no stage was the issue of a passenger levy raised.

Investment Allocated to Start-up Manufacturing Companies in South Belfast

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount of investment allocated to start-up manufacturing companies in the South Belfast constituency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8373/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: During the period 2005/06 to 2009/10, Invest NI offered support of nearly £220,000 to new locally-owned start up businesses in the manufacturing sector. Table 1 shows the number of businesses and the associated assistance offered in each of these 5 years. This represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects.

TABLE 1. INVEST NI LOCALLY-OWNED MANUFACTURING START UPS APPROVED IN SOUTH BELFAST PCA (2005/06 AND 2009/10)

Year Of Offer	No of Offers	Assistance Offered £000s
2005/06	6	38.77
2006/07	5	36.40
2007/08	9	68.52
2008/09	18	73.60

Year Of Offer	No of Offers	Assistance Offered £000s
2009/10	3	-
Total	41	217.29

The figures in Table 1 include 33 start ups approved indirectly through the Enterprise Development Programme (formerly the Start a Business programme), delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Northern Ireland. The Enterprise Development Programme established in 2009 does not offer financial support to establish a business. The assistance offered to the 33 start ups was through training, advice and guidance and amounted to just over £10,000.

Support for Start-up Businesses in South Belfast

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many start-up businesses her Department has supported in the South Belfast constituency in each of the last five years.
(AQW 8374/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: During the period 2005/06 to 2009/10, Invest NI offered support to 620 new locally-owned businesses in the South Belfast Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA). Table 1 shows the number of businesses offered assistance in each of these five years.

TABLE 1. INVEST NI LOCALLY-OWNED START UPS APPROVED IN SOUTH BELFAST PCA (2005/06 AND 2009/10)

Year Of Offer	Number of Start Ups
2005/06	131
2006/07	122
2007/08	129
2008/09	115
2009/10	123
Total	620

The figures in Table 1 include 565 start ups approved indirectly through the Enterprise Development Programme (formerly the Start a Business programme), delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Northern Ireland.

First Trust Bank

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact of the sale of the First Trust Bank on its employees.
(AQW 8409/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The implications of the sale of the First Trust Bank will not be known until its purchase has been agreed. However, the potential impact on the existing 1,500 staff and wider credit availability in Northern Ireland are obviously key concerns.

Given that the Irish Government is a significant shareholder in the First Trust's current owners, the Allied Irish Bank, Executive colleagues and I raised these concerns at a recent meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council. In particular, we stressed the importance of giving these issues due consideration in any future sale of the bank.

Furthermore, while the influence that the NI Executive can have on this commercial decision is limited, I can assure you that my Department, through Invest NI, will seek to enter into discussions as necessary

with any prospective buyer to explore options to safeguard the jobs of First Trust Bank employees in Northern Ireland.

Invest NI: Conditions of Support

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether Invest NI require indigenous small and medium enterprises to source match funding as a condition for support and to what extent.

(AQW 8418/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Under both Government policy and the European Commission's rules on state aid, all companies, irrespective of size or country of ownership, must contribute financially towards projects supported by Invest NI.

The extent of a company's contribution depends on its size, the nature of the project seeking support (eg research and development, training or job creation) and the location of the project, but as a general principle companies should be able to contribute at least 50% of a project's costs.

In the financial year 2009-2010, Invest NI offered approximately £94m or 62% of its assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), over two thirds of which (£64m) was offered to locally owned SMEs.

On average, SMEs made a contribution of 76% towards the costs of projects supported in the financial year 2009-2010.

Departmental Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by her Department in the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8420/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: From a search of available records the table below lists, for the last ten years, the DETI contracts over 12 months in duration and to the value of at least £1 million. Details of 'year on year over-runs' and 'break clauses' also included.

(i) Contractor/ Contract/Duration	(ii) Over-runs	(iii) Break Clauses	(iv) Break Clauses Exercised
Hibernia Atlantic (Project Kelvin) (2008-2018)	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
Commendium Ltd (Logon-ni – ICT demo Centres Contract) (2008-2013)	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
BT (100% Broadband Access Contract) (2004-2009)	NO	YES	NO

(i) Contractor/ Contract/Duration	(ii) Over-runs	(iii) Break Clauses	(iv) Break Clauses Exercised
Avanti Communications (Remote Broadband Services Contract) (2009-2012)	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
Citizens Advice (Face to Face Debt Advice Service Contract) (2008-2011)	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
Simmons & Simmons (Energy Legal Advice Contract) (2001-2005)	NO	YES	NO
Simmons & Simmons (Energy Legal Advice Contract) (2005-2008)	NO	YES	NO
Denton Wilde Sapte (Energy Legal Advice Contract) (2008-2011)	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
RPS (Isles Project Feasibility Study*) (2010-2011) * Contract awarded in partnership with Scottish and ROI Governments	N/A - Project still on going	YES	NO
ARUP (Abandoned Mines Engineering Contract) (2002)	NO	NO	NO
Atkins (Abandoned Mines Engineering Contract) (2002 – Present)	NO	NO	NO
Wallace Patrols (Abandoned Mines Security Contract) (2004 – Present)	NO	NO	NO

(i) Contractor/ Contract/Duration	(ii) Over-runs	(iii) Break Clauses	(iv) Break Clauses Exercised
Natural Environment Research Council (GSNI Science and Management Contracts) (1999-2004) (2004-2007) (2005-2007) (2007-2008) (2008-2011)	NO	NO	NO
Weber Shandwick (Tellus Outreach Projects) (2004-2007) (2009-2011)	NO	NO	NO
DCENR (Geological Survey of Ireland) (Tellus Science Audit Project) (2004-2007)	NO	NO	NO
SGS (Geochemical Analysis Contract) (2004 – 2007)	NO	NO	NO
Natural Environment Research Council (Tellus Projects) (2004 – 2007) (2007-2008) (2008-2011)	NO	NO	NO

Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the uptake of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme in the Derry City Council area; (ii) the number of applications; and (iii) the total amount lent, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8430/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme has been in operation since January 2009. As of 30 June 2010, in Northern Ireland, there have been 114 businesses offered Enterprise Finance Guarantee backed loans with a value of £19.8 million, of which 97 businesses have drawn down loans totalling £17.2 million.

In Derry City Council area , 6 businesses have been offered Enterprise Finance Guarantee backed loans with a value of £1.03 million, of which 5 businesses have drawn down loans totalling 0.8 million.

Jobs Created in Cookstown and Magherafelt

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created in (i) the Cookstown District Council area; and (ii) the Magherafelt District Council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8433/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: It is not possible to provide information on the total number of jobs created in each of the areas requested. DETI collect information on the number of jobs at a particular point in time and therefore can only provide the net change between two points in time.

Table 1 provides information on the net increase in all employee jobs in each of the areas requested as measured by the biennial Census of Employment (conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007). The net increase takes into account both job gains and losses during the period.

TABLE 1: NET INCREASE IN ALL EMPLOYEE JOBS BY AREA

District Council Area	2001-2003	2003-2005	2005-2007
Cookstown	966	591	1279
Magherafelt	573	1248	738

Table 2 presents information for those businesses assisted by Invest NI during the five financial years ended March 2009. This is based on the number of jobs promoted or safeguarded relating to projects assisted during this timeframe. Invest NI clients would be expected to create these jobs during the lifetime of assisted projects.

TABLE 2: INVEST NI JOBS PROMOTED & SAFEGUARDED IN COOKSTOWN & MAGHERAFELT DCAS (2005/06 - 2009/10)

Financial Year	Cookstown Dca		Magherafelt Dca	
	New Jobs	Safeguarded Jobs	New Jobs	Safeguarded Jobs
2005/06	56	-	84	41
2006/07	151	1	78	8
2007/08	139	4	116	80
2008/09	107	-	224	10
2009/10	100	260	70	47
Total	553	265	572	186

Notes:

- 1 New Jobs represent the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 2 Safeguarded Jobs represent the number jobs that would have been lost if the project was not supported.

Electricity from Renewable Sources

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the percentage and quantity of electricity generated from wind in each of the last three years; and how this compares with her Department's targets of generating electricity from renewable sources.

(AQW 8450/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

For the 12 months ending	% Onshore wind	MW hours (to nearest thousand)
March 2008	4.91	430,000
March 2009	7.10	584,000
March 2010	8.69	710,000

For the 12 months to March 2010, the total renewable electricity figure stood at 9.25%, of which the onshore wind element was 8.69%. It is expected that the current renewable electricity target of 12% by 2012 will be met.

Avanti Satellite Broadband Satisfaction

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many and what percentage of Avanti satellite broadband customers surveyed by Analysys Mason (i) were not satisfied with their overall service; and (ii) have suffered disruption to their service.

(AQW 8457/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In their survey, Analysys Mason asked Avanti satellite broadband customers to rate the service on a scale of 1 to 10. Of the 215 customers surveyed to end March 2010 (which represents 23% of the Avanti customer base), 65% (140) gave the service 5 or more. With regard to disruption, just over 50% of customers surveyed (108) have indicated that they have experienced service disruption, with the vast majority of these (some 71% - 76 customers) indicating that the disruption was short-term (lasting up to 24 hours).

Avanti Satellite Broadband Speed

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any problems which Avanti are experiencing in achieving the advertised or expected speed of their satellite broadband service.

(AQW 8458/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There is no evidence to suggest that Avanti is not delivering services in line with the specifications of the contract with DETI. This contract specifies a minimum service of up to 512 Kbps.

Avanti Satellite Broadband Complaints

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what percentage of Avanti satellite broadband customers surveyed by Analysys Mason have made a formal complaint to Avanti about their service and how many of these complaints have been resolved.

(AQW 8461/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Of the Avanti satellite broadband customers surveyed by Analysys Mason to end March 2010, 41% (88) have indicated that they have made a complaint to Avanti and of these, 62% (55) have been resolved.

Many of these complaints were not due to technical faults with the network, but relate to disruption by such things as bad weather.

Department of the Environment

Information Sign at Craigs Dolmen outside Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment when a replacement information sign will be provided at Craigs Dolmen outside Rasharkin.

(AQW 7900/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): I refer to your letter to my Department on 14 May 2010 and the subsequent responses issued on 19 May and 10 June 2010.

In May 2009, officers from my Department inspected the passage tomb known as Craig's Dolmen. This inspection was part of an ongoing series of visits being carried out at the c190 monuments in State Care to identify the works requirements at each site. Staff recognised the need for replacement information signage at this monument.

Priority is given to those sites requiring replacement signs where - there are high visitor numbers - which are easily accessible to the public, or - which are of particular archaeological significance. As a result, at present, priority is given to interpretation work at key monuments and sites such as Dunluce Castle and Carrickfergus Castle, both of which are well known State Care Monuments and also part of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Key Signature Projects plus other key sites like Grey Abbey.

Given the other priorities for signage at Monuments in State Care, the sign at Craig's Dolmen will not be replaced immediately. However, the intention is that, as part of a wider update of signage at Monuments in State Care, the sign at Craig's Dolmen will be replaced within the next 24-36 months, subject, of course, to the availability of the finance.

Pollution of the River Bush

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of the Environment what assessment has been made of the on-going pollution of the River Bush, in relation to (i) the current levels of salmon stock; and (ii) the potential long-term impact.

(AQW 7943/10)

Minister of the Environment: During late May and early June 2010, reports of extensive foaming on stretches of the River Bush were received and investigated by NIEA. The natural breakdown of algal can lead to foaming in rivers and in coastal areas and samples have been taken for algal analysis along with standard investigative water samples. The samples will also be tested for the presence of detergents.

Investigations are on-going regarding these reports and the watercourse is being kept under observation.

Whilst my Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating reports of suspected water pollution affecting ground or surface waters and for instigating enforcement action, where necessary, under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, stock levels of fish in waterways is the responsibility of the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL). DCAL has advised that survival during the freshwater phase of the salmon life cycle provides an indication of habitat quality, including water quality, on the River Bush. However, survival rates are also affected by competition for food and habitat territories and predation, and the true picture can be complicated when fry and parr are stocked to enhance freshwater production.

Egg to smolt survival from the most recent fully-recruited egg deposition in 2005 was 1.50% which is an increase on the previous 10 year average of 0.99%. Increased survival rates since lows of 0.62% from 1983-93 are, at least in part, due to work by DCAL to restore silted and compacted spawning beds and enhancement stocking conducted since 1997.

The long term impact of low freshwater survival in a situation of stable marine survival and exploitation rates will be a decline in the number of adult salmon returning to the river over time.

Salmon populations do, however, adapt to survival pressures and so this is not a simple relationship. Unfortunately, poor marine survival is a greater cause for concern at present.

With regard to the potential long-term impact of any pollution on the River Bush, aquatic invertebrates (e.g. snails, insect nymphs, worms and crustaceans) constitute a major food source for fish. Where these are depleted for any reason, including pollution, the food chain becomes distorted and the fish become emaciated or quite simply move to alternative locations where food supplies are more readily available.

Planning Service Redeployment

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Planning Service is the only area within his Department where re-deployment is taking place.

(AQW 7944/10)

Minister of the Environment: It might be helpful if I were to explain the background to the need to redeploy staff from the Department. The Department currently faces in year pressures of circa £16 million (over 12% of our opening budget position). This follows a difficult position last year when we had to absorb financial pressures of circa £9 million (6.6% of our opening budget position). Therefore I am seeking additional in year support to help address the challenges this presents for us. However, final decisions on this rest with the Executive.

These financial pressures mean that we must seek to reduce our workforce numbers quickly. Our first step has been to sustain the workforce reductions introduced last year when budget cover for 260 posts across the Department was withdrawn to reduce our expenditure. However, these workforce reductions implemented last year are not sufficient to meet the greater financial pressures we face this year. Therefore further reductions are necessary this year. I currently estimate that a further 350 posts will need to be removed from the Department this year in order to live within the existing levels of funding available to me. These posts will be located in all parts of the Department. In terms of their breakdown, I currently estimate that 180 of the posts will be in the administration grades and 170 in planning grades.

It is anticipated that the majority of the staff will have to be redeployed to other NI Departments.

Pollution Incidents in River Braid

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of pollution incidents that have occurred in the river Braid in each of the last three years; and for his assessment of (i) the impact on fish stocks to date; and (ii) the long-term impact of such pollution incidents.

(AQW 7963/10)

Minister of the Environment: The number of pollution incidents in the river Braid that have been reported to and substantiated by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in each of the last three years are set out in the table below.

Year	2007	2008	2009	Total
Number of Substantiated Incidents	2	18	8	28

Of these incidents, 25 were classified as being of low severity and 3 of medium severity. Therefore no long term impact would be expected.

The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has advised that electric fishing surveys are conducted on the River Braid to inform DCAL salmon management policy. Surveys use a timed (5 minute) electric fishing technique designed to assess the abundance of age 0+ (young of year) salmon fry. In excess of 40 sites are sampled throughout the Braid River and its tributaries each year and a

standard 'fry index' is developed each year to provide a measure of annual salmon recruitment. The fry indices for the period 2007 to 2009 are shown in the table below.

Year	2007	2008	2009
Salmon Fry index (average no. fry per 5 minute electric fishing)	3.66	3.50	2.35

Fry indices in themselves are not direct evidence that salmonid populations in the River Braid have been impacted by pollution. In general salmonid populations exhibit wide variations in recruitment success which are often associated with environmental and biological parameters. For example, sustained high flows during the winter can lead to the wash out of salmonid redds and reduce egg to fry survival.

With regard to the long-term impact of pollution incidents, aquatic invertebrates (e.g. snails, insect nymphs, worms and crustaceans) constitute a major food source for fish. Where these are depleted for any reason, including pollution, the food chain becomes distorted and the fish become emaciated or quite simply move to alternative locations where food supplies are more readily available.

Climate Change Act 2008

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made by Departments, and their agencies, in fulfilling their obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008.

(AQW 7970/10)

Minister of the Environment: The specific obligations for Northern Ireland as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 include:

- to develop and lay before the Assembly a Northern Ireland Adaptation Programme that deals with the climate change risk identified. This is to include objectives, proposals, policies and timescales;
- for Northern Ireland departments to give their views on the UK Government response to the advice and annual reports of the independent Committee on Climate Change; and
- for Northern Ireland departments to give their views to the UK Government when it is making decisions on the setting of UK carbon targets and budgets.

On the obligation to provide a Northern Ireland Adaptation Programme I can report that preparation of a UK wide sector-based risk assessment is progressing (as per the Act to be completed by January 2012). This risk assessment will be the basis for the Northern Ireland Adaptation Programme. Sector stakeholders from Northern Ireland have already been contributing to the UK risk assessment process through workshops. A further workshop for Departments, their agencies and other organisations is planned to take place in September to consider the specific climate change impacts of most relevance to Northern Ireland.

On our obligations to give views in relation to the UK response to the advice and annual reports of the Committee on Climate Change, I have successfully brought these matters to the Northern Ireland Executive for agreement. This has enabled me to provide on an annual basis the UK government with the agreed Northern Ireland position within the three month period stipulated by the Act.

Likewise on obligations to provide views on the level of ambition in relation to UK carbon budgets and targets, I obtained Executive agreement to the UK carbon target for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 80% in 2050 based on 1990 levels and the level of carbon budgets for carbon budget periods 2008-2012, 2013-2017 and 2018-2022.

In order to deliver against this agenda, I recently reached agreement with the Executive to establish a Cross Departmental Working Group (CDWG) on greenhouse gas emissions. This is a very positive development as it will ensure that those key departments which can deliver against the highest priority actions are fully signed up to the actions necessary to implement the climate change agenda and it

will promote openness and transparency in the monitoring of these actions. The first task of the CDWG will be to prepare a cross-departmental action plan and make recommendations on the prioritisation of actions; a prioritisation which will reflect the contributions of different sectors to the production of greenhouse gas emissions and the potential to influence different types of emissions (i.e. the available policy 'levers').

Statutory Carbon Budgets for Councils

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to introduce statutory carbon budgets for councils.

(AQW 7971/10)

Minister of the Environment: I have no plans to introduce statutory carbon budgets for councils in the current Assembly.

Natural Heritage Grant Scheme

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the level of funding to the Natural Heritage Grant scheme in each of the last three financial years and this financial year to date; and the amount of funding planned for the 2011/12 financial year.

(AQW 7975/10)

Minister of the Environment: The level of funding to the Natural Heritage Grant Programme in each of the last three financial years was as follows:

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
£3,188,501	£3,364,533	£3,406,510

The budget for 2010/11 is £2,702,000. It is not possible to provide figures for 2011/12 as Spending Review 2010 has just been commissioned and budgets for next year have not been agreed.

Illegal Taxi Operators

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of successful prosecutions brought against illegal taxi operators in each of the last three years; and the total amount of the fines imposed.

(AQW 7977/10)

Minister of the Environment: There is currently no legislative provision to enable enforcement action to be taken against taxi operators. However, a licensing scheme is proposed under the Taxis Act (NI) 2008.

The Driver & Vehicle Agency, which has primary responsibility for taxi enforcement in Northern Ireland, has successfully prosecuted 244 illegal taxi drivers over the last three financial years resulting in fines of £65,261 and court costs of £4,980 being awarded. The details are as follows.

Year	Convictions	Fines	Court Costs
2007-08	73	£21,285	£1,546
2008-09	92	£23,971	£1,918
2009-10	79	£20,005	£1,516

Access Officers Scheme

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment why funding has been withdrawn from the Access Officers scheme; and to outline his plans to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against as a result of failure to provide adequate disabled access.

(AQW 7979/10)

Minister of the Environment: I met with Disability Action to discuss their funding position on 7 May 2010 and to hear more about the range of information, advice and practical support the organisation provides to disabled groups and individuals in the community. I also set out my position in the light of the current very challenging financial position for my Department, and in particular for the Planning Service which has pressures on its budgets of over £8m.

As agreed at that meeting, Disability Action has submitted an economic appraisal and case for funding. This is currently under consideration by Planning Service and Departmental Economists who will provide me with proposals on the future funding of the organisation in the near future.

River Pollution and River Bank Erosion on the Lower Bann

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how much his Department, and its agencies, spent in addressing issues of river pollution and river bank erosion on the Lower Bann, in each of the last five years; and (ii) the amount of money currently allocated for future environmental work relating to water purity.

(AQW 7982/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) spent an estimated £68,357 investigating pollution incidents within the Lower Bann catchment between 2005 and 2009. The details are set out on a year by year basis in the table below.

Year	Number of Incidents	Estimated Cost
2005	81	£13,472
2006	80	£13,306
2007	88	£14,636
2008	92	£15,301
2009	70	£11,642
Total	411	£68,357

DARD Rivers Agency, in conjunction with other public bodies, had undertaken the Lower Bann Erosion Alleviation Scheme in 2009 to address flood alleviation and bank erosion issues. This scheme was completed over two financial years. The financial figures over these two years, (2008/09 and 2009/10) are approximately between £8,000 and £12,000. However, due to technical difficulties we are unable to provide an accurate breakdown figure for each financial year. Once this difficulty is rectified, the exact figure will be forwarded.

- (ii) Whilst no specific amount of money has been allocated for future environmental work relating to water purity, a cross-Departmental bid for additional resources has been developed by DOE on behalf of DOE, DARD, DCAL and DRD to implement the Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) through a River Restoration and Improvement Programme (RRIP). The bid, which is just under £9m, is the estimated budget required to implement the Plans over the next three years.

NI Environment Agency

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the action taken by the NI Environment Agency to identify the sources of pollution incidents reported in 2008 and 2009 in the feeder stream (Lismore) to the Three Mile Water river, given the salmonid status and unique location of the river.

(AQW 7988/10)

Minister of the Environment: I can confirm that between 2005 and 2009, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) representatives have responded to all reports of pollution in the feeder stream (Lismore) to the Three Mile Water within set targets which are based on the assessed severity of the incident.

Where pollution is ongoing and visible NIEA representatives can usually identify the point of discharge to the river and then track back through the drainage system to identify the actual origin of the pollution. Where the pollution is intermittent it can be a complex task to track the origin of the problem.

The pollution reports in the Lismore Stream have been intermittent and therefore when staff attend a particular pollution incident, it is not always possible to trace the pollution back to the source. Within urban areas where surface water drainage is discharged into watercourses it can be particularly difficult to trace a pollution source. For example, something polluting a roof drain of one property may cause pollution in the nearby stream. Similar problems can also be encountered through the misconnection of domestic appliances such as washing machines into surface water drains rather than into the foul sewer. Scenarios such as these have thus far meant that it has not been possible to identify the source of pollution in the Lismore Stream.

Recycling of Glass Products

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment how many of the 26 local councils allow households to recycle glass products in their recycling bins; and what steps he is taking to ensure that all local councils allow households to recycle glass products in their recycling bins.

(AQW 8007/10)

Minister of the Environment: At present nine local councils provide a kerbside glass recycling collection scheme. In some of these councils the service is available to all households whilst in others there is partial coverage. Overall, 202,914 households or 28% of all households in Northern Ireland have a kerbside glass collection service.

I am committed to improving Northern Ireland's recycling performance and am keen to support local councils in their efforts to put in place the necessary recycling infrastructure to enable more waste materials, including glass, to be recycled.

Whilst decisions on the collection of waste and the type of container made available to householders for this purpose are a matter for councils, as set out in Articles 20 and 21 of The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, my Department is taking forward a range of initiatives to assist councils in their efforts to boost recycling of key waste streams including glass.

I launched the Rethink Waste Fund on 28 May which will provide an initial £3.13m capital funding to councils to bring forward initiatives to boost recycling of a range of waste streams including glass. In addition, the £1m funding provided by my Department each year to the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has enabled WRAP to provide advice and support to local councils on a range of recycling issues including advice on establishing glass recycling collection systems.

I have asked my officials to commence work on a draft recycling policy which will consider the potential to recycle more of key waste streams, the potential to produce higher quality recyclates and the interventions necessary to bring this about. It is anticipated that the draft policy will be issued for consultation in the autumn.

Renewal of Car Tax

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to extend the range of payment methods available for the renewal of car tax, including the option of using a paypoint card.
(AQW 8008/10)

Minister of the Environment: Vehicle licensing is an excepted matter which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver & Vehicle Agency under a formal agreement between DoE and the Department for Transport (DfT), and policy in relation to vehicle excise duty is determined by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea.

This question has been referred to DVLA and officials from that agency will write to you.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.
(AQW 8012/10)

Minister of the Environment: At the end of each year my Department reviews the expenditure on the use of consultants, and based on this information sets a reduced threshold for expenditure for the following year. The Departmental Board monitors the expenditure on the use of consultants every quarter to ensure compliance with the agreed threshold.

Before reaching a decision to engage consultants, all the Department's business areas have to justify the reason for doing so and must be able demonstrate value for money. To this end, business areas must complete a business case for all external consultant projects. Furthermore, all external consultants projects costing £75,000 and over must receive approval from both myself and the Department of Finance & Personnel.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current position in relation to local government boundaries.
(AQW 8031/10)

Minister of the Environment: I have circulated a paper and draft Local Government (Boundaries) Order to my Executive colleagues for their consideration.

Planning Service Staff

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what criteria will be used when redeploying Planning Service staff to other positions within the Civil Service.
(AQW 8032/10)

Minister of the Environment: There are two distinct groups of staff in the Planning Service affected by the proposed redeployments, general administrative and P&T staff.

The selection of general administrative staff to be redeployed will be based primarily on business requirements i.e. identifying the individuals most suited to the work functions remaining in the Agency, rather than identifying the individuals whose posts are surplus. We will take account of anyone who wishes to volunteer for redeployment. If it is not possible to identify the individuals to remain based on business need and volunteers for redeployment, names may be selected randomly in a fair and transparent manner. Where possible in identifying posts for staff who are to be redeployed their personal preferences will be taken into account.

Separate arrangements exist for P&T staff. They must volunteer for regrading in order to be considered for redeployment - they cannot be compulsorily redeployed.

Planning Service Staff

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment if he will reconsider the decision to reduce Planning Service staff, in light of the recent changes to PPS21 and the likely resulting increase in planning applications.

(AQW 8033/10)

Minister of the Environment: It might be helpful if I were to explain the background to the need to redeploy staff from the Department. The Department currently faces in year pressures of circa £16 million (over 12% of our opening budget position), a large proportion of which, circa £6.4million, relates to a projected shortfall in planning receipts.

This scale of financial pressure within one year is unprecedented in this Department or any other NI Department and follows a difficult position last year when we had to absorb financial pressures of circa £9 million (6.6% of our opening budget position). Therefore I am seeking additional in year support to help address the challenges this presents for us. However, final decisions on this rest with the Executive.

The shortfall in planning receipts arises as a result of a 45% reduction in planning applications received since a high of 36,593 in 2004-05. I estimate that only 20,000 planning applications will be received in 2010-11 much the same as in 2008-09 and 2009-10. However, the actual 'live caseload' in the system for 2009-10 is circa 11,000 planning applications, down considerably from 18,479 in 2007-08. Whereas planning application numbers have been declining, staffing resources have remained static and costs have actually risen.

A contingency report has now been prepared and published on how Planning Service can live within its opening budget allocation. This identifies 271 posts considered surplus in terms of affordability. In light of the reduced volume of planning applications and associated income, redeployment of Planning Service staff is now necessary to align staffing levels and costs more closely to work demands and revenue. The Planning Service will reorganise to live within its budget and reprioritise resources to ensure key services to customers can be maintained and the impact of the reduction in staff is minimised.

I have also initiated a review of the Agency's funding, fees and structures together with a strategic review of its future priorities in light of the funds available. Together these reviews will provide a strategic focus for Planning Service together with a basis for more stable funding going forward. They will also ensure that future structures reflect available resources.

The Department has also initiated a fundamental review of the nature and structure of the fees charged for planning services with the aim of ensuring that the fees charged for specific chargeable services are broadly consistent with the costs of providing those services.

In terms of the current PPS 21 deferred cases, Planning Service has agreed with me an action plan aimed at reassessing these applications within 6 months. Progress will be closely monitored to ensure there is no significant slippage particularly in those divisions which have the greatest numbers of deferred cases.

I have already written to the Finance Minister about the financial pressure facing the Department in 2010-11 and setting out the measures already taken by the Department to address these financial pressures including a review of the provision of corporate services within the Department and two reviews of Planning Service operating costs. The Finance Minister has reiterated that the allocation of funds to departments is a matter for the Executive and that the Department should plan its expenditure on the basis that it will have to manage all of its financial pressures from within its existing agreed budget allocation. He has also indicated that he could not rule out further pressures on the Department's budget but that this is dependent on budgetary decisions which may be made in Westminster during 2010-11.

You will appreciate that, given my responsibilities as Minister and the unequivocal advice from the Minister for Finance & Personnel Sammy Wilson, I am unable to reverse the decision in relation to

redeployment of staff from Planning Service as I am required to live within the Department's existing budget which has already been approved by the Executive.

Local Government Reform Programme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment whether local government could seek a deferred payment option for any loans granted to fund the local government reform programme, until efficiency savings are realised.

(AQW 8061/10)

Minister of the Environment: Deferred repayments cannot be accommodated on loans granted from the Consolidated Fund as the Fund cannot operate at a loss. However, if a compelling case could be made, the Executive may be prepared to consider the option of repaying the capital and interest on local government reform-related borrowings on local government's behalf for an agreed initial period.

Staff Salaries in Excess of £100,000

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment how many staff in his Department, and associated quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8067/10)

Minister of the Environment: The remuneration of the most senior officials in each government department in Northern Ireland is routinely published in departmental Resource Accounts in £5,000 bands.

Remuneration information relating to the 2008/09 financial year is available in the Department of the Environment Resource Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2009 which can be found at

<http://applications.doeni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=16080>.

Information on remuneration bands for senior staff in the Department for 2009/10 is contained in the Departmental Resource Accounts for that year which were laid in the Assembly on 2 July 2010. These will also be published on the website shortly. However I can advise that the Accounts show that one individual currently employed by the Department is paid in the salary band £100,000-£105,000.

The Department does not pay in excess of £100,000 pa with regard to salary/remuneration packages for any individual holding a position within an associated quango. The Department does however contribute 50% towards the salary/remuneration package of one contracted individual whose overall total remuneration would exceed £100,000 pa.

PPS 5

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment when the proposed PPS 5 will be published.

(AQW 8077/10)

Minister of the Environment: On 5 July 2010 Central Craigavon Ltd lodged an appeal against Lord Chief Justice Morgan's judgement of 14 June 2010 with reference to its initial judicial challenge of draft PPS5. While in light of the aforementioned judgement I had hoped to progress the PPS, unfortunately until the outcome of the subsequent appeal of 5 July 2010 is known, it is difficult to provide a definitive timescale for its potential publication.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment why his Department amended the criteria for judging the planning application for the proposed runway extension at the George Best Belfast City Airport, to include economic issues.

(AQW 8133/10)

Minister of the Environment: The criteria have not been amended. Economic factors are taken into account where they are a material consideration.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment why he is not following the terms of the revised planning agreement for the George Best Belfast City Airport which stated that there will be no change in the restrictions, including the Seats for Sale safeguard, until 2013.

(AQW 8135/10)

Minister of the Environment: The modified Agreement contains a restriction limiting airport operators from offering for sale more than 2 million seats from the airport in any period of twelve months. There is no timeframe contained in the Agreement.

Under Article 40A of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 (as amended) the Airport may not apply to modify the Agreement prior to the expiry of the relevant period on 14 October 2013. However, my Department may modify or discharge a planning agreement by agreement if it considers it has good reason to do so.

In announcing that I am minded to lift the seats for sale restriction I have taken into account the earlier expressed view of the Department and the NI Affairs Select Committee that a seats for sale restriction is not a valid or suitable way to manage the environmental impact of airport activity; the view expressed by the Examination in Public that the restriction should only be retained in the short term and reviewed once a noise monitoring and flight tracking system is in place and operational; and the fact that a new integrated noise monitoring and flight tracking system has now been installed by the Airport and is fully operational.

I have instructed my officials to commence a period of consultation with Belfast City Council, North Down Borough Council and the Airport Forum which consists of representatives of local residents groups. The consultation commenced on 11 June 2010 and will last for 12 weeks, closing on 3 September 2010. I wish to emphasise that while I have indicated that I am minded to lift the restriction I will not take a final decision on the matter until all the issues raised in the consultation responses have been carefully considered.

Climate Change Act 2008

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment how much money his Department, and its agencies, have spent on fulfilling their obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008.

(AQW 8158/10)

Minister of the Environment: The specific obligations for Northern Ireland as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 include:

- to develop and lay before the Assembly a Northern Ireland Adaptation Programme that deals with the climate change risk identified. This is to include objectives, proposals, policies and timescales;
- for Northern Ireland departments to give their views on the UK Government response to the advice and annual reports of the independent Committee on Climate Change, which was required to be established under the Climate Change Act 2008; and
- for Northern Ireland departments to give their views to the UK Government when it is making decisions on the setting of UK carbon targets and budgets.

To date my department has spent £225,340 in fulfilling its obligations, under the Climate Change Act 2008.

River Pollution Incidents in Mid-Ulster

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of pollution incidents which occurred in each river in the Mid-Ulster area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8162/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Pollution Incident Database used by Northern Ireland Environment Agency records incidents by catchment rather than a constituency basis, therefore, the Moyola, Lower Bann and Ballinderry catchments have been used to represent the Mid Ulster area for the purposes of this response.

All reports of pollution incidents are investigated and if pollution is confirmed the incident is recorded as being substantiated.

Details of the total number of incidents reported and the number of incidents substantiated are included in the table below.

Year	Catchment	Total Incidents Reported	Number of Incidents Substantiated (Confirmed)
2007	Moyola	19	7
	Lower Bann	88	34
	Ballinderry	62	28
	Total	169	69
2008	Moyola	37	22
	Lower Bann	92	49
	Ballinderry	69	40
	Total	198	111
2009	Moyola	37	19
	Lower Bann	70	36
	Ballinderry	35	23
	Total	142	78

Recycling of Domestic Waste

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment what percentage of domestic waste has been recycled in the (i) Cookstown District Council area; (ii) Magherafelt District Council area; and (iii) Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8165/10)

Minister of the Environment: Councils report their provisional recycling figures quarterly to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in conjunction with the Central Statistics and Research Branch throughout the financial year. The final annual figures are only fully reconciled by the following December. Consequently the figures for the calendar year 2009, given in the attached table and highlighted below, may be subject to further reconciliation.

The attached table at Annex A shows the percentage recycling (including composting) rates between 2005/06 and 2009/10 (provisional estimates only) for Cookstown and Magherafelt District Council areas and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council area.

In the Cookstown District Council area, the recycling rate (including composting) has increased from 28.1% in 2005/06 to 39.6% in 2009/10 (provisional estimate only).

In the Magherafelt District Council area, the recycling rate (including composting) has increased from 35.7% in 2005/06 to 50.8% in 2009/10 (provisional estimate only).

In the Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council area, the recycling rate (including composting) has increased from 19.5% in 2005/06 to 33.9% in 2009/10 (provisional estimate only).

Planning Permission for Extensions

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to cases where planning permission for an extension has been granted as the surrounding view is not affected as trees are growing in the area, but the removal of these trees could impact adversely upon the planning permission.

(AQW 8223/10)

Minister of the Environment: The retention of any trees, regardless of their protected status, can be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application, including for an extension. Where appropriate, my Department may impose conditions to retain trees or other landscape features when granting planning permission where it is considered necessary to do so for reasons relating to visual amenity or privacy of adjoining properties. This will depend on the specific circumstances of each case but such conditions will only be imposed where the applicant has control over the trees.

Heavy Goods Vehicles Carrying Waste

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment what procedures are in place to ensure that heavy goods vehicles carrying waste are properly sealed.

(AQW 8227/10)

Minister of the Environment: Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 imposes a duty of care on persons concerned with controlled waste. The duty applies to any person who carries controlled waste and all waste holders must act to keep waste safe against:

- accidental spilling or leaking or inadvertent leaching from waste unprotected from rainfall;
- accident or weather breaking contained waste open and allowing it to escape; and
- waste blowing away or falling while stored or transported.

Waste which is transferred to another person should be in a container, such as a skip. The only reasonable exception would be loose material loaded into a vehicle and then covered sufficiently with, for example, a tarpaulin or netting, to prevent escape before being moved.

Ballycraig Estate Bonfire in Antrim

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment (i) which statutory agency is responsible for ensuring health and safety in relation to the large quantity of tyres being stored for burning at Ballycraig Bonfire, Antrim; and (ii) whether his Department has made any assessment of the environmental impact this bonfire could have on the health and safety of local residents, and if not, whether he will consider undertaking such an assessment.

(AQW 8228/10)

Minister of the Environment: No one statutory agency has overall control of bonfire management.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency does not regulate, and cannot remove waste from, bonfire sites. Its powers relating to bonfires are limited to investigation of criminal offences that are committed when companies or individuals illegally deposit waste, including tyres, on bonfires. My officials have been liaising with the PSNI about the Ballycraig site and will act on any evidence received regarding the dumping of tyres on the site.

In respect of controlling air pollution arising from bonfires, district councils are the lead enforcement authority and the primary legislation is the Clean Air (NI) Order 1981. Article 4 of the Order prohibits the emission of dark smoke from industrial or trade premises, or other premises on which waste originating from a trade source is burned. Article 23 provides that where a nuisance is caused by smoke emitted from premises, then action can be taken by councils under the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 for 'statutory nuisance.'

My officials do not have any remit to undertake assessments regarding health and safety and therefore such an assessment will not be carried out by NIEA.

Vacancy Control Measures in Local Councils

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment if, and when he will lift the vacancy control measures currently in place in local councils.

(AQW 8239/10)

Minister of the Environment: The vacancy control measures were lifted following a meeting of the Local Government Reform Joint Forum on 23 June 2010, which recommended their immediate suspension. All councils were notified of the suspension via a circular issued by the Local Government Staff Commission on 25 June 2010.

Speed Cameras

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the criteria used when deciding on the use and location of speed cameras.

(AQW 8272/10)

Minister of the Environment: Responsibility for decisions on the use and location of speed cameras does not lie with my Department.

I would recommend that you address your question to the Minister with responsibility for policing and justice.

Ballycraigy Estate Bonfire in Antrim

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all costs incurred by his Department in relation to the Ballycraigy Estate bonfire in Antrim, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8290/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department does not regulate bonfire sites and does not record costs involved in carrying out any investigations in relation to reports of the commercial deposit of waste materials at such sites.

Ballycraigy Estate Bonfire in Antrim

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment what action he has taken to monitor the environmental impact of the Ballycraigy Estate bonfire in Antrim in each of the last two years.

(AQW 8292/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department does not regulate bonfire sites, and has not carried out any environmental impact assessment of the Ballycraigy bonfire.

Alleged Fraud in Craigavon Borough Council

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment whether the alleged fraud in Craigavon Borough Council referred to in the Local Government Auditor's report is sub-judice.

(AQW 8298/10)

Minister of the Environment: The issue of an alleged fraud in Craigavon Borough Council is a matter for the Council and it is my understanding that the Police Service has been notified and is investigating the matter.

The Weir, Sion Mills

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) those considered by his Department or the NI Environment Agency to be stakeholders in the decision-making process for granting a licence to James Herdman to abstract or impound water at The Weir, Sion Mills; (ii) who was informed of this decision; (iii) the dates of these notifications; (iv) any responses received in relation to this decision; and (v) if, and how, all stakeholders were made aware of the ways in which they could make their views known.

(AQW 8302/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) My Department considered the following to be stakeholders on this licence application:- The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure Inland Fisheries, Loughs Agency, internal NIEA Directorates, The Ulster Angling Federation, Foyle Association for Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA), local angling clubs and Lord Morrow, DUP. NIEA engaged with all of these stakeholders as part of the decision-making process for granting the licence to James Herdman.
- (ii) NIEA also informed Lord Morrow, and Loughs Agency of the decision. In line with the Regulations and NIEA policy, a copy of the decision was placed on the public register on 19 February 2010 which is available to view at WMU offices in Lisburn.
- (iii) Lord Morrow was informed of the decision to grant the licence on 22 February 2010 in writing and via e-mail on 2 April 2010. Loughs Agency was informed in writing on 30 March 2010. The Ulster Angling Federation received a copy of the licence at a meeting with NIEA on 5 March 2010.
- (iv) The Ulster Angling Federation responded on 8 March 2010 expressing concerns about the licence conditions. A response to these concerns was issued on 13 April 2010.
- (v) During the consultation process, my Department informed all relevant stakeholders in writing advising that their comments were welcome, and would form part of the decision-making process for this licence application. The Department engaged in an 'open evening' on 11 August 2009 at the hydro plant to enable stakeholders to view the operation and to provide feedback as appropriate. All queries, concerns and comments were taken into consideration when determining the outcome of the application.

Hare Coursing Ban

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment, following the decision to ban hare coursing, what temporary measures will be taken to ensure that hare coursing cannot continue in the interim period until this Bill becomes law.

(AQW 8303/10)

Minister of the Environment: Following the Assembly's decision to introduce a ban on hare coursing using the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, my Department will not issue licences to net hares. This will serve to prevent hare coursing until such times as the Bill becomes law.

Irish Hare Population

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) what correspondence his Department has had with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on the delayed cutting and grazing option of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Schemes in relation to the Irish hare population; and (ii) whether this discussion had any effect on his Department's position on the protection status of the Irish hare.

(AQW 8304/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) There has been no direct correspondence between my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) on the delayed cutting and grazing option of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme in relation to the Irish hare population. However, research sponsored by my Department, and undertaken by Queen's University, would have informed DARD's choice of option for the Irish Hare in this scheme.
- (ii) There was no direct correspondence, consequently there was no effect on my Department's position on the protection status of the Irish hare.

Consultants in Councils

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the costs of consultants used in each of the 26 councils, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8306/10)

Minister of the Environment:

Council	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
Antrim	183,869	161,234	106,624
Ards	159,409	239,005	281,159
Armagh	209,145	199,066	154,539
Ballymena	194,535	254,609	392,530
Ballymoney	32,679	46,285	39,012
Banbridge	58,000	40,000	90,000
Belfast	2,053,203	2,577,155	3,367,630
Carrickfergus	13,913	25,671	39,124
Castlereagh	0	34,859	13,056
Coleraine	145,838	183,151	203,810
Cookstown	25,457	24,583	33,459
Craigavon	242,562	385,930	357,279
Derry	170,445	153,668	270,751
Down	726,328	1,093,165	920,042
Dungannon & South Tyrone	160,539	210,018	309,999
Fermanagh	78,100	84,175	152,130
Larne	201,473	141,671	226,094
Limavady	69,093	16,354	41,471
Lisburn	71,108	173,324	210,843
Magherafelt	25,592	126,167	129,841
Moyle	54,031	27,095	64,422
Newry & Mourne	84,844	186,492	254,628
Newtownabbey	1,037,760	1,191,583	1,052,810
North Down	161,965	147,264	125,785

Council	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
Omagh	224,127	103,282	144,974
Strabane	115,998	115,643	156,988
Total	6,500,014	7,941,449	9,139,000

The cost of consultants used in each of the 26 district councils in each of the last three years is detailed in the table below.

■ District Council Expenditure On Consultancy

Councils: Senior Management Costs

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost of senior management in each of the 26 councils, including chief executives and deputy chief executives, directors and heads of services, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 8307/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department does not hold the information requested and to obtain it from councils would incur a disproportionate cost.

Councils' Spend on Public Relations Staff and Resources

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail how much each of the 26 councils spent on public relations staff and resources, including advertising, in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 8308/10)

Minister of the Environment: The total cost of Public Relations in each of the 26 district councils for the last two years is detailed in the table below.

DISTRICT COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

Council	2007/2008 £	2008/2009 £
Antrim	123,463	130,600
Ards	61,970	55,318
Armagh	53,955	66,477
Ballymena	105,190	177,942
Ballymoney	60,168	80,137
Banbridge	100,460	102,565
Belfast	1,402,747	1,462,512
Carrickfergus	17,168	14,085
Castlereagh	135,293	118,010
Coleraine	432,625	465,849
Cookstown	119,419	127,103
Craigavon	239,116	248,765
Derry	145,025	134,696

Council	2007/2008 £	2008/2009 £
Down	73,144	56,964
Dungannon & S Tyrone	86,901	50,558
Fermanagh	98,839	106,860
Larne	38,929	72,607
Limavady	106,960	99,496
Lisburn	271,106	286,134
Magherafelt	42,725	80,772
Moyle	46,512	35,434
Newry & Mourne	230,012	299,582
Newtownabbey	219,187	241,062
North Down	364,756	305,092
Omagh	146,723	144,918
Strabane	202,552	164,936
Total	4,924,945	5,128,474

Quarries

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of the Environment how many quarries are (i) registered for an aggregate levy relief; and (ii) have an exemption to sell mud rock and shale without charging an aggregate levy; and whether any quarries are currently operating without planning permission.

(AQW 8321/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) There are currently 169 quarry sites registered in the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme, who are in receipt of the 80% reduction in the Aggregates Levy.
- (ii) The Department does not keep records for those quarries with exemptions. The Department is not responsible for the making of decisions on whether an exemption from the payment of the Aggregates Levy applies. Exemption decisions are the responsibility of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, who have advised the Department that they do not have any readily available statistics on sites with regard to exempt material.
- (iii) The Department is currently investigating 29 live enforcement cases involving the unauthorised winning and working of minerals (rock, sand and gravel) without the benefit of planning permission. This figure is taken from a live database and may be subject to change as further cases are identified or existing cases are resolved.

Council Legal Services

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost of legal services in each of the 26 local councils, broken down by (i) solicitors' fees; (ii) barristers' fees; (iii) court costs; and (iv) settlement awards, in each of the last three years; and to indicate whether each service was subject to a tender competition.

(AQW 8327/10)

Minister of the Environment: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

PPS 21

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment whether there will be an opportunity for further discussions in relation to planning applications, deferred until the completion of PPS21, which have been recommended for refusal.

(AQW 8334/10)

Minister of the Environment: I can confirm that I have decided there will be another opportunity to defer such applications. The Chief Executive of Planning Service wrote to all district councils on 2 June 2010, following the publication of PPS21, advising them of the reassessment exercise to be carried out in relation to around 2,500 deferred applications. In terms of this reassessment I have decided these should be handled as follows:

- (1) Priority will be given to any application that can be approved in terms of the revised policy with an aim to return these to Council and issue a decision as soon as possible.
- (2) Where a reconsidered opinion to refuse is formed, the application will be returned to council with an opinion to refuse. The council will then have another opportunity to defer these applications again, to allow an office meeting to be held if that is the corporate view of the council. Following the deferral and reconsideration the council will be reconsulted and a decision either to approve or refuse will be issued.
- (3) The applicant will, of course, have an opportunity to appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission if the application is refused.

Vehicles that Transport Animal Carcasses

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any regulations in place to restrict vehicles which transport animal carcasses to rendering plants from accessing the main streets of Crumlin; and (ii) what consideration he has given to introducing such measures to alleviate the concerns of the public.

(AQW 8369/10)

Minister of the Environment: There are no regulations in place to restrict vehicles which transport animal carcasses to rendering plants from accessing the main streets of Crumlin. Such material is not subject to the ordinary waste management controls administered by my Department, such as Duty of Care and Carrier Registration.

However, animal carcasses are classified as animal by-products and they are controlled under the Animal By-Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (ABP Regulations).

The ABP Regulations include transport conditions and require both unprocessed carcasses and processed material to be identified, transported in covered containers and accompanied by a commercial document or a health certificate.

The movement controls require animal by-products to be collected and transported in covered leak-proof containers or vehicles. Some renderers have in place a system to collect animal by-products in compartmentalised vehicles.

The ABP regulations are administered by DARD and already include stringent measures to protect public and animal health. Although DARD proposes to introduce new Animal By-Products Regulations in Northern Ireland in 2011. I am not aware that they are considering any additional measures at this time.

Review of Public Administration

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment why he did not make a formal statement to the Assembly on the stalling of the Local Government aspects of the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 8394/10)

Minister of the Environment: At its meeting on 14 June, the Executive was unable to reach agreement on a way forward for the local government reform programme.

In the absence of an agreement I wrote to the Speaker of the Assembly on 15 June, outlining where the local government reform programme now stood and what the next steps would be in the reform process. Copies of that letter were provided to all Assembly Members, so that they were immediately aware of the latest position.

I have made clear my commitment and that of the Executive to delivering its vision for local government, ensuring the needs of all citizens are at its core.

I have also made clear my intention to bring fresh proposals on a delivery timetable before the Executive over the summer, with the objective of reaching agreement and providing clarity on the delivery timetable for local government reform.

When I am in a position to clarify these matters, I intend to make a Statement to the Assembly on the way forward for all those affected by or with an interest in local government reform.

Wind Farms

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications have been approved for wind farms including the number of turbines involved and an estimate of the potential energy to be generated by each farm.

(AQW 8395/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has to date approved 41 planning applications for wind farms, involving the construction of 339 turbines with the potential to generate 585MW of energy. The details of each planning approval are set out in the table below.

CURRENT WIND FARMS

Extant Approvals	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)
Corkey	Ballymoney	10	5
Rigged Hill	Limavady	10	5
Eliot's Hill	Ballymena	10	5
Bessy Bell	Strabane	10	5
Slieve Rushen	Fermanagh	Superseded	Superseded
Owenreagh	Strabane	10	5
Lendrum's Bridge	Dungannon	20	13.2
Altahullion	Limavady	20	26
Lough Hill	Omagh	Superseded	Superseded
Callagheen	Fermanagh	13	22.75
Tappaghan	Fermanagh	13	19.5
Bessy Bell II	Omagh	Superseded	Superseded
Wolf Bog	Ballymena	5	8.75
Owenreagh II	Strabane	6	5.1
Bin Mt.	Strabane	6	9
Lough Hill II	Strabane	6	10.5
Altahullion ext	Limavady	9	5.2
Slieve Rushen	Fermanagh	18	54

Extant Approvals	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)
Garves	Ballymoney	5	15
Glen Buck	Ballymoney	1	2.5
Slieve Divena	Omagh	12	24
Crighshane	Strabane	14	28
Churchill	Strabane	8	16
Bessy Bell (Rev)	Omagh	6	9
Crockagarron	Omagh	6	18
Gruig	Ballymoney	10	17.5
Slieve Divena II	Omagh	8	12
Hunters Hill	Omagh	8	13.2
Thornog	Omagh	4	9.2
Curryfree	Londonderry	6	15
Screggagh	Omagh	8	18.4
Tappaghan Ext	Fermanagh	6	9
Long Mountain	Ballymoney	12	27.6
Altamooskin	Omagh	3	6
Slieve Kirk	Londonderry	12	27.6
Carrickatane	Strabane	9	27
Gortfinbar	Omagh	5	12.5
Ballyreagh, Tempo	Fermanagh	1	2.5
Tievenameenta	Strabane	15	45
Glenconway	Limavady	8	18.4
Carn Hill	Newtownabbey	6	12.6
Total: 41		339	585

George Best Belfast City Airport: Seats for Sale

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment who was consulted in relation to the proposed removal of the 'seats for sale' limit at George Best Belfast City Airport; and if he can confirm whether the public or local residents were included in the consultation.

(AQW 8399/10)

Minister of the Environment: Under Article 40A(2) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 my Department is required to consult with the District Council for the area in which the land, which is the subject of the Agreement, is situated. However, given the high level of public interest in the airport's operational activities and in the interests of openness and transparency I have decided to follow the same consultative process as undertaken with the 2008 modified Planning Agreement. In this context Belfast City Council, North Down Borough Council and the Airport Forum which consists of representatives of local residents groups have been consulted.

Wind Farms

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications are currently being considered for wind farms including the date on which they were submitted, the number of turbines involved and an estimate of the potential energy to be generated by each farm.

(AQW 8403/10)

Minister of the Environment: Currently my Department is considering 46 planning applications for wind farm developments. This would involve the construction of 296 turbines with a potential generating capacity of 749MW. The details of each application are set out in the attached table.

PROPOSED WIND FARMS

Application	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)	Date Submitted
Tullinoid	Fermanagh	6	10.5	08/03/04
Eglish	Londonderry	6	15	11/02/05
Drumadarragh	Newtonabbey	4	11.5	16/05/05
Ora More	Fermanagh	9	20.7	15/12/05
Crockdun	Omagh	5	15	20/01/06
Cregganconroe	Omagh	5	10	31/01/06
Altgolan	Strabane	7	17.5	21/08/06
Seegronan	Strabane	6	14	21/08/06
Elginny Hill	Ballymena	10	20	02/08/06
Eshmore	Dungannon	3	9	04/09/06
Inishative	Omagh	6	18	17/10/06
Corby Knowe	Antrim	3	9	17/10/06
Slatbeg	Dungannon	9	20.7	29/08/06
Rathsherry	Ballymena	9	20.7	06/09/06
Castleraig	Omagh	10	30	22/11/06
Altahullion III	Limavady	12	27.6	05/01/07
Glenbuck II	Ballymoney	3	6.9	01/12/06
Clunahill	Omagh	7	21	22/05/07
Gronan	Strabane	15	34.5	02/10/07
Brockaghboy	Coleraine	20	60	14/12/07
Koram Hill	Strabane	6	13.8	10/05/07
Tullywisker	Strabane	3	6	29/10/07
Shantavny Scotch	Dungannon	7	14	29/10/07
Farkland	Limavady	17	51	12/12/07
Slieveglass	Strabane	3	6.9	28/01/08
Crockbrack	Cookstown	1	2	11/02/08

Application	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)	Date Submitted
Curraghmulkin (Dooish)	Omagh	17	39.1	12/03/08
Lisnamuck	Coleraine	3	6	21/02/08
Teiges	Fermanagh	5	12.5	31/03/08
Cappagh	Dungannon	3	9	14/04/08
Aghamore	Strabane	5	15	01/05/08
Meenakeeran	Strabane	8	24	14/04/08
Slieve Croob	Banbridge	1	2.3	27/12/07
Molly Mountain	Fermanagh	7	21	15/08/08
Corkey Ext	Ballymoney	1	2.5	04/09/08
Crockbaravally	Omagh	3	6.9	05/12/08
Mullynaveagh	Dungannon	2	4.6	05/12/08
Connaught Road	Antrim	2	1.7	02/06/08
Smulgedon	Limavady	7	17.5	18/02/09
Crockagarran	Omagh	1	3	04/03/09
Thornog Ext	Omagh	4	9.2	01/04/09
Cloonty	Ballymoney	4	10	08/05/09
Monnaboy	Londonderry	4	10	06/11/09
Crockandun	Magherafelt	11	33	08/01/10
Beltonanean	Cookstown	1	2.3	12/05/10
Binnawooda	Strabane	15	34.5	17/05/10
Total: 46		296	749.1	

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if the George Best Belfast City Airport has amended its environmental statement regarding the planning application to extend the runway, in light of the criticism expressed in the recent Civil Aviation Authority report.

(AQW 8405/10)

Minister of the Environment: The George Best Belfast City Airport has not amended its environmental statement in light of the Civil Aviation Authority report.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the total numbers of current and former civil servants who are eligible for back pay under the Equal Pay settlement.

(AQW 7408/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): There are approximately 16,000 current and former civil servants who are eligible for inclusion in the NICS equal pay settlement.

Credit or Debit Cards Held by Government Departments

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of credit or debit cards held by each Government Department and its agencies; and (ii) the total amount of money transacted on each card over the last three years.

(AQW 7720/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of credit cards held by each department, and the amount transacted on these over the last three years is detailed in the table below. There are currently no debit cards held by Government departments or their agencies.

Department	No of credit cards	Amount transacted		
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
DARD	0	£0	£0	£0
DCAL	0	£0	£0	£0
DE	1	£2,198	£748	£920
DEL	0	£0	£0	£0
DETI	0	£0	£0	£0
DFP	1	£4,745	£1,208	£724
DHSSPS	0	£0	£0	£0
DoE	0	£0	£0	£0
DRD	0	£0	£0	£0
DSD	1	£0	£0	£6,488
OFMDFM	0	£0	£0	£0
Total	3	£6,943	£1,956	£8,132

As this question relates to the years prior to the devolution of policing and justice, the Department of Justice has not been included.

Hospitality

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent on hospitality by each Government Department and its agencies in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7722/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The table below sets out the total spent on hospitality by each department and its agencies in each of the last three years:

Department	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
DARD	£55,931	£74,991	*£80,072
DCAL	£43,473	£64,452	£44,930
DE	£88,877	£74,495	£56,883
DEL	£35,455	£45,356	**£62,970

Department	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
DETI	£17,026	£18,777	£19,868
DFP	£205,000	£209,000	£91,000
DHSSPS	£137,400	£196,700	£104,800
DoE	£124,238	£121,996	£102,009
DRD	£80,310	£55,695	£45,609
DSD***	£62,032	£129,483	£77,617
OFMDFM	£207,000	£238,000	£187,000
Total	£1,056,742	£1,228,945	£872,758

* Figures in respect of 2009/10 are provisional as resource accounts have not been finalised.

** It should be noted that expenditure in 2009-10 includes £10,382 that arose as a result of the resolution of disputed invoices for costs originating in 2007-08 (£3,122) and 2008-09 (£7,260).

*** The DSD figures include expenditure incurred by DSD in relation to services provided to DWP which is then recovered by DSD.

The Department of Justice came into existence on 12th April 2010. Details of payments on hospitality before that date are a matter for the previous department. Similar information to that requested is publicly available in Hansard in relation to the Northern Ireland Office (House of Commons reference: 26 June 2009: Column 1207W).

Travel Expenses

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent in each of the last five years by each Government Department and its agencies on (i) air fares; (ii) taxi fares; (iii) overnight accommodation; and (iv) meals while on business.

(AQW 7723/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The information requested is set out in the attached tables. However, in answering, I would wish to highlight the following points:

If a Northern Ireland Civil Service employee is on official business, meals are classified as subsistence allowances. Dependant on how long an individual is away from their place of work they may be entitled to a meals allowance which is classified as either day or night subsistence. If the individual is abroad they will be entitled to an overseas subsistence.

The Department of Justice came into existence on 12 April 2010. Therefore the information requested for this Department is not available.

The figures for 09/10 are provisional.

AIRFARES

Department	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
DCAL*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	50,632
PPS	38,159	21,202	19,820	14,854	28,613
DFP	366,000	267,000	321,000	291,000	225,000
DE	31,171	37,544	34,498	27,924	19,955
OFMDFM	144,700	128,800	221,700	304,200	195,500

Department	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
DEL	120,957	86,262	104,216	101,087	92,407
DRD**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
DSD	379,372	305,150	406,419	415,166	350,183
DOE*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	129,123
DETI	594,136	530,459	587,694	622,427	605,451
DHSSPS	272,303	263,393	279,978	133,700	231,768
DARD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	193,067

* Prior to 2009/10, DOE, DCAL and DARD are unable to extract this information without conducting an extensive manual exercise which would only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

** DRD is unable to provide the amounts in respect of airfare costs for the years requested.

TAXI FARES

Department	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
DCAL*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,097
PPS**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
DFP	21,000	28,000	27,000	28,000	19,000
DE	2,270	2,896	2,987	3,089	1,687
OFMDFM	14,500	12,400	20,100	14,600	14,900
DEL	11,640	9,340	8,344	8,096	8,087
DRD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,774
DSD***	40,180	50,194	70,319	48,897	52,003
DRD****	5,135	7,187	4,881	5,579	8,565
DETI	68,369	58,517	43,300	51,648	61,730
DHSSPS*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8,049
DARD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,931

* For the financial years 2005-06 to 2008-09 (inclusive), complete figures on taxi fares could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

** PPS are unable to supply taxi figures for these years.

*** Prior to the introduction of the Account NI system in DSD in November 2008, cost information on taxi fares were included in the generic category of public transport costs. Total public transport costs for 2005/06 to October 2008, are, therefore, included for information in the table above, with specific taxi cost information provided from November 2008.

**** Information provided relates to the payment of taxi companies for DOE Core, Planning Service and Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Expenditure in relation to taxi fares claimed by staff through travel claims cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. Information also includes claims by staff in the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) which operates as a trading fund and has its own accounting system.

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

Department	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
DCAL*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19,604
PPS	9,705	9,260	14,999	6,239	8,181
DFP	84,000	14,000	40,000	141,000	115,000
DE	30,828	28,180	31,950	24,177	23,252
OFMDFM**	44,600	60,400	100,000	128,400	111,900
DEL***	n/a	n/a	n/a	22,640	26,984
DRD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	30,198
DSD	181,827	170,545	171,932	176,519	146,842
DOE*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	68,243
DETI	162,964	183,129	199,370	181,481	250,725
DHSSPS*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	32,839
DARD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	85,770

* For the financial years 2005-06 to 2008-09 (inclusive), complete figures on overnight accommodation could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

** Before 2008/09 the accommodation and meals elements of overnight subsistence costs were not recorded separately in the accounts of OFMDFM. As a result, the costs of overnight accommodation shown in the table above for the years 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 include associated meals costs.

*** The Department does not hold information in a format that would facilitate identification of overnight accommodation for 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08.

MEALS ON BUSINESS

Department	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
DCAL*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	22,516
PPS	16,754	19,261	26,506	26,312	21,787
DFP	195,000	227,000	146,000	126,000	100,000
DE	53,467	46,829	51,140	41,793	43,667
OFMDFM**	7,000	8,400	7,000	5,800	5,900
DEL***	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
DRD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45,580
DSD	170,346	153,560	142,198	119,025	114,541
DOE*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	183,309
DETI	69,739	78,544	67,803	78,121	82,616
DHSSPS****	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
DARD*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	363,730

* For the financial years 2005-06 to 2008-09 (inclusive), complete figures for meals on business could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

** Prior to 2008/09 the costs of overnight meals allowances were not recorded separately from overnight accommodation, so for the years 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 the costs do not include expenditure on overnight subsistence.

*** The Department does not hold information that would facilitate identification of meals on business for any year.

**** Complete figures on meals could only be provided at disproportionate cost

Pension Enhancements and Lump Sums to Senior Civil Servants

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total amount of money paid out by each Department and its agencies on (i) pension enhancements; and (ii) lump sums to senior civil servants leaving the service, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7724/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Under the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) the main Scheme benefits are met through the Civil Superannuation. Departments are responsible for meeting the cost of any early retirements where a civil servant leaves the Service under compulsory, flexible or approved terms.

The early retirement costs met by the Departments on (i) pensions include the following:

- annual compensation payments;
- pensions payments before pension age;
- pensions increase payments before pension age; and
- the capitalised cost of the enhanced element of the pension payable from pension age.

The early retirement costs met by the Departments on (ii) lump sums include the following:

- redundancy compensation payments;
- the cost of early payment of the accrued superannuation lump sum; and
- the enhanced element of the superannuation lump sum.

Tables (i) and (ii) provide the total cost to each Department and its agencies on (i) pensions and (ii) lump sums to senior civil servants leaving on early retirement in each of the last five years.

TABLE (I) THE EXPENDITURE INCURRED BY EACH DEPARTMENT AND IT AGENCIES ON PENSION DURING FINANCIAL YEARS 2005-2006 TO 2009-2010 IS SET OUT IN THE TABLE BELOW.

Departmental Expenditure on Pension					
Department	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
DOE	£44,050.68	£66,980.84	£31,090.97	£32,279.10	£41,853.90
DETI	£19,303.16	£25,807.69	£53,626.17	£19,685.93	£25,819.79
DEL	£23,157.36	£14,914.67	£0	£34,439.62	£36,854.37
DRD ¹	£67,214.18	£87,420.44	£25,790.41	£0	£0
DFP	£0	£23,658.32	£13,538.44	£49,508.23	£52,206.30
OFMDFM	£14,332.65	£31,406.50	£698.16	£0	£0
DCAL	£0	£0	£5,055	£31,059	£9,3603
DARD	£17,613.92	£45,593.55	£32,105.22	£28,933.44	£56,060.49
DSD	£0	£0	£40,036.15	£45,310.51	£15,064.68

Departmental Expenditure on Pension					
Department	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
DE	£0	£0	£0	£0	£67,795
DOJ ²	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
DHSSPS ⁴	£20,000	£13,000	£29,000	£51,000	£18,000

TABLE (II) THE EXPENDITURE INCURRED BY EACH DEPARTMENT AND IT AGENCIES ON LUMP SUMS DURING FINANCIAL YEARS 2005-2006 TO 2009-10 IS SET OUT IN THE TABLE BELOW.

Departmental Expenditure on Lump Sums					
Department	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
DOE	£8,193.42	£13,579.45	£0	£0	£1,255.33
DETI	£2,732.42	£5,987.38	£3,559.55	£0	£3,934.22
DEL	£4,376.73	£0	£0	£7,797.20	£0
DRD ¹	£16,991.12	£0	£0	£0	£0
DFP	£0	£6,212.93	£0	£10,155.77	£0
OFMDFM	£3,905.81	£0	£0	£0	£0
DCAL	£0	£0	£3,888.68	£0	£0
DARD	£11,968.66	£2,790.84	£0	£0	£0
DSD	£0	£0	£9,696.02	£0	£0
DE	£0	£0	£0	£0	£7,860
DOJ ²	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
DHSSPS ⁴	£2,000	£1,000	£0	£3,000	£0

- 1 DRD have included Water Service figures for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 only.
- 2 The Department of Justice came into existence on 12 April 2010. Details of payments on pension enhancements and lump sums before that date are a matter for the previous Department, the Northern Ireland Office.
- 3 Provisional figure which may be subject to change following 2009-10 final outturn confirmation.
- 4 DHSSPS have provided figures round to the nearest £k.

Suspended Civil Servants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, for each Government Department, (i) the total number of civil servants who have been suspended on (a) full pay; and (b) part pay in each of the last five years; and (ii) the total of (a) salaries; (b) national insurance; and (c) pension contributions paid in respect of these employees during their period of suspension.

(AQW 8049/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The information requested is provided in the table attached. The data sourced is for each of the last five financial years. Figures presented include both industrial and non-industrial permanent staff in the eleven Ministerial Departments and their respective Executive Agencies. In view of concerns regarding Data Protection principles, figures have been amalgamated rather than broken down by individual departments.

Year	2005/06	2006/07*	2007/08**	2008/09	2009/10***
Number of Civil Servants suspended on full pay	19	22	7	9	8
Number of Civil Servants suspended on part pay	0	0	0	0	0
Total Salary paid	81991.11	137589.58	93586.04	88764.74	168626.44
Total national insurance paid	5555.16	11104.15	7186.43	6355.02	9560.27
Total pensions paid	13654.60	25032.55	11104.85	14584.7	27249.44

* These figures include payments made to 1 individual whose suspension began during the 2005/06 year

** These figures include payments made to 2 individuals whose suspension began during the 2006/07 year.

*** These figures include payments made to 3 individuals whose suspension began during the 2008/09 year.

Contracts for the Painting and Decorating of Public Buildings

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to detail the contracts that have been awarded for the painting and decorating of public buildings in each of the last three years; (ii) to outline the procedures in place to ensure that the contracts have been carried out according to paint specification, particularly where fire resistant paint is required; and (iii) whether any contractor has breached the terms and conditions of a contract in relation to paint specification.

(AQW 8055/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel has not awarded any contracts specifically for painting or decorating of public buildings in the last three years. All painting and decorating work during this period has either been undertaken as part of a more general construction contract or as an order issued in accordance with an existing Measured Term Contract (MTC).

The Department's Project Manager is responsible for monitoring compliance with the specification and for ensuring that all works are completed in accordance with the contract.

This monitoring process would include appropriate controls. In particular, where the painting work is of a specialist nature, periodic checks may be undertaken to ensure that adequate surface preparation has been carried out; that the correct type of paint has been applied; and that the correct thickness of paint has been achieved.

DFP has no record of any contractor having breached their terms and conditions of contract in relation to a paint specification.

Departmental Solicitor's Office Staff

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Departmental Solicitor's Office staff are currently allocated to the Department for Regional Development.

(AQW 8075/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Staff within the Departmental Solicitor's Office are not allocated to particular Departments. Work from several Departments is allocated to each Division within DSO on the basis of its nature and subject-matter. Management information indicates that, on average over the past three years, work for the Department of Regional Development has required the equivalent of 15.7 full time members of DSO's legal staff.

Humanist Wedding Ceremonies

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to granting legal status to humanist wedding ceremonies.

(AQW 8083/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Marriage legislation was the subject of extensive review in Northern Ireland a few years ago and widely consulted on. The Marriage (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 provides for two types of marriage ceremony; a religious marriage solemnised by an officiant i.e. a member of a religious body registered to carry out this function; and a civil marriage carried out by a registrar/deputy registrar appointed by a local registration authority as a statutory office holder for this purpose. There has been no previous approach from anyone on this matter either at the pre-legislation public consultation stage, during the actual legislative stages or subsequently.

Health and Social Care Board ICT Group's Bid for a New Computer System

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Regional Health and Social Care Board ICT Group's recently approved bid for a new computer system for the board (i) if the bid has been submitted to his Department for approval; (ii) the value of the bid; and (iii) when he expects to make a decision on it.

(AQW 8110/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: My Department has not received a bid for funds in respect of the Regional GP out-of-hours server project.

Procurement Opportunities for Local Companies

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the measures his Department has taken in the last three years to improve or open up procurement opportunities for local companies, contractors, sub-contractors and small and medium-sized enterprises.

(AQW 8193/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Public procurement is subject to EU Treaty obligations, which require freedom of movement, transparency and non-discrimination on the basis of nationality. Public sector buyers therefore cannot restrict their purchases of goods, works or services to favour local firms.

Government recognises the important contribution that local companies make to the economy of Northern Ireland and in response to the economic downturn my department established the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland (CIFNI) Procurement Task Group.

Following the publication of the Task Group Report, in April 2009, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs) engaged with the Construction Industry Group for Northern Ireland to develop proposals specifically aimed at maximising opportunities for SMEs.

These measures have been incorporated into a standard Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) template to be used to shortlist firms for invitation to tender for works contracts. The PQQ streamlines the assessment of contractors' health and safety competency; includes proportionate minimum standards for financial standing for individual firms; and accommodates applications from smaller enterprises to come together as consortia to bid for government contracts. It is being rolled out across all CoPEs from 1 March 2010.

In June 2010 CPD established a Business and Industry Forum for Northern Ireland (BIFNI). This Forum will provide a strategically focused interface between representatives from CPD, the CoPEs and the wider business community, where parties can consider matters of mutual interest including procurement opportunities.

CPD also introduced the eSourcing NI electronic tendering portal in May 2008 and it is expected that it will be operational across all CoPEs by September 2010. The portal will provide SMEs with a single

source for all Government procurement opportunities. It also simplifies and standardises the tendering procedure thereby reducing the cost and time required to participate in the procurement process.

In addition, CPD has delivered presentations on 'how to access Government procurement opportunities' to over 2000 delegates at some 35 workshops across Northern Ireland.

Civil Service Redundancies

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the civil service posts that have been removed through (a) compulsory; and (b) voluntary redundancies in each of the last five years; (ii) the severance packages available to staff; and (iii) the cost of each package, broken down by Department.

(AQW 8218/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Civil Service Pensions have responsibility for the management of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) and its associated schemes, which includes the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland) [CSCS(NI)]. The severance packages available to staff are set out in the rules of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland) which can be viewed at www.civilservice.pensions-ni.gov.uk.

Table 1 below shows the number of civil service posts which have been removed through (a) compulsory and (b) voluntary redundancies in each of the last five years.

The cost of the redundancy packages under (i), (a) and (b) which took place in the last five years, broken down by Department is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1: COMPULSORY / VOLUNTARY – POSTS SUPPRESSED

	05/06		06/07		07/08		08/09		09/10	
Dept	Comp	Vol	Comp	Vol	Comp	Vol	Comp	Vol	Comp	Vol
DARD	1		2				1			
DRD ¹		15		7						
DFP				1						
DETI					1					

1: DRD Water Service Staff moved from NICS to NI Water.

TABLE 2: COSTS OF PACKAGE TO EACH DEPARTMENT.

	DARD	DRD	DFP	DETI
Cost to Dept	£54k	£1,328k	N/R	N/R

Non Reportable: Individual costs cannot be provided as this would be in breach of the Data Protection Act.

Corporation Tax

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the proposed reduction in corporation tax announced in the recent budget; and if he has made any representations to the Treasury to have corporation tax in Northern Ireland reduced further to compete with the 12% rate in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 8220/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Chancellor has announced a reduction in the main rate of corporation tax from 28% to 24% over four years from 1 April 2011. The rate of corporation tax for small firms will be reduced from 21% to 20% with effect from 1 April 2011.

Furthermore, the UK Coalition Government has committed to producing a paper examining the potential mechanisms for changing the corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland. While I welcome this decision it is important to remain cautious about the potential costs of such a proposal. I will engage with Treasury Ministers as this work develops and my office is in the process of arranging an initial meeting with the Exchequer Secretary, Mr David Gauke.

First Trust Bank

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail his Department's efforts to promote a strong banking sector; and to detail the extent of his contact with Minister Brian Lenihan TD to protect the interests of First Trust Bank employees and customers in light of AIB group's proposals to sell the First Trust Bank to raise capital.

(AQW 8234/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Banking policy and banking regulation is a Reserved Matter for HM Treasury and the Financial Services Authority. However, I have engaged extensively with the local banks through my role as Chair of the Executive's Cross Sector Advisory Forum Banking and Lending Sub-group. This Sub-Group made six recommendations to the Executive, which are now being taken forward through the recently published 'The Executive's Priority Measures to Deal with the Economic Downturn.'

I have met with Minister Lenihan on numerous occasions over the past year to discuss NAMA and wider banking issues. The latest opportunity to raise the First Trust Bank issue was the North South Ministerial Council on 5 July. At that meeting I stressed the importance of ensuring that consideration is given to First Trust employees and wider credit availability in Northern Ireland.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration and; (b) £1 million entered into by his Department in each of the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts; (iii) whether there were break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8342/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Details of the contracts entered into by DFP, since Central Procurement Directorate was established on 1 April 2002, and which are either £1m or more in value and more than 12 months in duration, are set out in Annex A - Table 1. Information on contracts awarded prior to 2002 could only be obtained in part and at disproportionate cost.

The Table includes contracts awarded by DFP, or procured by DFP as a Central Purchasing Body on behalf of a range of Departments. It excludes those where another Department is the sole Contracting Authority.

Term contracts and framework agreements for the provision of supplies, services or works can include the option of additional years beyond the minimum period, provided the contract continues to represent value for money.

Contracts may include a break clause whereby the Department may choose not to continue a contract beyond a certain time provided appropriate notice has been given to the supplier.

All contracts include the option to terminate in the event that the supplier's performance is unsatisfactory.

ANNEX A**TABLE 1**

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2002/03	DFP	CP5/02B704	Refurbishment Of Ssa Office	No	No	No
2002/03	DFP	1694B70402	Mtc Civil Eng County Antrim	3.5	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	1696B70402	Mtc Civil Eng Down & Armagh	3.6	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	1697B70402	Mtc Civil Eng Tyrone Fmanagh Londonderry	3.6	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	1695B70402	Mtc Civil Engineering Belfast	3.5	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	PKITNSWT02	Ppm Of Kitchen Equipment - North- South & West	5.6	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	PKITBFNE02	Ppm Of Kitchen Equipment Belfast North & East	5.6	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	1640B70402	Hollywood Road Ssa Refurbishment	No	No	No
2002/03	DFP	1725B70402	Refurbishment Of Ssa Omagh And Enniskillen	No	No	No
2002/03	DFP	0023B70402	Refurb Ssa Shaftesbury Sq Shankill Rd & Kilkeel	No	No	No
2002/03	DFP	8014/01	Nics Single Source Maintenance Contract For Telecoms Equipment	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2002/03	DFP	8172/01	Dfp Accounting Services Review	No	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	8353/01	Nics Provision Of Electricity For Construction Service Buildings	No	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	8535/01	NICS Fleet Insurance Management	No	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	9335/02	NICS Renewable Electricity	No	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	9061/02	DFP Supply of a Contact Centre Solution For Bds	No	Yes	No
2002/03	DFP	9335/02	NICS Renewable Electricity	No	Yes	No
2003/04	DFP	0043B70403	Refurbishment of Government Offices	No	No	No
2003/04	DFP	0044B70403	Refurbishment of Government Offices	No	No	No
2003/04	DFP	03-SOUTH C	Building Term Contractor for Southern Area	4.7	Yes	No
2003/04	DFP	03-NORTH C	Building Term Contract for Northern Area	4.7	Yes	No
2003/04	DFP	0046B70403	Refurb of Gov Offices Coleraine & Larne	No	No	No
2003/04	DFP	0083B70404	Fitting Out of Ssa Offices - Banbridge & Armagh	No	No	No
2003/04	DFP	8955/02	NICS Province-Wide Courier Service	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2003/04	DFP	9021/02	NICS Motor Fleet Insurance	No	Yes	No
2003/04	DFP	9276/02	NICS Provision Of Electricity For Construction Service Buildings	No	Yes	No
2003/04	DFP	9847/03	EHR Legal Advisors	No	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0080B70404	General Purpose Maintenance	5.3	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0076B70404	Grass Maintenance Stormont	5.0	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0079B70404	Roads and Pavement Maintenance - Stormont	5.3	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0078B70404	Woodland Maintenance - Stormont	5.3	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0096B70404	DDA Upgrade ff Four Buildings	No	No	No
2004/05	DFP	0103B70404	Maintenance of Fire Safety Equipment - Southern	3.2	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0071B70404	BLDS Fabric Servicing & Maint North Area	2.4	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0104B70405	STC For Maintenance of Fire Safety Equipment	3.2	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	0105B70405	Maint of Generators & Uninterruptable Ps	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2004/05	DFP	9686/03	Nics Electricity for Construction Service Buildings	No	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	9918/03	NICS Motor Fleet Insurance	No	Yes	No
2004/05	DFP	12941/03	NICS NI Public Sector Travel Management Services	No	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	521/05	Professional Services for Regional Office Accommodation for Wramp Projects	No	No	No
2005/06	DFP	CONFWKRPS	Professional Services Framework Agreement	0.6	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	0091B70405	Grounds Maint Ice & Snow Northern Area	1.5	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	0092B70405	Grounds Maint Ice & Snow Southern Area	1.5	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	13077/03	DFP Rca It Replacement Project	No	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	13750/04	DFP Consultancy Support For Workplace 2010 Strategic Development Plan For Nics Estate	No	Yes	No
2005/06	DFP	13860/04	NICS Renewable Electricity	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	0176418007	Jobs and Benefit Accommodation Andersonstown	No	No	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2006/07	DFP	0213418006	MTC for Civil Eng Minor Wk 2006/07 Belfab	2.7	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	0211418006	MTC For Civil Eng Minor Wks 2006/07 Antrib	2.7	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	0210418006	MTC For Civil Eng Minor Wks 2006/07 Dnarmb	2.7	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	0212418006	MTC For Civil Eng Minor Wks 2006/07 Tyfelb	2.7	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	9946/03	NICS Accounting Services Programme	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	15023/06	NICS Single Source Maintenance for Telecoms	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	13681/04	NICS Edrm Implementation Programme	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	14248/05	DFP Via Csr System Support Contract	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	14450/05	NIPS Motor Fleet Insurance	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	14481/05	DFP - Ict Procurement For Harbour Gate	No	Yes	No
2006/07	DFP	14731/02	EHR Strategic Partner Procurement	No	Yes	No
2007/08	DFP	13394/04	DFP Provision Of Managed Network Services For The Northern Ireland Public Sector	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2007/08	DFP	13710/04	NICS PcspS(Ni) Post Award Administration & Payroll Project	No	Yes	No
2007/08	DFP	14954/06	DFP Ict Service Provision for Nics - Accommodation Requirement	No	Yes	No
2007/08	DFP	14965/06	DFP Resilient Messaging and Storage Project	No	Yes	No
2007/08	DFP	15609/06	Nics Shared Service Centre Supply and Delivery of Pcs	No	Yes	No
2008/09	DFP	1770130408	New Jobs & Benefit Office Ballymena	No	No	No
2008/09	DFP	15773/06	Northern Ireland Public Services Motor Fleet Insurances	No	Yes	No
2008/09	DFP	15625/06	Department Of Finance And Personnel Ni Direct Phase 1 - Procurement Of Contact Centre Services	No	Yes	No
2008/09	DFP	15266/06	Dfp Ni Direct	No	Yes	No
2009/10	DFP	CPD11393/06	Integrated Consultant Team Framework Agreement	No	Yes	No
2010/11	DFP	10-NORTH C	Property Management Minor and Small Works North	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2010/11	DFP	10-SOUTHC	Property Management Minor and Small Works South	No	Yes	No
2010/11	DFP	project_1725	Provision of Desktop PC's for NICS, NIO & Thier Respective NDPB's and Agencies	No	Yes	No
2010/11	DFP	project_1723	It Assist Supply & Delivery of Networking Equipment/ Network Monitoring & Service	No	Yes	No
2010/11	DFP	project_2342	Northern Ireland Public Services Motor Fleet Insurances	No	Yes	No

Cost of Telephone Calls and Postage

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent by each Department on (i) telephone calls; and (ii) postage in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8359/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: This information is not held centrally and has been provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only.

Expenditure by the Department of Finance and Personnel (including its executive agencies) over the last three years on the above items is as follows:

	2009/10 £000	2008/09 £000	2007/08 £000
Telephone calls	273	371	378
Postage	992	834	648

The information is provided on the basis of the last three complete financial years representing the basis of preparation of the Department's accounts.

Smoking-Related Deaths

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the number of smoking-related deaths in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8372/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Smoking history is rarely recorded on death certificates. However estimates can be made of the number of deaths related to smoking using research undertaken by the Health Development Agency¹ which gives estimates on the contribution that smoking makes to specific causes of death. The table below gives the number of smoking-related deaths registered in Northern Ireland, for each year between 2007 and 2009^P.

Registration Year	Smoking Related Deaths (estimate)
2007	2,310
2008	2,400
2009 ^P	2,360

1 Twigg, L., Moon, G., and Walker, S. The smoking epidemic in England, Health Development Agency, 2004 - <http://www.publichealth.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=502811>

P 2009 data is provisional

Petrol Retailers in Border Areas

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action his Department is taking to address the problems faced by petrol retailers in the border area, such as Strabane and Castlederg, caused by currency differentials and fluctuations.

(AQW 8383/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: As you will be aware, tax policy, including determination of fuel duty rates, is a Reserved Matter for HM Treasury to determine. My department cannot therefore directly influence fuel prices in Northern Ireland.

It is a concern that higher fuel prices in Northern Ireland impacts on the competitiveness of our petrol retailers relative to those in the Republic of Ireland. However, this situation also means that both Northern Ireland businesses and consumers situated in close proximity to the border can avail of cheaper fuel than their counterparts anywhere else in the UK. It should be noted that fuel prices have converged dramatically over the last decade. In June 2000 petrol in the Republic of Ireland was 27 per cent lower than in Northern Ireland. Today this differential has reduced to just 7 per cent - undoubtedly one of the main causes of this convergence has been falling value of Sterling against the Euro.

This convergence has made it very difficult to justify a case to HM Treasury for a reduction in fuel duty rates for Northern Ireland. Furthermore, any such reduction would have to be paid for by the Northern Ireland Executive and this would be very difficult at a time of severe fiscal constraint.

Data Collection Practices

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration has been given to the need to review data collection practices to identify data which is no longer required.

(AQW 8427/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel has introduced records management procedures which are integrated as key activities within the Department. These include the implementation of a record management system TRIM, Disposal and Retention schedules which determine the retention, destruction or transfer of records after a specified time period and Information audits which investigate the series of records held by the Department.

Northern Ireland Economy

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the possibility that the Northern Ireland economy will suffer a double-dip recession in light of measures contained in last month's budget at Westminster.

(AQW 8442/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The interim Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has forecast that the UK economy will grow by 1.8% in real terms in 2010-11 and by 2.4% in 2011-12, incorporating the impact of policy measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget 2010 statement on 22 June 2010.

However, the Executive remains alert to the risk of a possible return to negative growth for the local economy. In this context it is important that the Executive continues to support the local economy and business, in order to reduce the reliance on the public sector.

Budget Cuts Deferral

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he proposes to follow the example of the Minister of Finance in the Scottish Parliament by deferring the cuts set out in the recent Westminster budget until the next financial year.

(AQW 8444/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: On 24 May 2010 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced plans to reduce the level of UK public spending by £6 billion in 2010-11. Deferring the NI Executive's share of this cut in funding would shift the burden onto the 2011-12 financial year when the public expenditure environment is already expected to be more constrained.

In this context, the most sensible option is to accommodate as much of the reduction in funding as possible in the current financial year.

The Executive is currently considering the way forward on this matter as part of the In-Year Monitoring process.

Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Equal Pay Claim for Civil Servants.

(AQW 8445/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Management and Trade Union sides reached a negotiated settlement to the equal pay claims lodged by NIPSA with the Industrial Tribunal on behalf of a large number of its female members in certain grades in the NICS. Implementation of that settlement is well underway, with around 12,000 staff moved to new pay scales. Additionally, approximately 16,000 people are eligible to receive a lump sum payment. The settlement requires that those individuals agree to withdraw any equal pay claim currently lodged with the Industrial Tribunal, or to sign an agreement stating that no such claim will be pursued, before individual lump sum payments can be made.

Civil Service: Offers of Employment Withdrawn Following Security Checks

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, for each of the last five years, the number of job offers to civil service applicants which have been withdrawn because the candidate failed a security check, broken down by job type and grade.

(AQW 8459/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: It is the policy of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) that all external candidates who are to be offered posts must satisfy the vetting requirements prior to being offered an appointment. In early 2008, when AccessNI took over the role of criminal record vetting, the process was extremely slow and to meet urgent business need a number of conditional administrative

appointments were made. Of these, two people subsequently had their employment terminated due to the outcome of the criminal record check.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Specialist Dietician

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust expects to appoint a second part-time specialist dietician to deal with the waiting list of children with intractable epilepsy waiting to access the ketogenic diet.

(AQW 6604/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The Belfast Trust informs me that the Trust advertised for a second specialist dietician on 25 May 2010. A number of applications have been received and interviews will be held in July. An appointment from that process is expected in coming weeks.

Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt and Whiteabbey Hospital.

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation was carried out with (i) staff; (ii) unions; and (iii) the public, prior to the recent decision to reduce services at the Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt and Whiteabbey Hospital.

(AQW 6740/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Trust has conducted an analysis of attendances at the Accident and Emergency departments at Whiteabbey and the Mid Ulster hospitals which shows that 70% of those attending could have their needs met by a minor injuries service on these sites. The Trust will open minor injuries services on both sites from 24th May. In addition, the Trust is creating increased physical space within the A&E department at Antrim Area Hospital and providing a total of 20 additional beds to accommodate the anticipated increase in workload there. These additional facilities will be in place by 24th May and the hospital's A&E department will also be strengthened by a larger medical and nursing team.

The Trust will also continue to provide medical cover at the minor injuries units in Whiteabbey and Mid-Ulster for 2 months following the change in service to ensure the transition from one model of service to another is safe.

The changes to services at these hospitals has been signalled since the publication of Developing Better Services in 2002 and confirmed in a number of subsequent announcements. I regret the short period of consultation available with those directly affected. I understand that the Trust has been working closely with the unions and the Royal College of Nursing to support individual members of staff find their preferred choice of posting. I will ensure however that Trusts put in place arrangements to inform unions at the earliest possible stage of any urgent change required to health and social care services in the future.

Antrim Area Hospital Trolley Waits

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the reasons for the level of patients waiting on trolleys in the Antrim Area Hospital on 15, 16 and 17 May 2010.

(AQW 6963/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised by the Northern Trust that activity at Antrim Area Hospital was higher than normal over the period of 15 to 17 May. There will always be occasions at our Accident and Emergency departments where activity can be higher than normal and regrettably this can cause some delays. The Trust took steps to manage the situation and to ensure that those patients requiring admission were moved from the Accident and Emergency department to a ward at the earliest opportunity.

Enniskillen Fire Station: Poppy Day Bombing Tribute Picture

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the decision of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman that the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service tribute picture of the 1987 Enniskillen Poppy Day bombing should never have been removed from the Enniskillen Fire Station, when the picture will be returned and what measures are in place to ensure that such an action is not repeated.

(AQW 7266/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have read the Ombudsman's report and I am aware that the acting Chief Fire Officer has written to Mr Gault on foot of the report. This is a sensitive issue which deserves careful consideration. I am aware that discussions are taking place about how to move forward and I am hopeful that the discussions will resolve the issue.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Trolley Waits

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many people have waited on trolleys, for more than four hours, in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area each day from 1 May 2010 to date; and (ii) to list the hospitals where this occurred.

(AQW 7396/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department currently collects information on the time spent waiting to be seen in A&E Departments and Minor Injury Units for all new attendances and unplanned re-attendances regardless of whether or not they are subsequently admitted. This data is collected on a monthly basis from Health and Social Care Trusts within Northern Ireland using the Emergency Care (EC1) return.

EC1 data is published monthly and is available from: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/emergency_care.htm

FASA Offices in Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on funding for the FASA offices in Bangor.

(AQW 7453/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: FASA are currently operating the "one-stop-shop" pilot in the Bangor area. The PHA has informed me that it will continue to fund all the pilots until March 2011. Subsequently, subject to positive evaluation, it is anticipated that this initiative will be rolled out across Northern Ireland.

Belfast City Hospital Cancer Centre: Linear Accelerator

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the business case for a ninth Linear Accelerator for the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital.

(AQW 7555/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Due to the financial pressures placed on my Department and the Health Service by the budget settlement for 2010/11, funding for a number of service developments, including the introduction of the 9th Linear Accelerator at the Cancer Centre, have had to be deferred.

My Department is continuing to work closely with the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency to progress plans for cancer services, including the arrangements for additional radiotherapy capacity which is a vital service.

It is clear that over the course of the next Comprehensive Spending Review period additional radiotherapy capacity will be a very high priority for Northern Ireland. In the meantime, I have been

advised by commissioners that the current service profile will meet existing levels of demand for radiotherapy.

Adult Day Care in the Glens, County Antrim

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the provision of adult day care in the Glens, Co. Antrim.

(AQW 7613/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust's daycare facility in Cushendun, Glenmona House, is presently under refurbishment. The centre relocated to a new site at the Cottage Wood, Cushendall in early April 2010. The service has continued to be provided with minimum disruption to service users. The new premises are registered with RQIA for the same daily numbers. The feedback from service users and staff about the alternative premises has been overwhelmingly positive.

Northern Health and Social Services Trust: Salaries in Excess of £80,000

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff in the Northern Health and Social Services Trust receive salaries of £80,000 or more, per annum.

(AQW 7647/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A total of 127 staff, of which 126 are medical staff, employed in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust are entitled to an annual basic salary of £80,000 or more per annum.

Health Service Dentists

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the contract awarded to Oasis Dental Care Ltd to address the shortage of Health Service dentists, to detail (i) the location of each new practice where Health Service dentists are currently available; and (ii) the number of Health Service dentists currently employed at each practice.

(AQW 7742/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below details (i) the location of, and (ii) the number of Health Service dentists currently employed at each Oasis practice.

	Address	No of Health Service Dentists
Enniskillen	Elliott House Dental Practice, 5-7 Belmore Street Enniskillen BT74 5TB	6
Londonderry	Timber Quay Dental Practice 1&2 Timber Quay Strand Road Londonderry BT48 7NJ	4
Omagh	Derry Road Dental Practice 1st Floor Derry Road retail park Omagh BT78 5DR	2

	Address	No of Health Service Dentists
Dungannon	Linen Green Dental Practice 1st Floor, the Dye House Moygashel Dungannon BT71 7HB	2
Strabane	Strabane Dental Practice Unit 1, 16 Railway Street Strabane BT82 8AF	2
Cookstown	Molesworth Place Dental Practice 1st Floor Molesworth Place Molesworth Street Cookstown BT80 8LW	2
Carrickfergus	The De Courcey Dental Practice Unit 3 Lancastrian Street Carrickfergus BT38 7AB	2
Glengormley	The Glengormley Dental Practice Unit 1-3 350 Antrim Road Newtownabbey BT36 5QE	4
Hollywood	The Maypole Dental Practice 1st Floor 96 High Street Hollywood BT18 9HW	2
Bangor	The Balloo Dental Practice Ground Floor, D2 Balloo Office Park Balloo Drive Bangor BT19 7QY	2
Newry	The Armadown Dental Practice Unit 6 Monaghan Court Business Park Newry BT35 6BH	2
Banbridge	The Banbridge Dental Practice 47 Church Street Banbridge BT32 4AA	2

	Address	No of Health Service Dentists
Lisburn	The Lisburn Square House Dental Practice Office Suite 2, 1st Floor Lisburn Square House Haslems Lane Lisburn BT28 1TS	3

Self Harm

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many patients, aged 18 and under, have been treated in accident and emergency departments for self harm, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last 12 months; and (ii) to detail the procedure followed in offering support after discharge.

(AQW 7868/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

Missed GP Appointments

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of missed GP appointments in each of the last 12 months; and (ii) the estimated costs.

(AQW 7881/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This data is not available as it is not collated on a central basis.

Promoting Health Campaigns: Co-operation with Sporting Bodies

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what level of contact or co-operation his Department has had with sporting bodies in relation to promoting health campaigns in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7882/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Sporting bodies provide a valuable resource in the promotion of healthy lifestyles. In addition to addressing physical activity, sports clubs are also important venues to reach people on a range of health issues including healthy eating, staying smoke free, not misusing alcohol and drugs, and self-harm and suicide prevention. Sporting bodies and sports clubs are therefore recognised as important settings and delivery partners in a number of my Department's health improvement strategies.

In particular, my Department has worked closely with the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure and SportNI on the development and implementation of Fit Futures, and the forthcoming Obesity Prevention Framework.

In addition, my Department has supported the Public Health Agency and the HSC Family to engage with a range of sporting bodies including the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) on a number of projects over the last three years.

Examples include:

- work with the GAA, IFA, IRFU and local cricket, golf and football clubs in respect of promoting mental health, suicide awareness and Suicide Response Plans;
- the involvement of Rally Ireland, Ulster Rugby and the GAA on the Roadwise Programme which addressed road safety and accident prevention among 17-25 year olds;
- the Care in the Sun campaign which has been run with Cricket clubs and GAA clubs in association with Ulster Cancer Foundation;

- work with Sports Development Officers in the local councils to promote the Active Families programme and Healthy Towns Initiative
- work with Disability Sports NI to promote physical activity with individuals with a disability; and
- work with Community Sports Development to provide awareness sessions for coaches on health messages such as keeping sport smoke free, healthy eating, and oral health.

Radiotherapy Machines for the Belfast City Hospital Cancer Unit

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he plans to grant funding for two additional radiotherapy machines for the Belfast City Hospital Cancer Unit.

(AQW 7885/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have not been asked to grant funding for two additional radiotherapy machines for the Belfast City Hospital Cancer Unit

Disability Groups in North Belfast

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the groups in North Belfast that work with (a) children; (b) young people; and (c) adults with a disability; (ii) how much funding each group has received in each of the last three years; and (iii) the purpose of the funding awarded to each group.

(AQW 7886/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Health Service Facilities for Consultations and Treatment of Private Patients

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7233/10, to list the facilities, in each Health and Social Care Trust, which are used by Health Service doctors and staff to carry out consultations in a private capacity.

(AQW 7892/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: While private patients can be seen and treated in HSC facilities both inside and outside hospitals, the majority of such activity is in hospital facilities, for example, outpatient clinics, theatres, x-ray departments, or laboratories.

However, a complete list of facilities used to treat private patients is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Please note where NHS facilities are used for private consultations the use of these facilities is charged to the patient concerned.

Computer Equipment in the Health Service

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost, to date, of the ongoing upgrade and replacement of computer equipment within the Health Service.

(AQW 7901/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The two main schemes covering the ongoing replacement of computer equipment in the health service are the HSC PC Replacement Programme and ICT to Support GPs Under the GMS Contract.

The amount spent under these two schemes over the last 2 complete financial years is tabled below:

	2008/09	2009/10
HSC PC Replacement Programme	£3.25m	£3.23m

	2008/09	2009/10
ICT for GPs Under GMS Contract	£1.30m	£3.27m

Attempted Suicide

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many patients, aged 18 and under, have been treated in accident and emergency departments for attempted suicide, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last 12 months; and (ii) to detail the procedure followed in offering support after discharge.

(AQW 7906/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

E111 Health Card

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the costs of an individual receiving health care whilst abroad, when in possession of an E111 health card, are passed on from the EU country in which they were treated to his Department or the UK Government.

(AQW 7907/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Any costs incurred by Northern Ireland patients using the European Health Insurance Card, formally known as the E111 form, are dealt with by the UK government.

NHS Direct Telephone Service

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people from Northern Ireland have used the NHS Direct telephone service for England, Scotland and Wales; and to make a statement on the lack of availability of a similar telephone service for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7914/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: NHS Direct is not available in Northern Ireland. If someone from Northern Ireland contacts NHS Direct by telephone they are advised by recorded message that it is not available in their area. NHS Direct does not record the number of such calls received.

The 2009/2010 Patient Experience Survey indicated that the vast majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with access to GP and out-of-hours services in Northern Ireland.

Treating Private Patients Using Health Service Facilities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much doctors and medical staff have paid to each Health and Social Care Trust for carrying out consultations and treating private patients using Health Service facilities, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7919/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Doctors and medical staff do not reimburse the Trust for use of Trust facilities for private consultations and treatment of private patients. The cost of using the Trust facilities is charged to the individual private patient.

Adoption Waiting List

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have voluntarily removed themselves from the adoption waiting list in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 7951/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: For the period from 1 May 2009 to 31 May 2010, 33 applicants voluntarily removed themselves from the waiting list to adopt children from within Northern Ireland (domestic adoption) or from outside the United Kingdom (inter-country adoption). See Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Month	Numbers of Applicants that voluntarily removed themselves from the Adoption Waiting List
May-09	-
Jun-09	-
Jul-09	-
Aug-09	6
Sep-09	-
Oct-09	-
Nov-09	-
Dec-09	-
Jan-10	-
Feb-10	-
Mar-10	5
Apr-10	-
May-10	-
Total	33

Notes:

1. - ' Numbers suppressed to prevent disclosure of applicant's identity
2. Source of information was each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. Information provided by Trusts has not been validated by the DHSSPS
3. Figures include domestic and inter-country adoptions, approved and not yet approved applicants, and married and non-married applicants

Adoption Waiting Time

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average length of time people wait to adopt, after the required approval has been granted.

(AQW 7952/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available centrally, and could only be provided by HSC Trusts at disproportionate cost.

Children Placed in Care

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average length of time a child placed in care waits before (i) being adopted; or (ii) placed back with their family.

(AQW 7953/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The latest centrally available figures for the average length of time a child placed in care waits before being adopted is detailed in the statistical

bulletin, 'The Adoption of Looked After Children in Northern Ireland (2007 - 2008)'. This bulletin is available on the DHSS website at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib-3/statistics_and_research-cib-pub/children_statistics/statistics_and_research-cib_adoption.htm

Information on the average length of time a child placed in care waits before being placed back with their family is not available centrally, and could only be provided by HSC Trusts at disproportionate cost.

Rapid Response Vehicle Call-outs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7402/10 and AQW 7404/10, to detail (i) how his Department is kept informed of the NI Ambulance Service performance statistics; (ii) for his assessment of whether targets are being met in relation to rapid response vehicles, given that there is no record kept of the monitoring of response times or the cancellation of ambulances in each Health and Social Care Trust; and (iii) if he would consider introducing measures to allow for accurate monitoring.

(AQW 7962/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department is kept informed of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) performance against its emergency response target through weekly returns from the Health and Social Care Board and by monthly returns direct from NIAS itself. This target applies to all NIAS's emergency response resources as it would be misleading to measure for individual elements of the service.

I am satisfied that the data collected is sufficient and, therefore, do not propose to seek any new additional monitoring of emergency response. I would be concerned that to do so would represent an unnecessary use of finite resources in a vital front-line service.

Skin Cancer

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to address the increase in cases of skin cancer.

(AQW 7968/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department is developing a new Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy to replace the 1997 Melanoma Strategy. The new strategy will outline the dangers of excess exposure to UV radiation and will focus primarily on prevention and early detection of skin cancers.

Increased use of sun beds is linked to the rising numbers of skin cancer cases. I have therefore introduced a new Sunbed Bill in the Assembly which contains a range of measures for regulating the indoor tanning industry in Northern Ireland. I expect the legislation to complete its passage by March 2011.

In addition, the Northern Ireland Melanoma Strategy Implementation Group continues to highlight the risks of excess exposure to UV radiation and sunbed usage by means of public information campaigns, as well as specific initiatives aimed at children and young people.

Health Service Staff Expenses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has paid in expenses to Health Service staff, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7969/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department does not pay expenses to Health and Social Care staff.

Trastuzumab

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the new drug trastuzumab for the treatment of breast cancer will be available.

(AQW 7973/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Treatment with the cancer drug trastuzumab has been available to all those women in Northern Ireland diagnosed with breast cancer who are found to be clinically suitable for the drug since 2005.

Northern Area Managed Obesity Network

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support his Department is giving to the recently launched Northern Area Managed Obesity Network.

(AQW 7985/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Managed Obesity Network (MON) is commissioned by the Public Health Agency (PHA) to prevent and address the issue of obesity within the Northern area. It has been developed to provide better coordination between the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) and other partners who have an identified role to play. My Department will be influencing the Network through the Obesity Prevention Framework.

In respect of funding, MON received £163,000 in 2009/10 and this was secured by my Department during the previous CSR period.

Closure of Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the closure of the accident and emergency departments at the Mid-Ulster and Newtownabbey Hospitals, if he can confirm that there will be no changes to the accident and emergency department at the Causeway Hospital.

(AQW 7987/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer given to AQW 4960/10.

Ten-year Obesity Prevention Strategy Framework

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if consultation has been completed in relation to the ten-year obesity prevention strategy framework and when it will be launched.

(AQW 7990/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has led the development of a draft Obesity Prevention Framework which is currently with Executive Ministers for comment. Following Executive approval the Framework will issue for formal public consultation prior to its launch.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 8013/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The use of consultants within my Department is an area that is continuously under review. In 2009 my Department reviewed its processes and procedures with the result that a more rigorous process is now in place for assessing and approving the use of consultants.

The need to use consultants is only considered when all of the alternatives have been explored and where there is value for money in doing so.

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Safe Guarding Board for Northern Ireland has any plans for a new computer system to be used by all bodies responsible for the protection of children to share information.

(AQW 8023/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is not the role of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to develop such a computer system however, the SBNI will seek to ensure that there is consistency in approach to the collection of data and information sharing thresholds, across a range of agencies and organisations responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and this will be reflected in SBNI policies and procedures.

Lagan Valley Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can provide an assurance that the status of the Lagan Valley Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit will not be downgraded before 2013.

(AQW 8026/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The delivery of services at Lagan Valley is a matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust as the service provider. The Trust has advised that it is currently undertaking a consultation in respect of urgent care services across the Trust area, including the Lagan Valley Hospital Emergency Department.

I CAN Early Years Centre in Ballynahinch Primary School

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can provide an assurance that the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust will continue to fund the I CAN Early Years Centre in Ballynahinch Primary School and that this facility will continue to provide speech and language services.

(AQW 8027/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has funding in place to continue to provide one full-time speech and language therapist for the ICAN Centre. Regrettably, the South Eastern Education and Library Board does not yet appear to have secured the necessary funding to fulfil its commitment to continue to provide the school premises, one teacher, and one classroom assistant.

Developing Better Services Document

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to update the 2002 Developing Better Services document that relates to the services provided by the Lagan Valley Hospital.

(AQW 8028/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have no plans at present to review Developing Better Services or its proposals in respect of Lagan Valley Hospital.

Long-stay Psychiatric Patients

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average amount of money spent, per day, on food for a long-stay psychiatric patient.

(AQW 8048/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The average daily food cost over the five Health and Social Care Trusts for a long-stay psychiatric in-patient is £3.34.

Ambulance cancellations

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times ambulances, which were booked to take patients to hospital appointments in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, were cancelled in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8052/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information requested is not currently available.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many deaths occurred in the Ulster Hospital as a result of Deep Vein Thrombosis in each of the last five years; and what steps are being taken to reduce the number of deaths as a result Deep Vein Thrombosis.

(AQW 8062/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of deaths registered in each of the last five years, which occurred in the Ulster Hospital as a result of Deep Vein Thrombosis are detailed in the table below:-

Registration Year	Number of Deaths
2005	1
2006	1
2007	2
2008	2
2009 ^P	1

Source: General Registrar's Office

P Data for 2009 remains provisional until the release of the 2009 Annual Report of the Registrar General which is due to be released in November 2010.

Deaths as a result of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) have been identified by the following International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD 10) codes where they have been recorded as the underlying cause of death:-

- I80.2 – Phlebitis and thrombophlebitis of other deep vessels of lower extremities
- O22.3 – Deep phlebothrombosis in pregnancy
- O87.1 – Deep phlebothrombosis in the puerperium

Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are collectively known as venous thromboembolism (VTE). A target linked to VTE was set in my Priorities for Action 2009/10, with performance monitored by the Health and Social Care Board. A similar target and monitoring arrangements have been set for 2010/11.

Staff Salaries in excess of £100,000

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff in his Department, and associated quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8066/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Three senior officials in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety are currently paid in excess of £100,000 per annum in salary and/or remuneration packages.

Within the Department's Arms Length bodies, 934 senior staff are currently paid in excess of £100.000 per annum in salary and/or remuneration packages. Of these, more than 97% are clinical staff. This includes the five Trusts and twelve organisations.

Patient Advocates in Acute Hospitals

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current number of patient advocates in acute hospitals; and whether there have been any changes in the number of patient advocates or their terms and conditions since 1 January 2009.

(AQW 8072/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 4 (4.0 whole-time equivalent) patient advocates within acute hospitals. This is an increase of 2 (2.0 WTE) since 2009 and there have not been any changes to staff terms and conditions.

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

Rapid Response Vehicles

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in respect of the last six months (i) on many occasions a rapid response vehicle has arrived at a call-out before an ambulance; and (ii) how long, on average, it has taken an ambulance to arrive at a call-out at the request of a rapid response team.

(AQW 8076/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Current Information on emergency response attendances cannot be broken down for Rapid Response Vehicles (RRV) only.
- (ii) It is currently the protocol that when an RRV is dispatched to a call that the nearest available A&E ambulance will also be dispatched to attend the call. If an RRV arrives first on scene and they identify that due to the clinical or medical nature of the incident that an A&E ambulance is not required, they may stand down the A&E ambulance. RRVs may also request an A&E ambulance to attend an incident however this information is not captured or recorded by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust.

Increase in Costs to the Health Service from the Proposed Increase in VAT

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the estimated increase in costs for a full year to the Health Service from the proposed increase in VAT from 17.5% to 20%.

(AQW 8081/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: VAT paid on goods and services by government departments in Northern Ireland is mainly refundable. This extends to health and social care bodies not classed as non-departmental public bodies.

Additional pressures will be faced by the non-departmental public bodies for which my Department is responsible as they are unable to reclaim the VAT they incur. It is estimated that the proposed VAT change will cost in the region of £1.1m per annum.

Sick Days taken by Staff in the Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Department

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of sick days taken by (a) doctors; (b) consultants; and (c) nurses in the Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Department, in each of the last five years; and (ii) how many of these absences were stress related.

(AQW 8090/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department does not collect sickness absence data by the specific hospital or specialty but by the Medical and Dental, Nursing and Midwifery occupational family groups. The information is presented by Trust and is published on a bi-annual basis on the departmental website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hrd/wpu/wpu-monitoring.htm.

The reasons for sickness absence are not collected.

Waiting Times in Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, on the 1 January 2010, how many patients were recorded as spending 12 hours or more in the Accident and Emergency Departments in (i) Antrim Area Hospital; (ii) the Causeway Hospital; and (iii) Whiteabbey Hospital; and (iv) the Mid-Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 8091/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On the 1st of January 2010, no patients were recorded as spending 12 hours or more in the Accident and Emergency Departments in (i) Antrim Area Hospital; (ii) the Causeway Hospital; and (iii) Whiteabbey Hospital; and (iv) the Mid-Ulster Hospital.

Swine Flu

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7505/10, for his assessment of the impact on the health budget of the spend on swine flu.

(AQW 8101/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The review carried out by Dame Deirdre Hine on Swine Flu highlights the response across the UK was proportionate and effective. However my Department, and Health and Social Care organisations, are being financially punished for the handling of the pandemic.

In 2009/10 funding set aside for dental and ophthalmic remuneration, delivery of savings in the prescription drugs, and meeting the costs of new cancer drugs were all reduced to meet Swine Flu costs.

In 2010/11, my budget is being reduced by £16.6m for Swine Flu. This will have an impact on services.

Southern Health and Social Care Trust: Meals on Wheels

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the Southern Health and Social Care Trust's current strategy for the provision of the Meals-on-Wheels service for older people.

(AQW 8105/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Meals on Wheels service in the SHSCT is provided in accordance with criteria specified in the Departmental circular HSS (ECCU) 2/2008; N Ireland Regional Access Criteria for Domiciliary Care which is published on the Departmental website; www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Meals-on-Wheels

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many older people in the Upper Bann constituency had their Meals-on-Wheels service withdrawn in the last 12 months; and to give the reason for this decision.

(AQW 8107/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Statistical information on Meals on Wheels services is not collected on an individual constituency basis, nor can it be disaggregated by geographical areas smaller than HSC Trusts.

Stroke Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the dedicated Stroke Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQW 8111/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Board and the Western Trust have recently finalised the revenue funding required to support the new South Wing accommodation at Altnagelvin Hospital.

The transfer of stroke services into this new unit took place on Thursday 1 July 2010 and I officially opened the unit on Tuesday 6 July 2010.

Elderly Care Accommodation in North Belfast: Waiting List

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently on the waiting list in North Belfast for elderly care accommodation.

(AQW 8119/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Elderly Care Accommodation in North Belfast: Demand

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the demand for elderly care accommodation in North Belfast, particularly in the Ballysillan area.

(AQW 8121/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The statutory residential homes covering North Belfast and Ballysillan are Shankill House and Chestnut Grove. Neither of these homes accept permanent admissions although, the Trust does continue to place clients in these homes on a temporary/respite basis. The independent homes in this area are normally at full capacity which can, on occasions, create a waiting list for placements. Those waiting for this type of placement would be provided with a package of care in their own homes until placement can be accessed.

There has not been any notable increase in the demand for Residential placements in North Belfast or Ballysillan.

Elderly Care Accommodation in North Belfast: Shortfall

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the current shortfall in the provision of elderly care accommodation in North Belfast, particularly in the Ballysillan area.

(AQW 8123/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The statutory residential homes covering North Belfast and Ballysillan are Shankill House and Chestnut Grove. Neither of these homes accept permanent admissions although, the Trust does continue to place clients in these homes on a temporary/respite basis. The independent homes in this area are normally at full capacity which can, on occasions, create a waiting list for placements. Those waiting for this type of placement would be provided with a package of care in their own homes until placement can be accessed.

There has not been any notable increase in the demand for Residential placements in North Belfast or Ballysillan.

Adoption Waiting List: Voluntary Removal

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many couples from the East Antrim constituency have voluntarily removed themselves from the adoption waiting list in each of the last 3 years.

(AQW 8125/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Adoption Waiting List

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in the East Antrim constituency are currently on the adoption waiting list; and how long has each person been on the list.

(AQW 8126/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Reported Link Between Some Blood Pressure Pills and Cancer

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is aware of the reported link between some blood pressure drugs and cancer; and for his assessment of the need to control the prescribing of these drugs.

(AQW 8138/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am aware of the reported link between some blood pressure drugs and cancer. On 24 June 2010 the European Medicines Agency (EMA) announced that the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) has started a review of the evidence for the suggested link which will inform whether changes or control of prescribing of these drugs is necessary. My Department will adhere to any proposals from the findings of this review.

Prisoners Who are Drug Addicts

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many current prisoners are considered to be drug addicts; (ii) how many of these people are currently receiving treatment in prison; (iii) what type of treatment they are receiving; and (iv) the cost of providing this treatment for each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 8147/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Responsibility for the provision of Addiction Services in Northern Ireland's Prisons rests with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(i)/(ii) There are on average 1400 prisoners in prison at any one time, with up to 5000 prisoners committed each year. Given the dynamic nature of the prison population it is difficult to estimate how many prisoners suffer from addiction at any one time. However, there are currently 185 prisoners availing of the core addiction services and 49 prisoners engaged with the clinical team.

(iii) Prisoners attending/engaging with AD-EPT Service will receive any of the following:

- Core Harm Reduction Awareness session
- Addictions Assessment and Individualised Care Planning
- 1-2-1 Casework
- 1-2-1 Behaviour Change Counselling
- Harm Reduction/ Paraphernalia Care Planning
- Pre-release groupwork

- Delivery of Approved Substance Misuse Programmes

Of the 49 prisoners engaged with the Clinical Team, 19 are in receipt of medication as treatment for drug addiction.

(iv) The South Eastern Trust invests circa £770k in the provision of Addiction Services across the Prison Establishments.

Prescription Dispensing Fee

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the current total amount provided to pharmacists for dispensing a prescription.

(AQW 8148/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The dispensing fee is currently being paid at £1.04. Pharmacists are also reimbursed for ingredient costs of the medicine as appropriate.

Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting times, for each day, in the Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit (i) during the four weeks before; and (ii) during the four weeks after, the closure of the Whiteabbey Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit.

(AQW 8152/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on Emergency Care waiting times is collected and published monthly and is available from:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/emergency_care.htm

National Institute for Clinical Excellence Guidelines on Fertility Services

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the timescale for the implementation of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidelines on fertility services, particularly in relation to the number of In Vitro Fertilisation and Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection cycles provided by the Health Service.

(AQW 8154/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Northern Ireland aspires to provide the full three cycles of fertility treatment as recommended by NICE however financial constraints currently make this unachievable. I am aware that in some areas of England the number of cycles available is increasing. It is however worth noting that in many of these areas the NHS criteria for treatment are much more restrictive than we apply in Northern Ireland and therefore fewer couples have the opportunity to receive any publicly funded treatment.

Last year I announced an additional £1.5m recurrent funding for fertility services. This, in addition to an investment of £800k in a waiting list initiative, means that no patient is now waiting more than 12 months for treatment from being placed on a waiting list. It is hoped that it will also be possible to introduce a cycle of Frozen Embryo Transfer in addition to the currently funded stimulated cycle of treatment where this is appropriate.

In Vitro Fertilisation and Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will publish a timeline detailing the steps he intends to take to provide patients with three full cycles of In Vitro Fertilisation and Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection on the Health Service; and if he will make a statement on this matter.

(AQW 8155/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Northern Ireland aspires to provide the full three cycles of fertility treatment as recommended by NICE however financial constraints currently make this unachievable. I am aware that in some areas of England the number of cycles available is increasing. It is however worth noting that in many of these areas the NHS criteria for treatment are much more restrictive than we apply in Northern Ireland and therefore fewer couples have the opportunity to receive any publicly funded treatment.

Last year I announced an additional £1.5m recurrent funding for fertility services. This, in addition to an investment of £800k in a waiting list initiative, means that no patient is now waiting more than 12 months for treatment from being placed on a waiting list. It is hoped that it will also be possible to introduce a cycle of Frozen Embryo Transfer in addition to the currently funded stimulated cycle of treatment where this is appropriate.

Raised Blood Pressure or Hypertension

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many adults have been diagnosed with raised blood pressure or hypertension as a result of excess alcohol consumption in each of the last five years; and (ii) to provide a summary of the most recent population prevalence figures for this condition.

(AQW 8156/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information is not available on the number of adults who have been diagnosed with high blood pressure or hypertension as a result of excess alcohol consumption.

Internal Inquiry or Investigation in each Health and Social Care Trust

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health Service staff, at director level or above, have been the subject of an internal inquiry or investigation in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8157/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: None of the Health and Social Care Trusts Senior Executive staff have been the subject of an internal inquiry in the last three years.

Free Prescriptions

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the additional costs to his Department since the introduction of free prescriptions; and (ii) whether there has been any evidence of an increase in the number of prescriptions dispensed since the change.

(AQW 8159/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Data is not yet available regarding prescribing costs, nor the volume of prescriptions dispensed, since the introduction of free prescriptions in Northern Ireland.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last ten years (i) how many couples underwent IVF treatment; (ii) the average number of IVF cycles undertaken by each couple; and (iii) the total number of IVF cycles undertaken.

(AQW 8167/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: To provide the information in the format requested would incur disproportionate cost.

Over the past four years the publicly funded fertility service has provided in the region of five hundred cycles of IVF treatment per year.

Northern Ireland introduced an interim publicly funded infertility service in 2001 and at this time those treated were offered two treatment cycles. Following a public consultation on the issue revised criteria were introduced in 2006; wider access criteria meant that provision per patient had to be reduced to one cycle of treatment.

IVF Embryos

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the number of IVF embryos (i) implanted; (ii) stored; and (iii) disposed of in each of the last ten years.
(AQW 8168/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Licensed IVF Centres

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the names and identification numbers of all licensed IVF centres and to detail the site visits by inspectors of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to each centre since 1999.
(AQW 8169/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This area of work is regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA).

Details of all centres in the UK along with their ID numbers can be accessed directly via the HFEA website (www.hfea.gov.uk). Details of HFEA inspections since 2008 are also publicly available on this site.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the applications for research licences to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority since 1999 and to indicate those in which licences were granted.
(AQW 8170/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised that this information can only be obtained by a direct request to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). They can be contacted through their website (www.hfea.gov.uk).

Performance-Related Bonuses for Senior Staff

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total amount paid out in each Health and Social Care Trust on performance-related bonuses for senior staff, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 8172/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There were no Superior Award bonuses paid to Trust Chief Executives and Directors in April 2009; in relation to the April 2008 to March 2009 performance period. Details of the bonuses paid to these staff in relation to the earlier years have been published in the HSC Trust's annual reports.

Radiotherapy Services at Altnagelvin Hospital.

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when a decision will be made on the business case for radiotherapy services at Altnagelvin Hospital.
(AQW 8174/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western HSC Trust submitted a business case for the establishment of a new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital to my Department in April

2010 for consideration. A decision on approval cannot be made until this has been fully appraised, any issues addressed, and there is clarity around the available funding.

Radiotherapy Services at Altnagelvin Hospital.

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to outline the nature of the proposed satellite radiotherapy centre for Altnagelvin Hospital and whether the centre will operate on a full-time basis; (ii) to provide a timescale for the development of this centre; (iii) if the centre will treat all types of cancer so that patients from the Northwest will no longer be required to travel to Belfast; (iv) whether there is any potential negative impact on other proposed new services; and (v) whether the proposal in relation to the centre has altered from that which was announced in 2008.

(AQW 8176/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As I announced in April 2008, it is planned that a satellite radiotherapy unit is to be developed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital to meet future radiotherapy demands. A business case for its development, including the detailed plans for the services to be provided, was submitted by the Western Trust to my Department in April 2010. A number of matters of detail remain to be addressed and the HSC Board is working with the Western Trust on these.

Until the business case has been approved, and the necessary funding is in place to deliver the project, I am unable to provide more detailed comment on the scheme however it is still envisaged that the satellite radiotherapy service will be in place, as planned, during 2015.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of embryos conceived; and (ii) the number of live births, as a result of IVF treatment in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8186/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) This information is not readily available. To obtain this information would incur disproportionate costs
- (ii) The Regional Fertility Centre does not record this information separately for publicly and privately funded patients therefore the following table details the results of treatment for both.

	Pregnancies	Live births
2009/10 (pregnancies only)	114	N/A
2008/09	218	197
2007/08	201	198

Due to changes in the method of record keeping at the RFC to obtain the information for earlier years would incur disproportionate costs

New Local Enhanced Hospital in Omagh: Procurement and Construction

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the procurement method used for the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh; and when construction work is due to commence and be completed.

(AQW 8195/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The business case, including the procurement route, is currently being assessed by my officials. Until this process is completed and the funding to

both build and operate the new facility has been identified no announcement can be made on the way forward for this project, including the procurement route.

Hospital-Acquired Infections

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7695/10, whether hospitals have wards which are used to isolate patients with hospital acquired infections, whereby higher standards of hygiene measures are used to contain the spread of infections; and if he would consider implementing the same hygiene measures in all wards to reduce hospital acquired infections.

(AQW 8215/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Hygiene standards are the same in all wards across all Trusts in Northern Ireland. Additional environmental cleaning is carried out as necessary in response to HCAI cases in order to maintain those standards.

Pregnant Women: Drug Addiction and Abuse

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many pregnant women received treatment for (i) drug addiction; and (ii) drug abuse in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8225/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information in the form requested is not available.

Prescriptions for Antidepressants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many prescriptions for anti-depressants were dispensed in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8226/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of anti-depressants for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, and presented for payment in each of the last five years can be obtained from the Prescription Cost Analysis NI, Family Practitioner Services, BSO, which is available on the Internet at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net> and follow the links.

Refuge for Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to set up a refuge for male victims of domestic abuse, in line with the equality provision set out in Section 75 and given the lack of such services.

(AQW 8229/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Tackling Violence at Home is a cross-departmental domestic violence strategy for Northern Ireland which DHSSPS and DoJ jointly lead on.

The provision for refuge accommodation falls within the remit of DSD.

Supplying Pharmaceuticals to Hospitals and GP Surgeries

Mr M Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to outline the process of supplying pharmaceuticals to hospitals and GP surgeries; and (ii) whether there is a tendering process involving local suppliers and chemists; and how often the process is reviewed.

(AQW 8235/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The procurement of pharmaceuticals in hospitals conforms to the stringent criteria as set out under the Public Contract Regulations 2006 by virtue of EU requirements. Tenders advertised follow the appropriate processes provided for in these regulations which incorporate openness, transparency and equitable treatment. Tendering opportunities

are advertised on the E-sourcingNI web portal commonly used by all Centres of Procurement Expertise and following registration on the portal can be downloaded by any organisation local or otherwise.

Contracts are awarded for set periods, usually 2 to 3 years, and may include options to extend beyond that period and are subject to re-tendering upon completion of the full contract period. Individual hospitals order the contracted products direct from the contractor or local wholesaler.

GP's will either obtain their supplies from the local pharmacist through a Stock prescription or via a central procurement which again complies with the requirements as set out under the Contract Regulations.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many embryos are currently held in storage in IVF centres.

(AQW 8243/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This question would need to be redirected to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority who regulate all IVF centres. They can be contacted through their website (www.hfea.gov.uk).

Patients Who are Visually Impaired or Blind

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether health centres and hospitals are adequately equipped and designed to accommodate patients who are visually impaired or blind; and whether staff are offered training and support to understand issues relating to patients who are visually impaired or blind.

(AQW 8244/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts make every effort to ensure patients who are visually impaired or blind can access health and social care buildings by designing, constructing and equipping them to the highest standard. In addition, some Trusts have worked closely with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to improve access for visually impaired and blind people. Disability and/or visual awareness training is also available to staff in each Trust area.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women receiving IVF treatment were implanted with (a) 1; (b) 2; (c) 3; (d) 4; (e) 5; (f) 6; (g) 7; (h) 8 and (i) more than 8 embryos in the last ten years.

(AQW 8245/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: To obtain the information in the format requested would incur disproportionate cost.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many multiple births of (a) 2; (b) 3; or (c) 4 babies occurred as a result of IVF treatment in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8247/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: To provide the information in the format requested would incur disproportionate cost.

IVF Treatment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women were referred to Britain for treatment related to multiple pregnancies as a result of IVF treatment in Northern Ireland in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8248/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost as it is not held centrally. It is extremely unusual for any woman from Northern Ireland to need to be referred to Britain for treatment related to multiple pregnancies whether IVF related or not. This would only occur in relation to very rare complications.

Mid-Ulster Hospital Site

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any plans which the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has for the Mid-Ulster Hospital site.

(AQW 8268/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Mid Ulster will continue to play an important role in the delivery of hospital services to the local population and form an important part of the wider network of local and acute hospitals across the Trust area. It is critical to the success of our hospital system that we have vibrant local hospitals delivering safe, high quality care to the public.

As a local hospital, the Mid Ulster will provide a significant range of services. It is important that this is recognised by the local community. Services provided at the Mid Ulster include day surgery, diagnostics, outpatients, minor injuries, rehabilitation and day procedures.

In addition, subject to the availability of the necessary resources, the Trust intends to develop a new Health and Care Centre on the site.

Occupational Therapist

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the current longest waiting time for an initial assessment by an occupational therapist.

(AQW 8279/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Waiting Times

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current average waiting times for (i) an initial outpatient appointment; and (ii) a second appointment, in those specialities for which the information is available.

(AQW 8280/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Waiting times for a first outpatient appointment by specialty can be found at the following link: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/waiting_times

The length of time between a first and second outpatient appointment is determined by clinical criteria and will differ on a case by case basis. Consequently, patients awaiting a review outpatient appointment are not managed on a waiting list.

Waiting Times

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current average waiting time for (i) an initial outpatient appointment; and (ii) commencement of a series of treatment in psychotherapy, in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 8281/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 4673/10 on 25 February 2010.

Staff Employed in Mental Health

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of staff employed in mental health (i) currently; and (ii) in 2007, in (a) acute care; and (b) community care, in each Health and Social Care Trust area

(AQW 8282/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total number of staff employed in mental health across all staff groups is provided in the table below.

(I) STAFF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN MENTAL HEALTH

HSC Trust	Acute Care		Community Care	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	591	549.2	589	515.2
Northern 3	568	519.3	1,135	996.1
South Eastern	205	176.3	337	282.9
Southern	297	194.4	419	366.4
Western	545	514.5	630	558.6

(ii) It has not been possible to provide this information for 2007 as Trust's legacy HRMS systems were not consolidated until 2008.

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time equivalent
2. Note that some staff can work across both the acute and community sectors.
3. Northern HSC Trust figures relate to adult services only and includes some disability service staff.

Genito-Urinary Medicine and HIV Services

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his Department's assessment of the current Genito-Urinary Medicine and HIV services and what improvements can be made to them.

(AQW 8335/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The HSC Board is currently working to a target that all patients assessed as clinically urgent are able to access specialist Genito-Urinary Medicine/ Sexual Health services within two working days. In addition the HSC Board are considering the provision of more services within primary and community care and training and support services.

A key objective of the Department's Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2013 is to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. Planned action includes improving access to GUM/ sexual health services and raising public awareness of STIs, with a particular focus on those most at risk, and preventative initiatives including community based programmes and outreach programmes.

Contracts

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration and; (b) £1 million entered into by his Department in each of the

last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts; (iii) whether there were break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8338/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Expense Claims by Members of the Western Local Commissioning Group

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total amount paid in expense claims to members of the Western Local Commissioning Group since its inception.

(AQW 8352/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Expenses associated with the Western Local Commissioning Group for the financial year 2009/10 amount to £47,405. Locum cover for independent practitioners accounts for the majority of these expenses. Significant expenditure is unlikely to have been incurred prior to this financial year.

Medical Records

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how long medical records have to be retained before they can be destroyed.

(AQW 8353/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The retention period of a medical record varies according to the record type. General medical records are retained for 10 years after the conclusion of treatment, the patient's death or the date on which the patient permanently left the country. Patient records are held within the Business Services Organisation when a patient dies or goes to live permanently in another country.

Out-of-hours GP Service

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the review of the Out-of Hours GP Service in the western area, to detail the estimated savings on (i) GP costs; (ii) nursing costs; and (iii) administration costs from September 2010.

(AQW 8364/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The estimated savings on GP costs for the 2010/11 financial year is £300k and £600k for each financial year thereafter.
- (ii) Estimated savings on nursing will amount to £45k in 2010/11 and £90k for each financial year thereafter.

There will be no savings in the financial year 2010/11 administration costs as a result of planned changes to the Out of Hours services.

Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's Disease

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the availability through the Health Service of deep brain stimulation as a treatment for Parkinson's disease sufferers.

(AQW 8393/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a surgical technique which has been shown to reduce some of the symptoms in some patients suffering with Parkinson's disease. It is not suitable for everyone who has Parkinson's disease and the main treatment for the majority of Parkinson's sufferers is still drug therapy. DBS is not available in Northern

Ireland but sufferers may be referred for this treatment to clinics in either Oxford or Bristol depending on their assessed individual needs.

Speech and Language Therapists

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the current and future employment opportunities, in the health sector, for speech and language therapists, including those who have recently qualified.

(AQW 8402/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The HSC Trusts employ speech and language therapists at a range of levels in line with health service needs. The recruitment and selection of staff and associated employment opportunities is a matter for HSC Trusts. My Department carries out regional workforce planning to help ensure that sufficient suitably qualified staff are available to meet the needs of the Health Service. Workforce forecasts are regularly reviewed and corrective action is taken where necessary.

Otoplasty

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's policy regarding the provision of otoplasty.

(AQW 8415/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The current policy on provision of plastic surgery, including otoplasty which changes the appearance of a person's external ears, is contained in the document A Policy to Make Best Use of Resources in Plastic Surgery and Related Specialties which can be found on my Department's website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_a_policy_to_make_best_use_of_resources_in_plastic_surgery_and_related_specialties__205_kb_.pdf.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8422/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Occupational Therapist

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the current average waiting time for an initial assessment by an occupational therapist.

(AQW 8429/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Breastfeeding in Public Places

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the current legislation on breastfeeding in public places; and (ii) to outline what advice midwives give nursing mothers about breastfeeding in public places.

(AQW 8434/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) An assessment of the current legislation on breastfeeding in public places was undertaken as part of the recent review of my Department's Breastfeeding Strategy. The introduction of legislation to specifically support breastfeeding in public will be considered as part of the development of an updated Breastfeeding Strategy.
- (ii) Midwives give all women support in whatever method of feeding they choose for their baby and promote breastfeeding initiation. 56% of babies in Northern Ireland are born in hospitals that have UNICEF Baby Friendly Awards which means all women in these hospitals are encouraged to breast feed their baby.

Results from the latest Infant Feeding Survey 2006 show that breastfeeding rates for NI mothers have increased by almost 10%, rising from 54% in 2000 to 63% in 2005. While NI has still a lower rate than England, Scotland and Wales, the increase over the period was greater in NI than anywhere else in the UK.

The new Maternity Hand Held record for Northern Ireland has a section on infant feeding which encourages the midwife to discuss breastfeeding with mothers in both the antenatal and postnatal period.

All mothers who initiate breastfeeding are given the "Off to a good start" a booklet produced by the Public Health Agency which provides some information about breastfeeding in public.

Waiting Times for Cardiac Surgery

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the (i) current average waiting time; and (ii) longest waiting time for (a) an initial cardiac surgery outpatient assessment; and (b) a cardiac surgery operation.

(AQW 8436/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the average and longest waiting time for a first outpatient appointment in the Cardiac Surgery specialty is not available.

Information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting in time bands, for a first outpatient appointment in this specialty, at 31st March 2010, is collected and can be found at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/waiting_times.htm

At 31st March 2010, the average waiting time for cardiac surgery was 69 days. The longest waiting time was 147 days.

Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of patients, who have suffered a heart attack, received a cardiac rehabilitation programme, in each Health and Social Care Trust area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8438/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not currently available.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the areas of his current budget set aside to deal with drug and alcohol abuse; and whether any of the Health and Social Care Trusts are addressing these issues.

(AQW 8451/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Through the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs, my Department makes just over £7 million available to prevent, address and provide

support in relation to alcohol and drug misuse across Northern Ireland. The majority of this funding is issued through the Public Health Agency to take forward a range of regional and local programmes and interventions.

All the local Health and Social Care Trusts actively take forward work in this area, in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams within the Public Health Agency. This includes the provision of statutory addiction services, commissioning of substance misuse treatment and support services from the community and voluntary sector, and the delivery of a range of education, prevention and intervention programmes.

Vulnerable Children and Young People: Counselling and Therapies

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether early counselling and creative therapy intervention in vulnerable children and young people demonstrably improves their emotional health and well-being and their educational attainment, and has wider benefits for the future well-being of Northern Ireland's communities; and (ii) to detail the resources provided by his Department for the provision of (a) all psychological therapies; and (b) counselling for children aged 5-12, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust area, for each of the last three years.

(AQW 8455/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability acknowledged the benefits of psychological therapies and recommended better access to these services. My Department recently published a strategy for the Development of Psychological Therapy Services. An extra £3.4m has been allocated since 08/09 and a further £1m is being allocated in 2010/11 to expand the range and volume of psychological therapy services. Funding has been provided by my Department and the Department for Social Development.

It is not possible to provide information by Trust on expenditure on psychological therapies and counselling for children as funding is provided from a number of Health and Social Care and Education programmes for this purpose.

Cost of Food for Hospital Inpatients

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average amount spent, per day, on food for a hospital inpatient, in each of the Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 8462/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available in the format requested.

Occupational Therapist

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently awaiting assessment by an occupational therapist.

(AQW 8463/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Health Service Job Applicants: Failed Security Checks

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many job offers to health service applicants have been withdrawn because a candidate failed a security check in each of the last five years, broken down by post and grade.

(AQW 8465/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not held centrally and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Review of Public Administration

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7863/10, to provide a breakdown of £11.01 million spent on designing and implementing the structural change.

(AQW 8473/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information obtained since my earlier answer to AQW 7863/10 would suggest that dual running costs are much lower and more in the region of £2.5m. This makes actual spend on RPA restructuring in the region of £4.6m so far, rather than £11.01m.

These are one-off costs, but new simplified and focussed structures introduced by the Review of Public Administration will deliver £53 million annually in savings that can be directed back into front line services.

Health and Social Care Services Commissioning

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which organisation has the statutory responsibility for commissioning health and social care services in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 8474/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Board, through its five Local Commissioning Groups, which are co-terminus with HSC Trusts, has statutory responsibility for the effective commissioning of health and social care services and other related interventions to improve and protect the health and social well being of the people of Northern Ireland and reduce differences in access to good health and quality of life.

Direct Payments

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have availed of direct payments in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8475/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested.

Local Commissioning Group

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of investment in health and social care in each Local Commissioning Group area is being allocated directly to a Health and Social Care Trust; and what proportion will each Local Commissioning Group receive directly, in this financial year.

(AQW 8476/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: No funding in the Health and Social Care system is allocated directly to any Local Commissioning Group (LCG) or Trust.

All funding is allocated to the Health and Social Care Board (of which LCGs are sub-committees) and the Public Health Agency (PHA). Each Local Commissioning Group has a funding allocation based on the capitation formula. The Board, with the agreement of the PHA, then commissions services from the Trusts reflecting the decisions of the LCGs in respect of the use of their allocations. Based on this process Service and Budget Agreements are in place with each Trust for 2010/2011.

Department of Justice

Members of the RUC and PSNI Removed from Jobs Because of Siblings' Political Connections

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Justice how many members of the RUC and subsequently the PSNI have been removed from their jobs because of siblings' connections to other organisations or parties, in the last twenty years.

(AQW 7152/10)

Minister of Justice (Mr D Ford): Vetting arrangements for police officers are 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Security Provision for Judges

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 7131/10, to detail the annual cost to his Department of security provision for (i) District Judges; (ii) Crown Court Judges; and (iii) High Court Judges for (a) 2007/08; and (b) 2008/09.

(AQW 7494/10)

Minister of Justice: The annual cost to the Department of Justice for security provision for (i) District Judges; (ii) Crown Court Judges; and (iii) High Court Judges for 2007/08 and 2008/09 is presented in the tables below;

NI COURT SERVICE

	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
District Judges	14,246.88	15,172.93
Crown Court Judges	10,926.69	9,408.54
High Court Judges	16,016.98	16,007.54
Total	41,190.55	40,589.01

PSNI

	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
District Judges	N/A	85,588.63
Crown & High Court Judges	N/A	4,774,410.00
Total	N/A	4,859,998.63

In financial year 2007/08 PSNI are unable to provide figures detailing the annual cost of security provision for judiciary.

In financial year 2008/09 PSNI are unable to provide a split of Crown and High Court Judges.

Youth Justice Agency Youth Conferencing Programme

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many young people have gone through the Youth Justice Agency youth conferencing programme in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7875/10)

Minister of Justice: Table 1 presents information on the number of young people who have received a youth conference in each of the calendar years 2005 to 2009.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF YOUNG PERSONS REFERRED TO THE YOUTH CONFERENCE SERVICE 2005-2009

Year	Number of Young People
2005	172
2006	491
2007	964
2008	1,013
2009	1,069

Prostitution

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the seriousness of the problem of prostitution.

(AQW 7890/10)

Minister of Justice: In Northern Ireland the selling of sexual services is much more covert in nature than in the rest of the UK and for this reason difficult to quantify.

On-street prostitution mainly occurs in the South Belfast area, although there has been a significant reduction in recorded incidents.

The fact that the off-street sex industry in Northern Ireland is more covert than in other places in the UK increases the risk of trafficking and exploitation. For this reason PSNI focuses operations on brothels controlled by criminal gangs and gives priority to establishing that any persons found working as prostitutes in brothels are safe and are present there of their own free will.

The police are currently carrying out a review of policy in respect of prostitution and the sex industry in Northern Ireland. The objectives of this review include an assessment of the scale of the sex industry in Northern Ireland.

This policy review will allow for a more accurate assessment to be made of the extent of the sex industry and related problems.

TV for Prisoners

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each prison, (i) the availability of terrestrial and satellite TV for (a) specific individual prisoners; (b) groups of prisoners; and (c) in communal areas; (ii) the channels available in each of these groupings; and (iii) the total annual cost of providing these facilities, broken down by how these costs are incurred, including subscription fees.

(AQW 7908/10)

Minister of Justice: In the adult estate HMP Maghaberry and Magilligan prisoners have access to a range of facilities based on the Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS). There are three levels Enhanced, Standard and Basic. Both Enhanced and Standard are entitled to have in cell televisions (unless excluded temporarily as a result of an adjudication hearing). Prisoners on basic regime are not permitted to have in cell televisions. In Hydebank Wood access to facilities is more general due to the nature and specific needs of the population.

Where prisoners choose to have a television in their cell they pay a rental fee out of prisoner earnings. This fee varies from prison to prison. Prisoners may also purchase a television from a range of approved and specified models through the establishment's tuck shop.

The cost of providing both Terrestrial and Satellite television is met from the Governors Fund which draws its income from profits made by the prisoner tuck shop, prisoner telephone system, television rental fees and recycling initiatives. Additional costs are also detailed below by establishment. The figures quoted relate to the 2009/10 financial year.

Less than 30% of the current prisoner population has access to satellite subscription television in cell and where this is provided access is controlled by staff and limited in nature.

In preparation for digital switchover in 2012, the Prison Service has initiated a replacement programme for TV sets which are not digitally compatible and costs incurred to date are included in the establishment figures below.

HMP Maghaberry	Televisions Available
(a) Access to televisions in Cell	Yes
(b&c)Televisions in communal areas	Yes
Terrestrial Television	Yes (available to all - BBC1 and 2, ITV, Channel 4 and Five)
Satellite Television	Yes (limited to Sky Basic in The Gym, Sky Basic and Movies in the Prisoner Assessment Unit. In addition to Sky Movies Houses Braid, Erne and Mourne have Sky Ultimate).
Cost from Governors Fund	£29,621.50 (this includes new TV purchases and Sky Subscriptions for year)
Cost from Prison Budgets	£24,629.48 (however this includes £16,139 in relation to the newly opened Braid House Complex)

HMP Magilligan	Televisions Available
(a) Access to televisions in Cell	Yes
(b&c)Televisions in communal areas	Yes
Terrestrial Television	Yes (available to all - BBC1 and 2, ITV, Channel 4 and Five)
Satellite Television	Yes (limited to Sky Basic and Sports in Foyleview And Sperrin).
Cost from Governors Fund	£9732.90 (Subscriptions for year)
Cost from Prison Budgets	£4,396.80 (this includes new TV purchases and any repairs incurred)

Hydebank Wood	Television Available
(a) Access to televisions in Cell	Yes
(b&c)Televisions in communal areas	Yes
Terrestrial Television	Yes (available to all - BBC1 and 2, ITV, Channel 4 and Five)
Satellite Television	Yes (Sky Basic and Sky Sports were available to all Houses)

Hydebank Wood	Television Available
Cost from Governors Fund	£28,000
Cost from Prison Budgets	£5,345 (this includes new TV purchases and any repairs incurred)

Magazines for Prisoners

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each prison, (i) the availability of magazines for (a) specific individual prisoners; (b) groups of prisoners; and (c) in communal areas; (ii) the magazines available in each of these groupings; and (iii) the total annual cost of providing these facilities, broken down by how these costs are incurred, including subscription fees.

(AQW 7910/10)

Minister of Justice: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not supply magazines for prisoners.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Justice what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 7957/10)

Minister of Justice: The Department of Justice (DOJ) reviews the use of consultants in line with guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP): and has in place a range of control mechanisms to ensure that the use of consultants is managed appropriately.

Consideration may be given to employing consultants only when it is necessary and only where it will provide value for money.

Injury on Duty Award Appeals

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to his answer to AQW 7243/10, (i) to detail the total amount of compensation paid in respect of these cases; (ii) to detail the average amount of compensation paid in each case for the three years provided; and (iii) to provide the same information for 2005 and 2006.

(AQW 7978/10)

Minister of Justice: The payment of Injury Benefit awards 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Prison Service: Staff Suspensions

Mr P McGlone asked Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 7680/10, for a detailed breakdown of the expenditure by the Prison Service on salary costs for staff suspensions for each of these years.

(AQW 8040/10)

Minister of Justice: The breakdown of the expenditure on salary costs for staff suspensions in the last 5 years as given in the answer to AQW 7680/10 is shown in the table below.

Financial Year	Number of staff on suspension	Individual Cost (£)
2005-2006	5	44,311.98 40,842.87 40,842.75 21,377.06 3,548.02
2006-2007	7	29,507.85 5,530.51 42,331.92 22,231.06 24,273.46 8,637.92 Unpaid
2007-2008	5	36,066.36 30,313.12 25,736.38 unpaid 8,067.85
2008-2009	21	42,389.58 27,582.39 14,767.43 12,765.32 12,654.94 12,674.57 12,654.88 12,654.88 12,654.94 12,711.19 12,654.94 12,654.94 12,738.23 8,192.76 10,738.44 9,803.38 10,179.09 10,352.07 10,893.96 252.28 3,769.94

Financial Year	Number of staff on suspension	Individual Cost (£)
2009-2010	20	26,184.54
		26,184.66
		26,184.66
		26,184.54
		26,184.54
		26,184.66
		26,184.66
		26,184.66
		26,184.66
		26,184.66
		3,293.24
		40,541.57
		6,400.53
		35,715.53
		21,456.94
		15,624.57
		19,256.07
		24,891.47
		11,000.37
		4,020.41

Staff Salaries in Excess of £100,000

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Justice how many staff in his Department, and associated Quangos, are paid in excess of £100,000 pa in salary and/or remuneration packages.

(AQW 8041/10)

Minister of Justice: There are three members of staff in the Department of Justice in receipt of an annual salary in excess of £100,000.

Travel Expenses for Solicitors and Barristers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how much has been paid in travel expenses from legal aid to (i) solicitors; and (ii) barristers in the last financial year.

(AQW 8057/10)

Minister of Justice:

- (i) In the last financial year, £2,035,653 in travel expenses (travel time and mileage) has been paid to solicitors.
- (ii) In the last financial year, £699,861 in travel expenses (travel time and mileage) has been paid to barristers.

The above amounts exclude civil and criminal cases in which the fees have been determined by the Taxing Master (a judicial officer of the High Court), as the format in which those fees are notified to the Commission does not specifically identify travel.

Sick-related Staff Absence

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the levels of sick-related absence among staff in the (i) Prison Service; (ii) PSNI; (iii) Courts and Tribunals Service; and (iv) Youth Justice Agency, for each of the last three years.

(AQW 8064/10)

Minister of Justice: The levels of sick-related absence among staff in the Prison Service, PSNI, Courts and tribunals Service and Youth Justice Agency, for each of the last three years, are given in the following tables:

Northern Ireland Prison Service		
Year	Average Working Days Lost per Prison Officer	Average Working Days Lost per General Service Grade
2007/08	19.5	8.7
2008/09	15.7	8.9
2009/10	12.8	12

Police Service Northern Ireland		
Year	Average Working Days Lost per Police Officer	Average Working Days Lost per Police Staff
2007/08	11.1	11
2008/09	8.9	9.1
2009/10	8.2	9.2

Courts and Tribunals Service	
Year	Average Working Days Lost per Staff Member
2007/08	10.5
2008/09	9.5
2009/10	11.8

Youth Justice Agency	
Year	Average Working Days Lost per Staff Member
2007/08	20.4
2008/09	20.4
2009/10	15.4

It should be noted the Police Service count all calendar days absent as opposed to the other agencies using working days only.

Sexual Offences Examiners in Forensic Science Northern Ireland

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current number of Sexual Offences Examiners in Forensic Science Northern Ireland; and the number of posts that are vacant.
(AQW 8065/10)

Minister of Justice: Within Forensic Science Northern Ireland there is no such position as a “Sexual Offences Examiner” but the Agency does have 13 Court Reporting Officers competent to lead forensic investigations, evaluate findings and give evidence in Court in relation to Sexual Offences. This is part of a more general Biology role covering ‘offences against the person’ and includes murders, assaults as well as sexual offences. This team is supported by 14 laboratory staff, who carry out the relevant analyses on behalf of the Court Reporting Officers as part of a general Evidence Recovery and DNA analysis service.

In addition, other FSNI resources, including both Reporting Officers and Laboratory staff will, where relevant, contribute on the non-biological aspects of investigations of sexual offences, including, for example, fingerprints, electronic data recovery, drugs and toxicology.

There are currently no Reporting Officer vacancies within FSNI and 2 vacancies within the laboratory staffing support for cases of this nature.

Compensation Claims Against the Prison Service

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice (i) to detail the total number of claims for compensation which were made against the Prison Service by (a) serving; and (b) former prisoners in each of the last five years; (ii) to detail the number of these claims which were (a) successful (b) unsuccessful, in either

the courts, or out of court settlements; (iii) to detail the total amount of compensation awarded; and (iv) to provide a summary of the reasons for these claims.

(AQW 8085/10)

Minister of Justice: Point (i) (a) and (b) - it is not possible to supply the information in the format requested. Information for serving and former serving prisoners is not held in this format in relation to prisoner claims.

- (i) The total number of prisoner claims made against the Prison Service in each of the last five years is 546, shown year by year as follows:

Year	Number of prisoner claims
2005	92
2006	108
2007	75
2008	105
2009	107
2010 (Jan – May)	59
Total	546

- (ii)(a) The total number of prisoner claims for which compensation has not been paid during the past five years is 226, shown year by year as follows:

Year	No of claims for which compensation has not been paid
2005	11
2006	41
2007	30
2008	54
2009	55
2010 (Jan – May)	35
Total	226

These figures include claims such as those which are “Statute Barred”, dismissed, withdrawn, struck out or not proceeded with.

- (ii)(b) The number of claims for which compensation has been paid as a result of pre-proceedings (in-house) settlement, pre-hearing settlement or by a Judge’s decision following court hearing is 223, shown year by year as follows:

Year	Number of claims for which compensation has been paid		
	Total per year	In-house settlements (pre-proceedings)	Out of court settlement or court award (post-proceedings)
2005	45	29	16
2006	38	20	18

Year	Number of claims for which compensation has been paid		
	Total per year	In-house settlements (pre-proceedings)	Out of court settlement or court award (post- proceedings)
2007	51	26	25
2008	42	36	6
2009	33	23	10
2010 (Jan – May)	14	9	5
Total	223	143	80

NB: The above figures include both injury and property claims.

(iii) The total amount of compensation awarded from 2005 to 2009 and in 2010 to date is £376,047.53, shown year by year as follows:

Year	Amount of compensation awarded
2005	£ 45,435.34
2006	£112,577.42 (includes a single payment of £85,164.06)
2007	£ 54,047.86
2008	£ 52,294.28
2009	£ 72,024.99
2010 (Jan – May)	£ 39,667.64
Total	£376,047.53

(iv) The reason for claims against NIPS is the alleged negligence of the Service i.e. allegedly failing to fulfil its “duty of care”. Such claims are for various incidents notably:

- Incidents involving staff and/or other inmates;
- Slips, trips and falls;
- Smoke inhalation;
- Road traffic accidents;
- Lost property.

Compensation Claims Against the PSNI

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice (i) to detail the total number of claims for compensation which were made against the PSNI by serving prisoners in each of the last five years; (ii) to detail the number of these claims which were (a) successful (b) unsuccessful, in either the courts, or out of court settlements; (iii) to detail the total amount of compensation awarded; and (iv) to provide a summary of the reasons for these claims.

(AQW 8086/10)

Minister of Justice: Information relating to compensation claims against the PSNI is an operational 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Compensation Claims Against the PSNI

Mr T Burns asked Minister of Justice (i) to detail the total number of claims for compensation which were made against the PSNI in each of the last five years; (ii) to detail the number of these claims which were (a) successful (b) unsuccessful, in either the courts, or out of court settlements; (iii) to detail the total amount of compensation awarded; and (iv) to provide a summary of the reasons for these claims.

(AQW 8087/10)

Minister of Justice: Information relating to compensatory claims against the PSNI is an operational 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, and I have forwarded this question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Speeding Tickets

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how many speeding tickets were issued by the PSNI in each of the last five years and the amount of fines recovered.

(AQW 8099/10)

Minister of Justice: Table 1 below, provided by PSNI, sets out the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued for speeding offences for each of the last five years.

TABLE 1: FIXED PENALTY NOTICES ISSUED FOR SPEEDING OFFENCES

Offence	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Excess Speed - Officer Issued Tickets (Roadside)	12616	12059	12341	9150	9755	55921
R Driver Exceeding 45MPH Officer Issued Tickets (Roadside)	147	197	296	235	290	1165
Breach of Temp Speed Limit Officer Issued Tickets (Roadside)	-	-	701	1439	858	2998
Camera Speeding Offences (Cofpns)	12857	12327	16050	15212	23047	79493
Total	25620	24583	29388	26036	33950	139577

Revenue derived from FPNs is not held with reference to specific offences.

Payments for speeding offences include offences that were detected by mobile or fixed camera and a Conditional Offer Fixed Penalty Notice [COFPN] was subsequently issued. While the greater proportion of COFPN's are detections for excess speed, these notices also include detections of red light running by fixed cameras.

An FPN is also issued for offences detected by hand held laser devices; this type of FPN is known as an 'endorseable' ticket. This type of FPN is issued for a wide range of other motoring offences and information on the revenue received is only held by type of FPN. Table 2 below details the total amount of revenue received on the two categories of FPN that include speeding offences. There is no direct correlation between the number of tickets issued and the revenue received for any given year.

TABLE 2: REVENUE RECEIVED ON FIXED PENALTY NOTICES*

Year	Conditional Offers £60 penalty	Endorsable £60 penalty	Total Revenue
2005	£640,440.00	£780,820.00	£1,421,260.00
2006	£572,940.00	£749,456.96	£1,322,396.96
2007	£716,220.00	£1,201,320.00	£1,917,540.00
2008	£735,420.00	£1,607,100.00	£2,342,520.00
2009	£1,033,680.00	£1,660,200.00	£2,693,880.00

*There are a very small number of £30 Non-Endorsable tickets issued for exceeding 45mph while displaying 'L' and 'R' plates but in terms of overall revenue the sums are so insignificant that they have been disregarded for the purposes of this answer.

When payment of a fixed penalty is not received the matter is registered with the court for enforcement. Table 3 sets out the amount paid for court imposed fines since 2007.

TABLE 3: COURT IMPOSED FINES*

Year	2007	2008	2009	Total
Payments Received	£47,815	£46,350	£34,160	£128,325

*Data is only available for the last three years.

Fines for Failing to Wear a Seatbelt

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how many tickets were issued to drivers for failing to wear a seatbelt in each of the last five years and the total amount of fines recovered.

(AQW 8102/10)

Minister of Justice: Table 1 below, provided by PSNI, sets out the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued to drivers for failing to wear a seat belt for each of the last five years.

TABLE 1: FIXED PENALTY NOTICES ISSUED FOR FAILING TO WEAR A SEAT BELT

2005	2006	Jan- June 2007	July-Dec 2007	2008	2009
17472	16191	9693	3734	5631	5000
		Total 2007 - 13427			

* In mid-2007 the legislation was amended and not wearing a seatbelt became an endorsable offence, which carries 3 penalty points and a £60 fine as opposed to previously being a non-endorsable offence which carried a £30 fine.

Revenue derived from FPNs is not held with reference to specific offences.

When payment of a fixed penalty is not received the matter is registered with the court for enforcement. The specific offence code for Failing to Wear a Seat Belt (Driver) was only created within the NICTS's IT system in mid-2008 and this data has only been available since then. Table 2 sets out the amount paid for court imposed fines since July 2008.

TABLE 2: COURT IMPOSED FINES FOR FAILING TO WEAR A SEAT BELT (DRIVER)

Year	Payments Received
2008 (Jul – Dec)	£11,680
2009	£27,950
Total	£39,630

Time in Prison on Remand

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each of the last five years, the total number of prisoners who have spent more time in prison on remand than the length of the custodial sentence imposed on them by the courts.

(AQW 8143/10)

Minister of Justice: The information provided in the table below is from 2007. As no electronic information is available prior to this date, data could only be obtained by researching individual prisoner files and to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

Calendar Year	Maghaberry	Hydebank Wood	Total
2007	35	17	52
2008	35	21	56
2009	19	33	52
2010 (to date)	17	11	28

Investigating the Theft of ATMs

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how much has been spent investigating the theft of ATMs in each of the last five years; and to provide a summary of the outcome of these investigations.

(AQW 8146/10)

Minister of Justice: This 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Registered Sex Offenders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 7549/10, what category of sex offender is the individual whose address was given to police as “of a location where the person can be regularly found”.

(AQW 8149/10)

Minister of Justice: As indicated in my response to AQW 7549/10, information about offenders subject to the notification requirements set out in Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (the sex offender register) is an operational matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I would therefore recommend that you contact the Chief Constable directly about this further query.

Pilot Drugs Court

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Justice if he would consider introducing a pilot drugs court to deal exclusively with drugs related offences.

(AQW 8161/10)

Minister of Justice: Between 2000-01 and 2003-04 a multi-agency team considered the issue of drugs courts and they concluded that they were not required at that time in Northern Ireland. In the intervening period we have not been approached to re-consider this issue. At present there are no plans to introduce a pilot drug court to handle drug offences in Northern Ireland. However the situation will continue to be monitored.

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland: Thematic Inspection Report on Sexual Violence and Abuse

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice if he has received the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland thematic inspection report on sexual violence and abuse and for his initial assessment of the report.

(AQW 8178/10)

Minister of Justice: I received the CJINI thematic report and met with the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice to discuss his findings ahead of the report's publication on 5th July.

The report recognises many examples of good practice and successful partnership working between criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector. It also draws attention to areas where case management and victim engagement arrangements could be further strengthened and these will be taken forward by the agencies concerned. I am particularly keen to make further improvements in arrangements for supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse and will be publishing proposals in the autumn for tackling the current high levels of attrition particularly in relation to cases involving rape. They include the development of special support and advocacy services for victims of rape or sexual assault; publication of a step by step victim information handbook; and legislation to provide enhanced special measures for victims giving evidence at court.

Firearms Offences

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of firearms offences in Mid-Ulster in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 8187/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number in Mid Ulster constituency convicted of a firearms offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

NUMBER CONVICTED OF A FIREARMS OFFENCE¹ – MID ULSTER² 2002-2006

Year	Number convicted
2002	2
2003	1
2004	3
2005	3
2006	4

1 Includes offences related to possessing firearm/ammunition in suspicious circumstances; possessing handgun/ammunition without certificate; possessing prohibited weapons; and possessing firearm or imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of violence; discharging firearm in a public place; carrying firearm in a public place; and trespassing with firearm on land.

2 Based on the constituency in which the offender's address falls.

Rape

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice how many incidents of (i) rape; and (ii) attempted rape have been recorded in the (a) Magherafelt; and (b) Cookstown Council areas in each of the last five years, broken down by the age of the victim; and how many convictions have been secured for each offence. **(AQW 8188/10)**

Minister of Justice: The table below gives the number of recorded rape offences (including attempts) in Magherafelt and Cookstown policing areas broken down by age of victim. Due to small numbers and the potential disclosure of victim identity, rape and attempted rape are not given separately and data for the financial years 2005/06 to 2009/10 have been aggregated.

In terms of convictions, there were no persons convicted in Magherafelt and Cookstown police District Command Units for rape (including attempts) during the five years assessed. Data covered are for the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

While there were no convictions for rape, conviction data is not directly comparable with the number recorded as PSNI denote the offence as it has been initially recorded and this may differ from the offence for which a suspect is subsequently proceeded against.

RECORDED RAPE OFFENCES (INCLUDING ATTEMPTS) BY AGE1 OF VICTIM AND POLICING AREA DURING THE PERIOD 2005/06 – 2009/10

Age	Cookstown	Magherafelt
Victim under 18 years	23	27
Victim 18 or over	9	10
Total	32	37

Source: PSNI

1 The victim age refers to the victim age at the time the crime occurred.

Sexual violence has a devastating impact on its victims. I am committed to working with Ministerial colleagues on the implementation of the 5 year Regional Strategy on Sexual Violence and Abuse which has prevention strategies, enhanced support for victims and an effective justice response as its key cornerstones. The planned opening of Northern Ireland's first Sexual Assault Referral Centre at Antrim Area Hospital in early 2012 will be one of its key achievements delivering coordinated aftercare services for victims and acting as a supportive gateway to the justice system where enhanced support services can start to reduce levels of victim withdrawal and improve conviction rates by helping victims to give their best evidence in court.

Elderly People Assaulted in their Homes

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice how many incidents of elderly people being assaulted in their homes have been recorded in the (i) Magherafelt; and (ii) Cookstown Council areas in each of the last 5 years. **(AQW 8189/10)**

Minister of Justice: Data on recorded incidents are maintained by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable to respond directly.

Victims of Crime

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice to outline the work being carried out by their Department to assist the victims of crime.

(AQW 8191/10)

Minister of Justice: Improving services for victims of crime is central to the work of my Department.

One of my first acts as Justice Minister was to go and see at first hand how victims are being supported when they come to give evidence in court, by visiting Victim Support and the NSPCC at Laganside Court.

I also had a constructive discussion on victims' issues with my Irish counterpart Dermot Ahern when I met with him in my first week.

I recently launched two guides to Northern Ireland's criminal justice system; one for victims and witnesses of crime, the other for families and friends bereaved through murder and manslaughter. I have asked the police and other justice agencies to distribute these widely, as a way of helping victims and their families navigate their way through the complexities of the system.

I will shortly announce a dedicated programme of work specifically designed to improve the victim's experience of the justice system. This work will be set out in an action plan, which I will publish.

This will include a new Code of Practice which will set out the minimum standard of service that the criminal justice agencies will be expected to provide to victims of crime.

I will also be announcing over the summer a consultation on draft guidance for practitioners on how to assist children and vulnerable and intimidated adult victims and witnesses to give their best possible evidence in criminal proceedings.

I intend to bring forward a Justice Bill which will include a number of provisions for victims. I am proposing the establishment of an offender levy, the revenue from which would be used to establish a Victims of Crime Fund, and I am also proposing to extend the statutory special measures to assist vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best possible evidence in criminal proceedings.

Victims of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Justice what meetings he has had with relevant parties since taking up office in relation to victims of (i) sexual assault; and (ii) domestic violence.

(AQW 8192/10)

Minister of Justice: The table below details the meetings I have had, since taking up office, with relevant parties in relation to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence:

Date	Details of Meeting
26 May	Meeting with Foyle Women's Aid (as part of a wider visit to Londonderry).
28 June	Meeting with Dr Michael Maguire to discuss the key findings and recommendations from the forthcoming CJINI report on how the criminal justice system handles cases of sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland.
29 June	Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) on Domestic and Sexual Violence

Drink-Driving Offences

Mr P Weir asked Minister of Justice how many drink driving offences have been recorded in North Down in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8202/10)

Minister of Justice: Data on recorded drink driving offences are maintained by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable to respond directly.

Rival Gangs in the Abbey Glen Drive and Crescent area of Newtownabbey

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of recorded incidents involving rival gangs in the Abbey Glen Drive and Crescent area of Newtownabbey since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 8209/10)

Minister of Justice: Data on recorded incidents are maintained by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable to respond directly.

Crown Court: Cost of Trials

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what is the minimum cost of bringing a case to trial at Crown Court.

(AQW 8221/10)

Minister of Justice: There are many variables that influence the cost of bringing a case to the Crown Court. Each case will have its own unique set of circumstances that will have a bearing on the final costs of the case. Even the most straightforward of cases will have the potential to involve virtually all of the criminal justice agencies and the factors that would have a bearing on the costs would include -

- the amount of police time used during investigation,
- the costs associated with preparing and conducting the prosecution by the PPS,
- whether the case required input from the Forensic Science Agency,
- the number of witnesses required (both defence and prosecution),
- the judicial and staff costs associated with the Magistrates' Court stage and committal proceedings,
- the Crown Court stage including the length of any trial,
- the number of solicitors and counsel involved,
- the preparation of pre-sentence reports by PBNI,
- the cost of any medical reports, and
- whether a jury was sworn.

Discussions with the Minister for Justice and Law Reform

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland to ensure that there is a free exchange of information on individuals convicted of crimes of assault in both jurisdictions.

(AQW 8231/10)

Minister of Justice: I meet regularly with Dermot Ahern under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Criminal Justice Co-Operation and discuss a range of matters to support co-operation between criminal justice agencies on both sides of the border. While operational arrangements for information exchange, including decisions in individual cases, are a matter for the police, we will keep the overall framework under review in that forum.

Speeding Tickets

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Justice how many speeding tickets, including Fixed Penalty Notices, have been issued in each constituency in each of the last six months.

(AQW 8270/10)

Minister of Justice: Data on Fixed Penalty Notices issued for speeding are maintained by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable to respond directly.

Reported Incidents of Domestic Violence

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of reported incidents of domestic violence in each district council area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8275/10)

Minister of Justice: The recording of reported incidents of domestic abuse in each district council area is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Police Officers and Prison Officers Disciplined for Accepting Bribes

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) police officers; and (ii) prison officers who have been disciplined for accepting bribes in each of the last 10 years, broken down by the rank of the officer.

(AQW 8289/10)

Minister of Justice: The conduct and discipline of police officers 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable who will respond directly.

With regard to the Northern Ireland Prison Service, I can confirm that no prison officers have been disciplined for accepting bribes in any of the last ten years.

Mediation in Cases of Domestic Violence

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the need for mediation between the victim and the accused in cases involving domestic violence; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

(AQW 8379/10)

Minister of Justice: In October 2005 the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety launched the 'Tackling Violence at Home' strategy for tackling domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland. The strategy focuses on the three key areas of prevention, protection and justice and support.

The overall aims of the strategy and the associated action plans recognise the need to improve services and support for all victims, to hold perpetrators/abusers accountable and to provide effective interventions for their behaviours.

The safety of the victim is paramount to any action that may be taken in a case of domestic violence. Government Departments work closely with those agencies (such as Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project, Victims Support NI) that work directly with victims. It is widely known that mediation is not appropriate in cases of domestic violence. Any intervention, therefore, must have built in safeguards and support for the victim. For example, Integrated Domestic Abuse Programmes, which are programmes for court mandated perpetrators of domestic violence, also offer support services to women who have been victims of the men sentenced to the programme and men's current partners through women's safety services.

One of the key actions in the current Domestic Violence Action Plan is to ensure the availability of quality assured programmes for those perpetrators who may be abusing their partners but who are not presently being dealt with through the criminal justice system. When introduced, such programmes will have built in support systems for victims, family members and significant others.

Domestic Violence

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to address the cost of obtaining a non-molestation order and the wider issues of access to justice for victims of domestic violence.

(AQW 8380/10)

Minister of Justice: The 'Tackling Violence at Home' strategy and associated action plans focuses on, among other things, the provision of better protection, justice and support services for victims of domestic violence and their families. A key action in the current action plan is: "To work in partnership with other key organisations to ensure access to justice by domestic violence victims by identifying existing barriers to justice and working together to remove them e.g. financial, cultural, linguistic, etc."

A small working group led by DoJ, Community Safety Unit and with membership drawn from Legal Services Commission, Women's Aid, and the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) has been set up to identify the barriers to justice for victims of domestic violence with a view to taking forward appropriate action to address such barriers. The working group will be considering, among other things, the cost of obtaining a non molestation order.

Legal aid plays an important role in the provision of access to justice for victims of domestic violence, including applications for non-molestation orders, for those applicants who are financially eligible for legal aid. For some applicants legal aid is available free of charge whilst others may have to make a contribution towards the costs of their legal representation, depending on their financial circumstances.

The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission administers civil legal aid. As part of the work on civil legal aid reform, my officials are examining whether a waiver on the financial eligibility limits for victims of domestic violence should be introduced in Northern Ireland. A waiver was introduced in England and Wales in 2005, the effect of which is that applicants have access to funded legal services subject to varying levels of contribution toward the cost of their case, depending on their financial status and their disposable income or capital at the time of application.

In addition to non- molestation orders new powers, which commenced 30 September 2009, under the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004, offer protection to those victims who are subject to harassment and domestic violence abuse. These new rules allow the courts to serve a restraining order for any offence even when someone has been acquitted in order to better protect victims. Because these orders are imposed by the Court the cost is not borne by the victim.

Another initiative which may go some way to addressing barriers to justice is the proposed introduction of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs). The Crime and Security Act seeks to strengthen the protection available to victims by enabling the police to apply for a DVPO when a suspected perpetrator of domestic violence is not charged. A DVPO will require the perpetrator to not contact the victim or return to the victim's address. The Home Office will pilot the scheme in two separate areas and if the evaluation determines the scheme to be successful it is hoped that DVPOs would be introduced in Northern Ireland by way of the Criminal Justice Order early 2011.

Courts and Tribunals Service: Appeals Against Awards Made by the Taxing Master

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Courts and Tribunals Service having to make 38 interventions against appeals, from members of the legal profession, against awards made by the Taxing Master; and that 13 of these appeals were subsequently withdrawn following the interventions.

(AQW 8416/10)

Minister of Justice: Where a claim for legal aid fees is going on appeal or review to the Taxing Master, the Department (formerly the Lord Chancellor) may arrange for written or oral representations to be made on its behalf, “with a view to ensuring that the public interest is taken into account”.

In the 38 claims in question (comprising 32 claims by barristers and 6 by solicitors), the total amount claimed was approximately £10.5m (including VAT). At the first instance assessment stage, the Taxing Master determined the total amount payable at approximately £5.7m (including VAT).

After notification was given by the Department that it intended to intervene in respect of these claims, the representatives involved in 13 of the claims (all of whom are barristers) have withdrawn their applications that the Taxing Master review his original assessment.

Under the relevant rules, a representative is not required to give reasons for withdrawing their appeal or review application.

PSNI Breathalyser Checks in North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the average number of times per month that the PSNI set up breathalyser checks in North Down over the last three years.

(AQW 8426/10)

Minister of Justice: The use of preliminary breath tests by the PSNI 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Asylum Seekers

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Justice how many asylum seekers have been arrested in each of the last five years; and (ii) how many asylum seekers are currently in detention.

(AQW 8447/10)

Minister of Justice: The arrest of asylum seekers 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 and therefore this question should be addressed to the Chief Constable who will respond directly.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service has foreign national prisoners in custody but does not hold information relating specifically to asylum seekers, as that is a matter for the UK Border Agency.

Department for Regional Development

Hillhead Road in Newry

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the future of the Hillhead Road in Newry.

(AQW 7496/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): As the Member will be aware, my Department's Roads Service initially closed a section

of the Hillhead Road, Newry on 26 January 2007. A further section of the road was closed on 21 August 2008.

Roads Service subsequently issued legal proceedings against three previous quarry owners in early 2009. I understand that these proceedings have been progressing, and are due to come before the

High Court in the coming months. Therefore, until these proceedings have been heard, I am unable to comment further on the future of the Hillhead Road.

[A photograph was provided with the original answer.]

Kingarve Road, Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the trees that were cut down by Roads Service on private property at Kingarve Road, Dungannon, on Saturday 19 December 2009; (i) how many staff made up the work squad; (ii) if a supervisor was present; (iii) the grade and role of the staff in the work squad who misinterpreted the instructions; and (iv) the grade and role of the member of staff who authorised the cutting down of these trees.

(AQW 7501/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there were two members of staff in the work squad, one of whom was the supervisor. The supervisor's role is to organise, supervise and assist in undertaking the work, and on this occasion it was the supervisor who misinterpreted the instructions given to him by his line manager, whose role is to identify, prioritise and issue instructions for the road maintenance work that is required within his area of responsibility. No member of staff authorised the inadvertent cutting down of the trees in private ownership.

In view of the data protection implications associated with the disclosure of the grades of staff involved, I will write to the Member separately advising him of such details.

Speed Bumps

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to list all 'B' roads in each Roads Service division which have had speed bumps installed in the past ten years.

(AQW 7522/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below lists the 'B' class roads in each of my Department's Roads Service divisions, on which speed bumps have been installed in the last ten years:

‘B’ class roads on which speed bumps have been installed**Southern Division**

- B79 Drumalane Road, Newry
- B112 Derrymore Road, Bessbrook
- B3 Coolmillish Road, Markethill
- B3 Loughbrickland Road, Rathfriland
- B12 Aghalee Road, Aghagallon
- B111 Annareagh Road, Hamiltonsbawn
- B111 New Line, Richhill

Eastern Division

- B20 Ballyholme Road, Bangor
- B20 Ballyholme Esplanade, Bangor
- B20 Sheridan Drive, Bangor
- B20 Grays Hill, Bangor
- B178 Church Road, Carryduff

Western Division

- B4 Drumnakilly Road, Carrickmore
- B4 Termon Road, Carrickmore
- B46 Creggan Road, Carrickmore
- B80 Tattymoyle Road, Fintona
- B122 Ecclesville Road, Fintona
- B46 Dromore Road, Fintona
- B46 Carnlea Road, Fintona
- B164 Deerpark Road, Ardstraw
- B85 Urney Road, Strabane
- B72 Meetinghouse Street, Strabane
- B85 Urney Road, Clady
- B165 Bellspark Road, Clady
- B48 Derry Road, Omagh
- B72 Castlegore Road, Castlederg
- B72 Strabane Road, Castlederg
- B4 Edenamohill Road, Edenhill
- B4 Letterboy Road, Ederney
- B72 Castlederg Road, Ederney
- B107 Clabby Road, Clabby
- B534 Drumadravy (Lisnarick) Road, Irvinestown
- B515 Link Road, Brookeborough
- B34 Killyman Road, Dungannon
- B43 Mullaghmore Road, Donaghmore

- B106 Cavan Road, Killyman
- B106 Trewmont Road, Killyman
- B4 Cavanakeeran Road, Pomeroy
- B4 Edendoit Road, Pomeroy
- B43 Tanderagee Road, Pomeroy
- B160 North Street, Stewartstown
- B520 West Street, Stewartstown
- B520 Hillhead, Stewartstown
- B40 High Street, Draperstown
- B40 Derrynoyd Road, Draperstown
- B40 Magherafelt Road, Draperstown
- B41 Tobermore Road, Draperstown
- B47 Sixtowns Road, Draperstown
- B47 Sixtowns Road, Straw
- B18 Ballyneill Road, Ballyronan
- B160 Ballyronan Road, Ballyronan
- B160 Shore Road, Ballyronan
- B160 Mullananhoe Road, Ardboe

Northern Division

- B12 Glenavy Road, Crumlin
- B12 Main Street, Crumlin
- B53 Station Road, Randalstown
- B53 Barnish Road, Randalstown
- B53 Craigstown Road, Randalstown
- B148 Drumahoe Road, Larne

A1 Cloughogue to Beechill Road

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development when the A1 Cloughogue to Beechill road will be officially opened.

(AQW 7538/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that construction of the new A1 Cloughogue to Beechill dual carriageway is ahead of schedule and is expected to be opened to traffic this summer, in advance of the December 2010 programme date. However, Lagan Ferrovial, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project, are not yet in a position to confirm the opening date.

Speed Limit Outside Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any proposals his Department has to reduce the speed limit outside schools to 20mph in the Mid-Ulster constituency.

(AQW 7656/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has no plans to reduce the speed limit outside schools to 20mph in the Mid-Ulster constituency.

CCTV Cameras on Railway Network

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of CCTV cameras on the NI Railway network in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7699/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have provided the cost of CCTV cameras on the NI Railway network in each of the last three years in the following table:

Capital Expenditure by Project	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Poyntzpass Manually Controlled Barrier CCTV Renewal	72	2		74
CCTV at Portadown		1	38	39
CCTV at York Road		106	54	160
CCTV at Botanic Station			2	2
CCTV at Yorkgate			56	56
CCTV at Antrim Integrated Bus/Rail Station			99	99
Replacement of CCTV System at Central Station			10	10
Accommodation Crossing Covert Surveillance System		16	2	18
	72	125	261	458

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Maintenance expenditure	28	25	43	96
	28	25	43	96

The information provided does not include the following capital projects which contain an element of CCTV, but the costs relating to it are not readily available from Translink:

1. Newry Railway Station
2. Greenisland Park and Ride
3. Whiteabbey Park and Ride
4. Whitehead Park and ride
5. Menary's Miniature Stop Lights Provision
6. Class 3000 Trains

Cairnshill Park and Ride Scheme

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the amount invested in the Cairnshill Park and Ride scheme in South Belfast; (ii) the expected date of completion; (iii) when the site and transport service is expected to become fully operational; and (iv) if there are any plans for usage of this site in the interim.

(AQW 7880/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Plans for the introduction of a new park and ride facility at Cairnshill are well advanced and I can confirm that a £7.9m capital investment has been made. Of this £6.25m relates to land costs and £1.65m to construction costs.

Although the construction work at the site is largely complete, the procurement of the bus services, together with the introduction of further bus priority measures, need to be finalised before the site becomes fully operational. I hope to be able to announce the outcome of the procurement in the autumn.

In the meantime, I have asked officials to investigate opening the car park as a park and share site and to consider how existing Translink bus services could be used to benefit accessing the city centre.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 6916/10, to detail (i) if NI Water has obtained the date when each individual, employed under the CO 71 contract, started working for NI Water; (ii) whether employees were informed of (a) the purpose for seeking this information, and if not, to detail why; (b) where this information has been stored; and (c) how to access the information to check its accuracy; and (iii) to list those who have access to the information.

(AQW 7927/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that as part of its transition to a Government owned Company it sought to obtain some data on all external contractors engaged in its business via contract CO71, in order that it could measure against the requirements of the contract tender arrangement and to understand any future implications of that contract.

As such:

- (i) The dates of original engagement for external contractors via various contracts were estimated by NIW line managers.
- (ii) (a) External contractors were not approached as this was an internal NIW management exercise.
(b) The information is stored on an internal Microsoft excel spreadsheet.
(c) Access to the information is limited.
- (iii) The Head of Mechanical & Electrical in NIW has access to the information.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 6916/10, to outline which management level within NI Water requested that the start date of each individual, employed under the CO 71 contract, should be obtained.

(AQW 7930/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that senior management at Level 3 grade sought the estimated start dates for each external contractor engaged via contract CO71.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 6916/10, whether NI Water complied with the Data Protection Act 1998 in relation to obtaining the start date of each individual employed under the CO 71 contract.

(AQW 7933/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that obtaining the estimated start dates for each external contractor engaged via contract CO71 was an internal NIW management exercise and as such does not fall under the interpretation of sensitive personal data within the Data Protection Act.

NIW is registered (Z9774154) on the Information Commissioner's Office Data Protection Register and this provides the necessary data protection compliance to seek and hold employment history on external contractors.

Unadopted Alleyways and Paths

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has any plans to develop a strategy for the adoption and maintenance of unadopted alleyways and paths.

(AQW 8001/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not have any plans to develop a strategy for the adoption and maintenance of unadopted alleyways and paths.

Public expenditure to bring such alleyways and paths up to adoption standard, and to maintain them, would be an unjustifiable cost to my Department and would not provide good value for money.

Unadopted Alleyways

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions his Department has had with local government in relation to the difficulty posed in terms of health and safety by poorly maintained, unadopted alleyways.

(AQW 8002/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is not responsible for the maintenance of unadopted alleyways and, as such, has not had any discussions with local government in relation to the difficulty posed in terms of health and safety by poorly maintained, unadopted alleyways.

Water Charges: Commercial Properties

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to list the retail or commercial properties that have not paid water charges in the last 12 months, broken down by council area.

(AQW 8014/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that release of the information requested in relation to specific retail or commercial properties would breach its duty of confidentiality to its customers in respect of maintaining commercially sensitive information which they would have no expectation would be publicly disclosed without their consent. The reputations of those businesses concerned would be damaged if this information was disclosed and disclosure would likely be prejudicial to the commercial interests of those businesses. Information on the names of specific businesses is therefore considered exempt under Section 43 "commercial interests of the Freedom of Information Act". However, the table below provides a breakdown, by Council Area, of the total amount of water charges unpaid over the last 12 months by the retail and commercial sectors.

Council	Number of Customers	Current Total Debt £
Antrim Borough Council	72	93,076.05
Ards Borough Council	123	132,482.85
Armagh City and District Council	243	198,756.11
Ballymena Borough Council	137	169,849.70
Ballymoney Borough Council	58	30,786.05
Banbridge District Council	78	70,204.41
Belfast City Council	703	1,045,606.52
Carrickfergus Borough Council	34	22,634.22

Council	Number of Customers	Current Total Debt £
Castlereagh Borough Council	46	38,202.70
Coleraine Borough Council	108	93,133.74
Cookstown District Council	95	72,885.83
Craigavon Borough Council	246	240,207.32
Derry City Council	215	177,464.04
Down District Council	182	121,501.42
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council	328	360,706.19
Fermanagh District Council	327	319,597.91
Larne Borough Council	26	7,462.99
Limavady Borough Council	46	165,079.43
Lisburn City Council	102	89,290.62
Magherafelt District Council	138	101,274.95
Moyle District Council	37	39,080.93
Newry and Mourne District Council	382	392,475.80
Newtownabbey Borough Council	94	276,322.43
North Down Borough Council	67	64,473.40
Omagh District Council	227	167,946.51
Strabane District Council	105	67,496.40
Unknown	161	250,163.38
Grand Total	4,380	4,808,161.90

Water Charges: Commercial Properties

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the total amount of revenue outstanding as a result of the non-payment of water charges by retail or commercial properties.

(AQW 8015/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the total amount of revenue outstanding from 1 April 2007 to 31 May 2010 as a result of the non-payment of water charges by retail and commercial properties is £12, 444, 837. This includes £3,182,312 relating to properties billed in May 2010.

Reservoirs at Craigantlet, North Down

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any future plans for the reservoirs at Craigantlet, North Down.

(AQW 8022/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that that there are four impounding reservoirs at Craigantlet - Church Road, Creightons Green and Ballysallagh Lower and Upper. All four reservoirs, along with their associated water treatment facilities, have been

taken out of service as part of the implementation of NIW's Water Resource Strategy. It is expected that, within the next few months, these assets will be declared 'no longer required for future use' and will be disposed of in accordance with NIW's disposal policy.

Proposed Bridge for Carlingford Lough

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed bridge for Carlingford Lough.

(AQW 8024/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I assume the Member's question refers to the proposal for a bridge at Narrow Water across the Newry River, which flows into Carlingford Lough from the north-west.

The Narrow Water Bridge proposal is being taken forward by Louth County Council and my Department has no direct involvement in this project, nor has it made any commitment to contribute funds to this scheme. However, when requested, my Department's Roads Service will continue to co-operate with its counterparts in the South, as it continues to develop and take forward this project. Significant work has already been completed and I understand that Louth County Council is to undertake further appraisal of the proposal, prior to progressing it through the statutory processes.

The Member may also recall that I have recently welcomed the conclusions of the Feasibility Report into the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme, which would link the A2 Warrenpoint Road to the A1 Belfast/Dublin dual carriageway, just south of Newry. Roads Service is proceeding with the further environmental and engineering assessments considered necessary to identify a preferred corridor for the Relief Road. This will include engaging in a wider consultation process, in due course.

NI Water: Staff Redundancies

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how many staff who were made redundant by NI Water were then re-employed by (i) NI Water directly; or (ii) contractors working on behalf of NI Water, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8037/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that no employees made redundant by NIW were re-employed by the company directly. NIW is unaware of any ex-employees being re-engaged by contractors working on its behalf. There is no requirement for employees made redundant to notify NIW of future employment.

NI Water: Investigations into the Appointment of Staff

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are any ongoing investigations in relation to the appointment of staff within NI Water.

(AQW 8039/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that there are no ongoing investigations in relation to the appointment of staff within NIW.

Cycling Competitions

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to extending the limit on the maximum number of riders in cycling competitions in order to encourage the up-take of the sport and to promote his policy of encouraging cycling as an alternative means of transport.

(AQW 8043/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Cycling Ulster submitted a request to the Committee for Culture, Arts, and Leisure in January 2010, seeking a change

to legislation to allow more cyclists to participate in cycling road races. This request was forwarded to Roads Service for consideration.

Although my Department has responsibility for the relevant legislation, it has no policy interest in this issue. Indeed, this issue is cross cutting with the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure having an interest in the promotion of sport, NI Tourist Board having responsibility for tourism events, the Department of Environment having an interest in road safety and the PSNI having an interest in roads policing. However, Roads Service is willing to facilitate any changes agreed by the various stakeholders.

Roads Service convened a meeting on 7 June 2010 with the stakeholders to discuss the request from Cycling Ulster. Further discussions are planned, and it is hoped to complete consultations before the end of September this year.

I can also advise the Member that my Department, through its Travelwise initiative, continues to promote and facilitate cycling as a healthy, environmentally friendly and sustainable alternative means of transport. An Active Travel Forum was established in February this year to research, and bring forward recommendations for an Active Travel Strategy, which will include consideration of the barriers faced by cyclists and proposals to address them.

Consultants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he is taking to review the use of consultants in his Department.

(AQW 8069/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department continually monitors its use of consultants in order to ensure that it only engages external consultants when absolutely necessary where they will provide value for money.

The Department has a number of measures in place to manage the use of consultants which include:

- the issue and maintenance of detailed guidance on the use of consultants which incorporates the best practice principles set out in the DFP Use of Consultants Guidance (FD (DFP) 04/09);
- a comprehensive management information system for recording both financial and compliance information relating to all external consultancy projects; and
- regular compliance checks are carried out on all external consultancy projects awarded by the Department and expenditure in this area is monitored by the Departmental Board.

Residents Parking Schemes

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development when he plans to introduce residents parking schemes in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Kilrea; (iii) Garvagh; (iv) Portrush; and (v) Portstewart.

(AQW 8071/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise that my Department's Roads Service currently has no plans to introduce residents parking schemes in any of the areas identified.

NI Water: Director of Customer Service Delivery Criteria

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) job specification; (ii) essential criteria; and (iii) desirable criteria for the position of Director of Customer Service Delivery within NI Water.

(AQW 8093/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the Job/Person Specification for the position of Director of Customer Service Delivery was as set out below. All criteria were deemed essential except where "desirable" stated.

- (i) Knowledge / Experience
- A degree or equivalent
 - Significant experience in the utilities sector or a demonstrably similar environment
 - Senior (director or head of department) level experience
 - Proven track record in operational management or customer service at a senior level (Experience in both is desirable)
 - Has played a demonstrable and leading role in the management of significant change programmes / projects
 - Experience of managing a sizeable budget (c£50million)
 - Experience of improving working practices and productivity whilst the business goes through a significant period of change and cost cutting
- (ii) Thinking Competencies / Skills (e.g. intelligence, problem solving, vision)
- Forward thinking/vision
 - Analytical
 - Conceptualisation/modelling
 - Problem solving
- (iii) Relating Competencies / Skills (e.g. leading, interpersonal, negotiating)
- Strong leadership skills with evident gravitas
 - Ability to motivate people and get the best out of them
 - Ability to relate to people at all levels
 - Building co-operation and teamwork across all functions
 - Competent in operating at Board level or equivalent
 - Able to act as an ambassador for the company with stakeholders (customers, shareholder, regulators and employees)
- (iv) Achieving Competencies / Skills (e.g. results, prioritising, energy, tenacity)
- Planning and prioritising
 - Understanding what is important and what is not
 - Robust project management
 - Optimising costs and outcomes
 - Delegation and follow up
 - High energy levels with a strong and clear focus on outcomes but willing to focus on and understand detail
- (v) Chemistry / culture / fit
- Able to make a personal impact
 - Ability to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity
 - Tenacious and resilient
 - Open and acceptable
 - Home location: Lives in or willing to relocate to Northern Ireland
 - Other: Own car or access to vehicle and current valid licence

NI Water: Director of Customer Service Delivery Applications

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how many applications NI Water received for the position of Director of Customer Service Delivery; and how many applications progressed to the interview stage.

(AQW 8094/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that 50 applications were received for the position of Director of Customer Service Delivery of which 9 progressed to interview stage.

NI Water: Director of Customer Service Delivery Interview Panel

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail who sat on the interview panel for the position of Director of Customer Services Delivery within NI Water.

(AQW 8095/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the interview panel for the position of Director of Customer Services Delivery was comprised of the Chairman of NIW, Chris Mellor, the Chief Executive of NIW, Laurence MacKenzie and NIW's Director of Human Resources, Pauline Shepherd.

Land Sale at the Vacant Site at 22-24 William Street, Lurgan

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the timescale for the completion of the land sale at the vacant site at 22-24 William Street, Lurgan; and the reason for the delay in the sale of this site.

(AQW 8104/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the disposal of Departmental land at 18–24 William Street, Lurgan was completed on 25 June 2010.

I understand that there was a slight delay in completing the disposal, due to the need to secure a Licence to facilitate an emergency access to the rear of the subject property.

Speed Limit Outside Schools in North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline any proposals he has to reduce the speed limit outside schools in North Down to 20mph.

(AQW 8112/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has no plans to reduce the speed limit outside schools to 20mph in the North Down constituency.

Residents Parking Schemes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the proposed timescale for the introduction of residents parking schemes outside Belfast.

(AQW 8115/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a small number of schemes are currently being progressed outside Belfast, and the scheme within the City of Derry is at the most advanced stage. It is possible it may be in place by next Spring, subject to the availability of the necessary funding.

However, Roads Service has carried out preliminary surveys in a number of towns to help determine areas where there are significant parking issues for residents.

Within the Belfast Metropolitan Area, the implementation of residents' parking schemes has been delayed due to difficulties in gaining sufficient local community support for the proposals. Consultation is continuing at present, and the outcome will help inform plans for future schemes within the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

CO 71 Telemetry Validation Project

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 7585/10, in relation to identifying suitably skilled and experienced staff for the Telemetry Validation Project, whether NI Water took into account an individual's length of service and what consideration was given to possible Transfer Of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations implications for NI Water.

(AQW 8127/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that in October 2008 Williams Industrial Services provided it with specific individuals to work in the Telemetry Validation Project and other business areas. Williams Industrial Services were advised that, as the employer, they retained full responsibility for the selection and allocation of their employees in relation to the Telemetry Validation Project. The length of service of Williams' employees was not a consideration for NIW.

NIW does not consider that there was a transfer of employment and therefore did not give consideration to possible implications arising from the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.

CO 71 Telemetry Validation Project

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 7585/10, at what management level NI Water engaged with Williams Industrial Services to identify individuals to work on the CO 71 Telemetry Validation Project.

(AQW 8128/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that Senior Management at Level 3 engaged with Williams Industrial Services.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development what action NI Water has taken to correct and update records of service for staff employed under the CO 71 contract.

(AQW 8129/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that as advised in previous responses to Assembly Questions, those engaged via C071 are not employees of NIW and as such we do not retain any records of service for those contractors as they are employees of the "contractor".

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps NI Water has taken to ensure that it adheres to the Transfer Of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations entitlement for staff employed under the CO 71 contract.

(AQW 8131/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that the C071 contract specification makes clear the contractor's specific responsibilities which include the potential application of the Transfer Of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 and the Service Provision Change (Protection of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 in circumstances where there is a cessation or partial cessation of the contract.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how many staff employed under the CO 71 contract have (i) received redundancy; or (ii) not received redundancy.

(AQW 8132/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that, as explained in previous responses to questions relating to the employment status of the staff employed under the CO71 contract, the staff are not employed by NIW and consequently it has no knowledge of how many have or have not received redundancy.

Road Gritting

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of hours; and (ii) the amount spent on road gritting in the 2009/10 financial year by (a) Roads Service; and (b) external contractors.

(AQW 8145/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service supplements its in-house drivers, with drivers sourced through an external contract, to deliver its Winter Gritting Service. During the 2009/10 Winter Service Season approximately 43,000 man hours were committed to delivering the Winter Gritting Service. Roads Service spent approximately £8.1 million on gritting during the 2009/10 financial year, of which approximately £565,000 related to external driver costs.

The overall cost includes supervision, scouting, staff resources and salt.

Sewage Pollution in Rivers

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development how many incidents of sewage pollution have occurred in rivers in the Mid-Ulster area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8166/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that pollution incidents attributed to NIW are classified by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency according to the severity of the incident. The severity ratings of high, medium, low and unsubstantiated are applied to pollution incidents, according to the impact of the incident.

The number of incidents in Mid-Ulster over the past three years is set out in the table below.

	1 Apr 2007 – 31 Mar 2008	1 Apr 2008 – 31 Mar 2009	1 Apr 2009 – 31 Mar 2010
High	0	0	0
Medium	1	14	13
Low	3	1	4
Total	4	15	17

New Social Housing Units at Church Road, Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what action NI Water will take to ensure that the 11 proposed new social housing units at Church Road, Rasharkin can be built by 2012/13.

(AQW 8171/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the public sewerage system serving Rasharkin has currently adequate capacity to cater for the proposed 11 new social housing units at Church Road, Rasharkin. Responsibility for approving or refusing planning applications rests with the Department of the Environment's Planning Service.

Traffic Calming Measures in Greater Belfast

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost, per kilometre, of installing all forms of traffic calming measures and the total amount spent on traffic calming measures in the Greater Belfast Metropolitan area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8173/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Road Safety remains a high priority for my Department's Roads Service, and they are committed to delivering a programme of sustainable transport measures aimed at reducing the numbers of collisions on the road network and giving appropriate priority to pedestrians and cyclists.

Traffic Calming is a recognised form of Traffic Engineering which Roads Service use to achieve this aim. Every traffic calming scheme is unique and comprises of a combination of many different features, such as speed humps, speed cushions, kerb build outs, pedestrian refuges, roundabouts etc. Roads Service has also implemented several pilot 20 mph zones to restore the balance between vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

As every scheme is unique, with differing features and design, it is not possible to give a definitive cost per kilometre for traffic calming. However, Roads Service has advised that it has spent some £1,506,000 on traffic calming schemes implemented during the last three financial years in the Greater Belfast Metropolitan area, which includes the six Councils of Belfast, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and North Down. A breakdown of these costs over the last three financial years is detailed in the table below.

The measures provided consisted of road humps, speed cushions, priority junctions, pinch points, footway build-outs, road narrowing, channelisation, formalised parking, traffic islands, mini-roundabouts and gateway features.

Financial Year	2007 – 2008	2008 – 2009	2009 – 2010
Cost	£494,000	£552,000	£460,000

Speed Limit for Rathmore Road in Bangor

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development if he can confirm that the current speed limit for Rathmore Road in Bangor is 30mph.

(AQW 8204/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Rathmore Road, Bangor has a current speed limit of 30mph.

Speed Humps

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the use of speed humps, given concerns regarding the delays caused to ambulances and fire engines.

(AQW 8205/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that considerable research has been carried out into the design and performance of road humps since the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990 were introduced. All traffic calming measures are designed and implemented in accordance with these regulations.

When implementing any traffic calming scheme, my Department's Roads Service undertakes an extensive consultation process, during which, all 'blue light' emergency services are given the opportunity to comment. Should any of these services voice a concern about a particular scheme, Roads Service will modify the design in order to obtain an acceptable compromise, which will not jeopardise any emergency vehicle's response time.

Transport from Magherafelt to the Antrim Area Hospital

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development what public transport is available for passengers travelling from Magherafelt to the Antrim Area Hospital.
(AQW 8208/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been informed by Translink that Ulsterbus service 110 operates a regular service from Magherafelt to Antrim Bus Station. A separate Ulsterbus service, 321e, operates from Antrim Bus Station to Antrim Area Hospital.

Overhead Motorway Information Signage

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) on how many occasions and for how long each time any overhead motorway information signage has been out of operation; and (ii) what has been the cost of repairing any breakdowns.

(AQW 8241/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, depending on their nature, faults can affect a single sign, or a multiple of signs. According to Roads Service's records over the past six months, the number of occasions when the operation of the signs has been affected by faults, is as follows:-

January/February 2010	March/April 2010	May/June 2010
24	16	19

The maintenance of the variable message signs is included within a maintenance contract for the overall motorway control system. The average time to repair the above faults was 2.4 hours.

With regard to the cost of repairing the faults, this is included within the maintenance contract price, which is currently £560,000 per annum. This cost includes the maintenance of all the motorway control equipment, such as variable message signs, lane matrix signals, CCTV, MIDAS incident detection loops and the communications network. Roads Service does not hold information on the specific costs of rectifying faults on the variable message signs.

Motorway Information Signage

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much the existing system used for motorway information signage cost to purchase.
(AQW 8242/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that variable message signs within a motorway control system were first installed on the motorway network in 1995, in conjunction with the opening of M3 Lagan Bridge. Since then, the system has been improved and extended to other parts of the motorway network. There has been variation in prices over the past 15 years, and many of the signs were procured as part of more extensive facilities, or through a Design Build Finance Operate contract, therefore, Roads Service is unable to provide a cost for the motorway information signage element, currently on the motorway network.

However, I can advise that, at current prices for signage of this nature, the cost to Roads Service would be in the region of £24,000 for gantry mounted signs, and £80,000 for free standing cantilever type signs.

Interim Members for the Board of NI Water

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development how many applications were received for the posts as interim members of the Board of NI Water.
(AQW 8284/10)

Minister for Regional Development: As part of the emergency appointments process adopted in this instance (and for which the Department secured the approval of the Commissioner of Public Appointments) the Department drew up a 'long list' of potential candidates and these individuals were approached to gauge their level of interest. Following this process the Panel then considered 11 candidates for the posts of interim Non-Executive Directors to the Board of Northern Ireland Water.

Interim Members for the Board of NI Water.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development what salary the newly appointed interim members of the Board of NI Water will receive.

(AQW 8285/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The newly appointed interim non executive members of the Board of Northern Ireland Water will receive a fee of £18,000 per annum (pro rata) based on an estimated time commitment of 2 days per month. Any days worked in addition to this estimate will be remunerated at £750 per diem subject to a maximum of four additional days.

Board of NI Water: Expenses Entitlement

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the expenses entitlement of members of the Board of NI Water.

(AQW 8287/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that members of its Board are entitled to reimbursement of those expenses incurred in the course of their duties, provided they are claimed in accordance with the rules governing such expenses as set out in the NIW Employee Handbook. The range of expenses that may be payable along with associated rates and upper limits are set out in the table below. All expense claims for NIW Board members must be supported by receipts and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of NIW before payment is made.

Expense Type	Rate / Limit
Official Mileage	£0.40 per mile if motor vehicle insurance is covered for business purposes
Official Mileage	£0.257 per mile if motor vehicle insurance is not covered for business purposes
Day Subsistence Allowance	£4.25 if more than 5 hours away from normal place of work
Day Subsistence Allowance	£9.30 if more than 10 hours away from normal place of work
Night Subsistence Allowance (Central London)	Up to £120 per night & £18.30 to cover lunch and dinner
Night Subsistence Allowance (Elsewhere in GB and NI)	Up to £80 per night & £18.30 to cover lunch and dinner
Personal Expenses Allowance	£5.00 per night

Board of NI Water: Appointment of Non-Executive Members

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the process and criteria used to appoint non-executive members to the Board of NI Water.

(AQW 8288/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In circumstances where the Department had to move quickly pending the running of a full public appointments process I agreed to the Department using an emergency process to fill the four non-executive positions. The Department then discussed the proposed process with the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Felicity Huston) to seek her support to deviate from the normal appointments process. Selection criteria for the four interim appointments were based on business and stakeholder needs. A list of names of potential candidates was drawn up and individuals were contacted to gauge their interest and were asked to submit CV's. Interviews or "conversations with a purpose" were then held by a panel which included an Independent Assessor. Finally, recommendations were made to me for approval.

Board of NI Water: Selection of Interim Members

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the selection process used to identify interim members for the Board of NI Water.

(AQW 8312/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In circumstances where the Department had to move quickly pending the running of a full public appointments process I agreed to the Department using an emergency process to fill the four non-executive positions. The Department then discussed with and secured the support of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Felicity Huston) to deviate from the normal appointments process. A list of names of potential candidates was drawn up and individuals were contacted to gauge their interest. Interviews or "conversations with a purpose" were then held by a panel which included an Independent Assessor.

The Panel concluded that it was essential for candidates to have:

- Experience at Board level, either in an executive or non-executive capacity, in a large organisation;
- Experience of exercising sound control and governance in either a large public or private sector organisation
- Strong interpersonal skills including the ability to negotiate, persuade, challenge and influence at all levels;
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to build relationships at all levels;
- Knowledge of socio-economic, statutory and/or political factors which impact on Northern Ireland Water Ltd. (This was a recommendation of the Independent Panel in January 2008.)

It was also desirable for candidates to demonstrate competence in the following:

- Experience gained at a strategic level of working either in a service-related industry or an asset intensive industry;
- Experience at Board level in an organisation funded partly or wholly by public funds.

Although a significant number of individuals on the list were contacted it must be said that many were not interested in putting themselves forward to be considered for the Interim appointments. However despite the challenges faced the Department still managed to create a competitive environment undertaking interviews/ conversations with a purpose with 11 candidates for the Non-Executive appointments.

Board of NI Water: Advertisement for Interim Members

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) where the posts for interim members on the Board of NI Water were advertised; (ii) to detail (a) the job specification; (b) the essential criteria; and (c) the desirable criteria requested; and to include a copy of the advertisement.

(AQW 8313/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The posts of interim Non-Executive Directors to the Board of Northern Ireland Water were not advertised. In circumstances where the Department had to move quickly pending the running of a full public appointments process I agreed to the Department using an

emergency process to fill the four non-executive positions. The Department duly sought and received the support of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Felicity Huston) to deviate from the normal appointments process. The essential criteria developed for the interim appointments were as follows:

- Experience at Board level, either in an executive or non-executive capacity, in a large organisation;
- Experience of exercising sound control and governance in either a large public or private sector organisation
- Strong interpersonal skills including the ability to negotiate, persuade, challenge and influence at all levels;
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to build relationships at all levels;
- Knowledge of socio-economic, statutory and/or political factors which impact on Northern Ireland Water Ltd. (This was a recommendation of the Independent Panel in January 2008.)

Desirable criteria included:

- Experience gained at a strategic level of working either in a service-related industry or an asset intensive industry;
- Experience at Board level in an organisation funded partly or wholly by public funds.

The role of the non-executives is to bring an independent judgement to bear on issues of strategy, performance, governance and executive appointments within NIW. They are expected to bring wide experience and critical detachment to the work of the NIW Board and be prepared to constructively criticise and assist executive management in the development of strategic objectives and policies. A list of names of potential candidates was drawn up and individuals were contacted to gauge their interest. Interviews or “conversations with a purpose” were then held by a panel which included an Independent Assessor, appointed at the request of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Board of NI Water: Conflict of Interest Re Interim Members

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any conflict of interest arose on behalf of the current NI Water staff or the Minister in relation to the (i) identification; (ii) selection; and (iii) appointment of interim members on the Board of NI Water.

(AQW 8314/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I was invited to consider the list of candidates to be seen by the Panel and to identify any further candidates to be considered by the Panel.

The interviewing Panel included an Independent Assessor who asked each interviewee to confirm that they had no conflicts of interest or probity issues that would effect them carrying out the role of a non-executive director in NI Water, or that would have any detrimental impact on NI Water. There were no such issues identified in respect of the interim Board members appointed.

C071 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) why NI Water extended the C071 contract for 6 months, on two successive occasions, without the contract going out to tender; (ii) to provide a breakdown of the costs incurred by extending this contract on both occasions; (iii) whether legal advice was sought before the contract was extended; and (iv) if NI Water has any plans to extend the contract for a third time.

(AQW 8330/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that (i) the original tender provided it with an option to extend C071 for up to one year from 1 October 2009 to 30 September 2010. NIW exercised its option to extend in two six monthly terms in agreement with the incumbent provider; (ii) No costs were incurred in either of the extensions as both were agreed on the basis of current contract prices; (iii) Legal advice was not sought as the extensions were within scope

of the originally advertised requirement; (iv) NIW will be re-advertising the requirement with a view to having the new arrangements in place by September 2010.

NI Water Staff Transfer

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria used by NI Water to transfer staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

(AQW 8333/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the criteria used to transfer staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations are set out within the provisions of Section 3 of the regulations. The relevant extract is set out below.

(1) These Regulations apply to—

- (a) a transfer of an undertaking, business or part of an undertaking or business situated immediately before the transfer in the United Kingdom to another person where there is a transfer of an economic entity which retains its identity;
- (b) a service provision change, that is a situation in which—
 - (i) activities cease to be carried out by a person (“a client”) on his own behalf and are carried out instead by another person on the client’s behalf (“a contractor”);
 - (ii) activities cease to be carried out by a contractor on a client’s behalf (whether or not those activities had previously been carried out by the client on his own behalf) and are carried out instead by another person (“a subsequent contractor”) on the client’s behalf; or
 - (iii) activities cease to be carried out by a contractor or a subsequent contractor on a client’s behalf (whether or not those activities had previously been carried out by the client on his own behalf) and are carried out instead by the client on his own behalf,

and in which the conditions set out in paragraph (3) are satisfied.

- (2) In this regulation “economic entity” means an organised grouping of resources which has the objective of pursuing an economic activity, whether or not that activity is central or ancillary.
- (3) The conditions referred to in paragraph (1)(b) are that—
 - (a) immediately before the service provision change—
 - (i) there is an organised grouping of employees situated in Great Britain which has as its principal purpose the carrying out of the activities concerned on behalf of the client;
 - (ii) the client intends that the activities will, following the service provision change, be carried out by the transferee other than in connection with a single specific event or task of short-term duration; and
 - (b) the activities concerned do not consist wholly or mainly of the supply of goods for the client’s use.
- (4) Subject to paragraph (1), these Regulations apply to—
 - (a) public and private undertakings engaged in economic activities whether or not they are operating for gain;
 - (b) a transfer or service provision change howsoever effected notwithstanding—
 - (i) that the transfer of an undertaking, business or part of an undertaking or business is governed or effected by the law of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom or that the service provision change is governed or effected by the law of a country or territory outside Great Britain;
 - (ii) that the employment of persons employed in the undertaking, business or part transferred or, in the case of a service provision change, persons employed in the organised grouping of employees, is governed by any such law;

- (c) a transfer of an undertaking, business or part of an undertaking or business (which may also be a service provision change) where persons employed in the undertaking, business or part transferred ordinarily work outside the United Kingdom.
- (5) An administrative reorganisation of public administrative authorities or the transfer of administrative functions between public administrative authorities is not a relevant transfer.
- (6) A relevant transfer—
 - (a) may be effected by a series of two or more transactions; and
 - (b) may take place whether or not any property is transferred to the transferee by the transferor.
- (7) Where, in consequence (whether directly or indirectly) of the transfer of an undertaking, business or part of an undertaking or business which was situated immediately before the transfer in the United Kingdom, a ship within the meaning of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995[9] registered in the United Kingdom ceases to be so registered, these Regulations shall not affect the right conferred by section 29 of that Act (right of seamen to be discharged when ship ceases to be registered in the United Kingdom) on a seaman employed in the ship.

C071 Tender

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how NI Water ensures that (a) embedded contract staff under NI Water tender C071; or (b) mechanical and engineering staff employed directly by NI Water, do not deliberately interfere with, disrupt or contaminate the public water supply or waste water system which they maintain; (ii) how the security of the water and waste water systems is monitored during normal working hours and outside normal working hours; and (iii) who is responsible for the security arrangements.

(AQW 8344/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that as explained in previous answers it does not recognise the term “embedded contract staff”. It is a statutory duty on NIW to provide wholesome water and it is an offence to provide water that is unfit for human consumption. With regard to the security arrangements for protecting the public water and wastewater systems, responsibility for ensuring that security is maintained within specific works areas rests with the managers of those areas. NIW takes advice from government security advisors in liaison with PSNI. In line with advice provided, NIW does not comment on security matters. The disclosure of security arrangements could jeopardise the integrity of the public water and wastewater systems.

Speed Humps

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the designed safe approach speed of all vehicles to speed humps.

(AQW 8348/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Departments Roads Service is committed to reducing the number of casualties on our roads and Traffic Calming is a recognised and proven safety measure.

Since the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990 were introduced, considerable research has been carried out into the design and performance of road humps. Roads Service design and implement all Traffic Calming measures in accordance with these regulations and, although the regulation does not specify a design speed, dimensions and location of the humps are closely regulated to reduce vehicles speed and prevent passenger discomfort.

All schemes are signed with appropriate traffic signs, which are positioned to provide adequate warning of the presence of a road hump or a series of road humps. These signs allow a driver entering a traffic calmed area to adjust their speed accordingly and negotiate the various Traffic Calming measures in a safe manner.

Parking at Train Stations

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of parking at train stations.

(AQW 8350/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In line with the strategic direction and underlying principles contained in the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and working closely with my Department, Translink continue to develop and implement the Park and Ride schemes allowed for in the three Transport Plans - the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN), the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP).

However, given the budgetary constraints on capital funding and the need to prioritise projects, funding for such Park & Ride schemes will be subject to budget availability and the necessary approvals.

Parking Provision at Carnalea Train Station

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to increase the car parking provision at Carnalea Train Station.

(AQW 8351/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Given the budgetary constraints on capital funding and the need to prioritise railway projects, my Department has no plans at this time to develop new parking facilities at Carnalea train station.

Belfast International Airport: £1 Drop-Off and Pick-Up Levy

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if Belfast International Airport consulted his Department regarding the implementation of a £1 levy for access to the passenger set-down and pick-up area at the airport.

(AQW 8366/10)

Minister for Regional Development: No. The levying of access charges within the boundary of the privately owned airport is a matter for the owner. My Department was, however, given notice of the airport's intentions.

Belfast International Airport: £1 Set-Down and Pick-Up Levy

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if a traffic impact assessment has been carried out in relation to the decision to implement a £1 levy for access to the passenger set-down and pick-up area at Belfast International Airport.

(AQW 8367/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there was no Planning Application associated with the decision by Belfast International Airport to introduce a £1 levy for access to the passenger set-down and pick-up area. As such, a traffic impact assessment has not been carried out.

Translink Fare Increase

Mr G McHugh asked the Minister for Regional Development why Translink has increased bus and train fares four times in the last two years and whether he has any plans to prevent any further increases.

(AQW 8375/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Fares increases are always a last resort. However it is important to recognise the financial pressures facing Translink. Indeed as Translink remains a Public Corporation those financial pressures are my responsibility. It would not be in the best interests of the consumer or the taxpayer for a financial plan to be agreed that could lead to major difficulties in the organization. Indeed Translink retains company status and there are responsibilities as a direct result.

I believe the fares increases have been necessary and justified and kept to the minimum. In respect of the most recent overall increase agreement was given only after carefully balancing up the arguments made by Translink against other stakeholder views. Critically I also took independent advice on the financial position of Translink which confirmed that there were no alternatives available.

Discussions around next year's financial plans will take place in the context of budgetary, cost and passenger information available at the time. I can assure you I will endeavour to keep fares to the minimum for the consumer.

Parking Fines Issued in Enniskillen

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking fines have been issued in Enniskillen since January 2008 to vehicles registered (i) in Northern Ireland; and (ii) in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 8385/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is not possible to differentiate between parking fines issued to vehicles registered in the North and those registered in Britain, or other countries. However, information is available for Southern registered vehicles.

I can advise that 19,535 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued in Enniskillen town from 1 January 2008 to 30 June 2010, of which 6,484 were Southern registered vehicles.

A4 and A5 Roads

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's strategy to keep traffic flowing while the major schemes to improve the A4 and A5 roads are carried out.

(AQW 8400/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the A4 Dualling scheme, which started construction in December 2007, has progressed to date with the minimum of disruption to traffic passing through the works. While Roads Service has endeavoured to facilitate the free passage of traffic during the works, its primary focus is ensuring the safety of road users and construction workers.

Prior to the implementation of any traffic management measure the contractor must submit proposals to Roads Service for comment. Regular meetings are also held throughout the period of contract, between Roads Service and the Contractor, to discuss any proposed traffic management measures and to review the impact of those measures already implemented.

Lane closures have been used during the A4 construction works and they have been very successful in terms of ensuring safety, and minimising delay to through traffic. Some night time closures of the A4, with associated diversions, have also been allowed, where lane closures alone could not ensure safe working, for example, to facilitate the placing of bridge beams, that can weigh up to 50 tonnes.

When a lane closure is allowed, it attracts a financial penalty known as a Lane Occupation Charge. The severity of the charge for a lane closure varies depending on the nature of the road, and the time of the day during which it is closed. Roads Service has found the use of a Lane Occupation Charge acts as an incentive to minimise the number, and duration, of lane closures granted under the Contract.

The proposed route for the A5 Western Transport Corridor dual carriageway is almost entirely off-line from the existing A5. This will bring safety benefits for both road users and construction workers and will also help to minimise traffic disruption. Where the new road crosses the existing A5 and where it ties in at junctions, safety will be given the highest priority. Various measures such as temporary diversions, traffic lights and night working will all be employed to reduce the impact of the works.

Speed Awareness Course Delivered by AA DriveTech

Mr G Adams asked the Minister for Regional Development on what date the speed awareness course delivered by AA DriveTech became available; and who is eligible to apply for this course.

(AQW 8406/10)

Minister for Regional Development: This matter is not the responsibility of my Department. I understand that it is a matter for the Chief Constable of the PSNI and I have sent him the question and asked him to respond directly to you.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8424/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Table 1 lists contracts in excess of 12 months duration and £1m in value procured directly by DRD. The table indicates whether there were any over-runs in these contracts; any break clauses attached to the contractor; and the break clauses exercised.

Where possible the information covers contracts entered into over the past 10 years, but in many cases information was only available from 2002-03.

Table 2 includes details of the contracts procured by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) on behalf of DRD which are either £1m or more in value and more than 12 months in duration. This information is limited to contracts awarded prior to 1 April 2002 when CPD was established. Information prior to that period is not readily available and could only be obtained in part and at disproportionate cost.

TABLE 1

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
Translink Goods & Services					
2002/2003	Supply of Vehicle Fuel	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
2002/2003	Provision of Class 3000 Maintenance Services	No		Yes	No
2002/2003	Supply of Class 3000 Maintenance Spares	No		Yes	No
2003/2004	Provision of Tyre Rental Services	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
2003/2004	Provision of Train Cleaning Services	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
2003/2004	Supply of Uniforms	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
2006/2007	Supply of Vehicle Fuel	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
2006/2007	Supply of Uniforms	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 years extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007/2008	Provision of Security Guarding Services	No		Yes	No
2008/2009	Supply of Electricity	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up		No
2009/2010	Supply of Electricity	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised
Translink Capital Projects					
2002/2003	Buses for QBCs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	Magherafelt Bus Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	Downpatrick Bus Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	CCTV at Level Crossings	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	Train Simulator	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	Cleaning & Stabling Facility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2002/2003	Lurgan Resignalling	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	Falls Road Running Repair Shed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002/2003	New rolling stock	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Bus Purchase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Moir and Trummery Level Crossings	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Central Station Associated Projects	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Downpatrick Bus Passenger Terminal and Engineering Works	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Replacement Financial Accounting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/2004	Infrastructure Adjustments to accommodate New Trains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Belfast to Whitehead Relay	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Relay of Track at Portadown and Moira Railway Stations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Belfast to Whitehead Reconstruction	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Integrated Ticketing Project	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Buses for QBCs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Bleach Green to Whitehead	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Lurgan Resignalling	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Magherafelt Bus Centre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	New Bus Order	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Cleaning Stabling and Valeting Fac.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Antrim to Bleach Green	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	CCTV at Level Crossings	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Bleach Green to Whitehead	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/2005	Station Halts - DDA Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005/2006	Lisburn Bus Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005/2006	T.P.W.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2005/2006	New Rail Vision	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005/2006	Fencing Programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005/2006	Whitehead to Larne Track Renewal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005/2006	York Road Running Repair Depot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006/2007	Purchase of New Buses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006/2007	Newry Railway Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006/2007	Additional Train Capacity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	New Buses for Belfast Metro Phase 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Ulsterbus Fleet Replacement - 90 S/D	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	UB Additional School Bus Requirement	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Metro Additional School Bus Requirement	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Ulsterbus Fleet Replacement - 80 D/D	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Ulsterbus Fleet Replacement - 20 Goldliners	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Track Life Extension Works - Ballymena to Londonderry	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	New Trains Two - Use of Consultants	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	Sea Defences - W'Head to Larne and C'Raine to L'Derry	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/2008	New Trains II	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Building Condition Upgrade Programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Corporate Asset Management	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Bridge Replacements - Antrim to Coleraine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Ballast Hopper Wagons	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Class 450 Overhaul Programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Meeting House Lane MSL and MCB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	NIR Trackside Fencing Programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008/2009	Ballymena PW and Signalling Facility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009/2010	Ulsterbus Fleet Replacement Addendum	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2009/2010	Ulsterbus Fleet Replacement addendum - 44 S/D Rural	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009/2010	Class 3000 Overhaul Programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009/2010	Train Maintenance Facility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Roads Service Goods & Services					
2002/03	MTC Street Lighting and Traffic Works	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC Repairs to Structures	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC Environmental Services 2003 Grass Cutting (10 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC Surface Dressing and Renewal of Roadmarkings 2003 (10 Contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	TC for Maintenance and Improvements to Structures 2003 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised in 1 contract
2002/03	TC for Environmental Maintenance 2003 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	TC for Asphalt and Macadam (Bitmac) Resurfacing 2003 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC for Street Lighting and Traffic Works 2003 (Eastern Division)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC for High Friction Surfacing (2003/2004) all divisions (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC for High Performance Surface Dressing (Using polymer modified binder) 2003 (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC for Minor Improvements to Roads and Carparks 2003 (5 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2002/03	MTC for Minor Improvements to Roads and Carparks 2003 (5 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	MTC for Bitmac Resurfacing 2003 (9 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Micro-Surfacing of Carriageways, Lay-bys and Footways 2003 (Northern & Western and Southern & Eastern Divisions) (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Slurry Sealing of Carriageways, Lay-bys and Footways 2003 (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for High Friction Surfacing 2003 - (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Street Lighting and Street Furniture 2003 (Northern Division)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Road Markings and Road Studs 2003 (8 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	TC for Small Scale and Responsive Works 2003 (Eastern Division) (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Gully Emptying 2003 (Northern, Southern & Western Divisions) (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Street Lighting and Traffic Works 2004 (7 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003/04	MTC for Repairs and Maintenance to Structures (Eastern)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	MTC for Weed Control 2004 (Southern & Western Divisions) (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	MTC for High Performance Surface Dressing 2004 (Northern, Southern, Eastern & Western Divisions)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2004/05	TC for Surface Treatments 2004 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	TC for Surface Dressing 2004 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	Exercised in 2 contracts
2004/05	TC for Road Markings and Road Studs 2004 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	MTC for Surface Dressing of Carriageways and Renewal of Roadmarkings 2004 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	MTC for Small Scale and Responsive Work 2004 (10 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	TC for Maintenance and Improvements to Structures 2004 (5 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	TC for Asphalt and Macadam(Bitmac) Resurfacing 2004 (5 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004/05	TC for Minor Improvement Works 2004 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005/06	MTC For Surface Dressing 2005 (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005/06	TC for Small Scale & Responsive Works 2005 (8 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005/06	TC for Environmental Maintenance 2005 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005/06	Consultancy Services (Partner) for the Assistance in the Delivery of Roads Services Programmes	No		Yes	No
2005/06	Framework Consultancy Services for the Assistance for the Delivery of the Roads Service SRI Programme	No		Yes	No
2005/06	MTC For Minor Improvements To Roads & Carparks 2005 (16 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2005/06	TC For Road Markings & Studs, Phase 2 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	TC for Surface Dressing 2006 (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	MTC Street Lighting Maintenance, Street Lighting & Traffic works 2006 (9 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	TC For Small Scale & Responsive Works 2006 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	TC For Minor Improvements Works 2006 (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	TC For Minor Improvements Works 2006 (6 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006/07	TC for Maintenance & Improvements to Structures 2006 Eastern	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007/08	MTC for the Maintenance & Improvement of Street Lighting 2007 (10 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007/08	TC for Environmental Maintenance (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007/08	TC for Asphalt Resurfacing 2008 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007/08	TC For Maintenance & Improvements of Structures (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2008/09	MTC Surfacing Dressing 2008 (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009/10	TC for Surface Dressing 2009 (2 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009/10	TC for Surface Treatments 2009 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

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2009/10	Consultancy Services (Partner) for the Assistance in the Delivery of Roads Service Programmes 2009	No		Yes	No
2009/10	TC Road Markings 2009 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009/10	TC For Surface Dressing 2009 (3 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009/10	Framework Consultancy Services for the Assistance for the Delivery of the Roads Service SRI Programme	No		Yes	
2010/11	T C for Asphalt Resurfacing 2010 (5 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	
2010/11	T C for Environmental Maintenance 2010 (4 contracts)	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	
Roads Service Capital Projects					
2001	Newtownstewart Bypass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002	A8 Improvements Belfast to Larne Road	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002	Strabane Bypass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002	Limavady Bypass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2002	A6 Toome Bypass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003	Foyle Bridge Strengthening	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004	A1 Beech Hill to Loughbrickland Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005	Omagh Throughpass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005	A1/N1 Cross Border Road	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	DBFO 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007	Skeoge Link	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007	DBFO2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007	A20 Southern Distributor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2009	A2 Maydown	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	M2/A26 Ballee Road East	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	Carland Bridge	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	A5 Western Transport Corridor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	A8 Improvements Coleman's Corner to Ballyrickard Road	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NIW Capital Projects					
2000/01	Newry Sewers Upgrading	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kilkeel WwTW Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Valley Distribution System	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Newry WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Woodburn Conduit – Contract 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Woodburn Conduit – Contract 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lagmore Conduit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Strabane WWTW Secondary Treatment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Banbridge WWTW Imps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2001/02	Flood Alleviation – various locations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lisnaskea WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	North East Antrim Sewerage Scheme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Orthophosphate Dosing – various locations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2002/03	Greyabbey/Kircubbin WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lough Macrory WTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Silent Valley WTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Tullaghgarley WWTW Phase 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Newcastle Service Res	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Newry WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Omagh WWTW Inlet Works	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Knock Valley Relief Sewer	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Western Div WWTW Imps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballynacor Sludge Treatment Dewatering Facility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003/04	Fofanny WTW EC Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Portglenone WWTW Part 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Aghalee WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	EPF Flood Alleviation Project	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Glenavy Wastewater Treatment Works	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Incinerator Mercury removal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Gortgare (Greysteel) WwTW Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Enniskillen Drainage Area Plan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kilcoo – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballyclare WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2004/05	Kinallen – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kilkeel & Annalong Water Supply	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Rathfriland WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Fintona RBC Installations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	River Bann Pumping Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Culmore WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Castlederg and Killen WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Omagh WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Service Reservoir Integrity – Southern	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballinamallard – RBC Installations W&S	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballymena North Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lislea – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	PEIT 04/05 Eastern Area (Phase 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	PEIT 04/05 Eastern Area (Phase 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballymena South Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Portadown Watermains Rehabilitation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2004/05	Tamnamore/Mullenakill/Clontycloy – RBCs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lough Ross/Carran Hill WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Killinchy/Whiterock – RBC Installation West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Glarryford Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Breda South Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kirkcubria Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	North Coast WWTW EC Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belcoo – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lisbellaw – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2005/06	Moneyreagh WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Beragh/Sixmilecross RBC Installation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Blacksull – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Lough North Shore WwTW – Whitehouse	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Lough North Shore WwTW – Ca	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Sewers Project (Tunnel)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Sewers Project (Structural 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Sewers Project (Structural 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Pomeroy WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Carnlough/Bessbrook Sewerage Scheme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Bellaghy WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Drumnakilly, Altamuskin & Carrowclare RBCs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Loughguille WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Banbridge Drainage Area Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Newry Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Caledon/Killylea/Tynan – RBC Installations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Loan Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Tandragee WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2005/06	North Down Strategic Trunk Watermains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Clough Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Comber Road Sewerage, Newtownards	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dundrum WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Warrenpoint Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Stewartstown Zone WM Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballymoney Sewerage Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Rostrevor/Tullymurry Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Sugar Island & Island Bank Catachment SS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Castlewellan WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mayobridge/Derryleckagh/Crown Cres.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Claudy WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lenaderg & Seapatrick SPSs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Fivemiletown – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Clay Lake WTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2006/07	Larne WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Sion Mills WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Clady – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dunore to Hyde Park Pumping Main Replacement	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Letterbreen WwTW RBC Installations Additional	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dromore WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Irvinestown WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ard's North Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Belfast Sewers Project	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Pennyburn Pumping Station	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Drumakilly, Altamuskin & Carrowclare RBCs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballybrakes & Glenstall WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Strangford WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballinaleck – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007/08	Magheralin Sewerage Scheme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Castor Bay/Moira Zone WM Imps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dromara WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Hilltown WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Clare Village Sewerage Scheme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Milltown, Antrim WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Hydepark Service Reservoir Integrity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Londonderry Sewer Imps Stage 1 – Victoria Market	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Limavady WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Warrenpoint WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Portaferry WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Enniskillen WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2007/08	Seagahan WTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Drumahoe Sewerage Scheme SPS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Derrylin WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Bangor Outer Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Loughguile Zone Wm Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Gilford WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Draperstown WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Park WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seahill WwtW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Saintfield WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballyholme (Bangor) DAP Phase 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Portrush Sewer Improvements Stage 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballywalter WwTW Interim Solution	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Annahilt WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lisbarnet WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Cloughy WwTW Interim Solution	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Hugenot Drive Lisburn SPS Upgrade	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Benburb/Milltown – RBC Installations West & South	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Hamiltonsbawn WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2008/09	Downpatrick WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Crossmaglen WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Castlecaulfield WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Gillford Road Portadown Sewerage Upgrades	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Magherafelt WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Drumaness WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ormeau Road Storm Separation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Comber Road/Portaferry Road Newtownards SPS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Altnahinch and Seagahan WTW's Sludge Disposal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Portballintrae Zone Wm Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Whitehouse DAP Phase 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Coalisland WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Bushmills & Portballintrae WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009/10	Mid Down Zone WM Imps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Waterside Zone Watermain Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Joymount Carrick DAP Phase 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dungiven WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Coagh WwTW Improvements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Moneyamore STW Imps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Glenlough SR, Ballymoney, New Service Reservoir	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Maghera WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Lough Bradan WTWs Upgrade	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Carmoney Water Treatment Works Upgrade	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Castor Bay to Dungannon Strategic Trunk Mains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Toome (Creagh) Sewerage Scheme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Hook's Corner WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	New Holland WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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2009/10	Portavogie WwTW Interim Solution	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ballyhalbert WwTW Interim Solution	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Londonderry DAP: Duke Street Work package	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mullaghboy WWTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Whitehead, Ballystrucker & Ballycarry Rationalisation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Londonderry DAP: Sewers Rehab Phase 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dunmurry WwTW Modifications	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Newtownbreda WwTW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NIW Goods & Service					
1999	PPP – Kinnegar	No	No	Yes	No
2001	Provision of Landfill sites for the disposal of Sewage Sludge Cake	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2001	Provision of Landfill sites for the disposal of Sewage Sludge Cake	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002	Collection & Transportation of Sewage Sludge Cake	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Leakage Repairs	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Cleaning/Degreasing/Desilting of Sewers	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Cleaning/Degreasing/Desilting of Sewers	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Cleaning/Degreasing/Desilting of Sewers	Yes planned extensions allowed for	4 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Network Sewerage CCTV Surveying	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	Network Sewerage CCTV Surveying	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

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2003	Network Sewerage CCTV Surveying	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2003	PPP Professional Advisory Services – Water Treatment Alpha [C226]	No		No	No
2003	PPP Professional Advisory Services – Wastewater and Sludge treatment	No		No	No
2004	Sludge Tankering	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004	Sludge Tankering	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004	Sludge Tankering	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2004	Management & Supply of Technicians for Support in the field of Telemetry	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005	Collection, Transportation, De Watering and disposal of WTWs	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005	Collection, Transportation, De Watering and disposal of WTWs	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006	Repair of Sewers Using Trenchless Techniques	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006	Leakage Detection [C105]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006	Leakage Repairs & Infrastructure Improvements	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006	Supply of Electricity to Water Service	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2006	PPP – Project Alpha	No		Yes	No
2007	Sludge Tankering [C020]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No

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2007	Heavy Mechanical Maintenance [C056]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year 2 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Heavy Mechanical Maintenance [C056]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year 2 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Supply of Techs for maintenance of Equipmt, in the fields of	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	De-Sludging of Septic Tanks [C081]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year 5 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	De-Sludging of Septic Tanks [C081]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year 5 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Provision of Work Study Practitioners			Yes	No
2007	Provision of Electricity to NI Water Sites	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Collection, Transportation & Disposal of De-Watered Sludge from WTWs	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year 3 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Supply and Delivery of Leakage Data Logging Equipment [C203]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Supply, Delivery and Installation of a sludge Logging System [C270]	No		Yes	No
2007	Installation of Telemetry at Waste Water Pumping Stations [C278]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	Installation of Telemetry at Waste Water Pumping Stations [C278]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2007	PPP – Project omega	No		Yes	No

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2008	Leakage Management Services [C140]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	9 months extension option taken up	Yes	No
2008	Service Repairs & Maintenance Project [C309]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2008	Supply of Electricity to NI Water	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009	Supply & Delivery of Chemicals [C013]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Supply & Delivery of Chemicals [C013]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Supply & Delivery of Chemicals [C013]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Collection, Transportation and Disposal of Sewage Sludge Cake [C222]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009	Collection, Transportation and Disposal of Sewage Sludge Cake [C222]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009	Supply, Maintenance and Installation of Waste Water Pumps	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009	Provision of NIW Reporter [C287]	No		Yes	No
2009	ICT Service Delivery Partnership [C302] Pearl – The Design, Implementation & Support of an integrated Real Time	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2009	Data Modelling Calculation System	Yes planned extensions allowed for	Maintenance period of 5 years allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Maintenance of telecoms network [C335]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Fuel Card Services [C336] Mechanical Joints/fittings, Underground Stopcocks, Stopcock/Meter	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run (Extensions)	(iv) Period of over-run (Extension)	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2009	Chamber systems, Plumbing materials & under – pressure water fittings	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Sludge Management Services [C340]	No		Yes	No
2009	Full Service Marketing Agency [C341]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Provision of Temporary Workers & Temporary Engineering Technicians	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Analytical Services – Lot 2 Sampling [C351]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	AMT Gross Service Charge [C367]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	CBC Direct Contract GSC [C373]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	3 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2009	Cold Water Meters and Automatic Reading Equipment (AMR) [C007]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2010	Security Guarding & Associated Services Contract [C389]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No
2010	Support of Oracle e-business suite [C404]	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option allowed for	Yes	No

TABLE 2

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run	(iv) Period of over-run	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
Contracts procured by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) on behalf of DRD					
2004/05	Mackies Infrastructure Phase 2	No		No	No
2006/07	DRD Ballycastle to Rathlin Island Ferry Operator	No		Yes	No
2008/09	DRD NISRANS Provision of a Local Streetworks Register	No		Yes	No
2008/09	DRD Provision of a Streetworks Register for and on behalf of NIRAUC	No		Yes	No
2009/10	DRD - DRD Roads Service - Supply and Delivery Road Maintenance Supplies	No		Yes	No
2002/03	DRD Northwest Group Ferry Operator	No		Yes	No
2002/03	DRD nistrans Service	Yes planned extensions allowed for	2 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2002/03	DRD Roads Service dbfo Programme	No		Yes	No
2003/04	DRD Public Transport Services Pilot	No		Yes	No
2003/04	DRD Water Reform Engagement of Legal Advisor	No		Yes	No
2006/07	DRD Extension of Door to Door Transport services in Northern Ireland for people with disabilities	Yes planned extensions allowed for	1 year extension option taken up	Yes	No
2005/06	DRD Water Service NI Customer Billing and Contract Computer System	No		Yes	No

(i) Year	(ii) All contracts that both exceeded £1m in value (excluding VAT) and lasted longer than 12 months	(iii) Year – on year over-run	(iv) Period of over-run	(v) Break clauses included in the contract	(vi) Has a break clause been exercised
2006/07	DRD Parking Enforcement Services for Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in Northern Ireland	No		Yes	No
2006/07	DRD Financial Services Advice for DRD Water Reform Unit	No		Yes	No
2008/09	DRD Provision of Door to Door Transport Services in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry	Yes planned extensions allowed for		Yes	No

Sewage Pollution of Rivers in North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many incidents of sewage pollution have occurred in rivers in the North Down area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8428/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that pollution incidents attributed to NIW are classified by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency according to the severity of the incident. The severity ratings of high, medium, low and unsubstantiated are applied to pollution incidents, according to the impact of the incident.

The number of incidents in North Down area over the past three years is set out in the table below.

	1 Apr 2007 – 31 Mar 2008	1 Apr 2008 – 31 Mar 2009	1 Apr 2009 – 31 Mar 2010
High	0	0	0
Medium	4	0	4
Low	11	7	15
Total	15	7	19

NI Water Mechanical and Engineering Staff

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail who (i) plans; (ii) manages; and (iii) controls all NI Water mechanical and engineering staff on a (a) daily; and (b) weekly basis during normal business hours, while they carry out work on or at NI Water sites and at NI Water depots.

(AQW 8431/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that work carried out at its sites/depots by its Mechanical and Engineering (M&E) staff is prioritised, planned, controlled and managed, on both a daily and weekly basis, by M&E line managers in conjunction with NIW's work control centres.

CO 71 Tender

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail who; (i) plans; (ii) manages; and (iii) controls all embedded contract staff engaged under tender CO 71 on a (a) daily; and (b) weekly basis during normal business hours, while they carry out work on or at NI Water sites and at NI Water Depots.

(AQW 8432/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day today operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

NI Water Hand Tools

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline how NI Water ensures, monitors, controls and enforces that all mechanical and engineering staff have two sets of hand tools for working at clean and dirty water sites in order to prevent cross contamination; and (ii) whether the NI Environment Agency is aware of the situation.

(AQW 8443/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it has in place guidelines relating to the avoidance of cross-contamination. The guidelines state that an additional set of designated tools will be procured for each craft fitter, electrician and technician and that these restricted tools should be stored appropriately and separately from other possible sources of contamination. Tools or equipment etc that are shared and are at risk of providing cross contamination should be disinfected prior to use on clean water sites using an appropriate disinfectant. NIW monitors compliance with its procedures through routine checks in order to ensure that separate tools are available if required or that suitable disinfection has taken place. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) monitors NIW on behalf of NIEA and any incidents of cross contamination must be reported to the DWI.

NI Water Hand Tools

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline how NI Water ensures, monitors, controls and enforces that all contract staff engaged under tender CO 71, have two sets of hand tools for working at clean and dirty water sites to prevent cross contamination; and (ii) if not, to detail the reasons; and (iii) whether the NI Environment Agency is aware of the position.

(AQW 8446/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development whether NI Water has breached any of the terms and conditions of the CO 71 contract; and to detail the nature and impact of any breaches.

(AQW 8466/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

CO 71 Tender

Mr B Leonard asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to provide a comprehensive and inclusive list of the information NI Water currently holds and records on its databases, spreadsheets or other, in relation to all embedded contract staff engaged under tender CO 71; and (ii) to detail why is it necessary for NI Water to hold this information.

(AQW 8467/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would therefore be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

CO 71 Contract

Mr B Leonard asked the Minister for Regional Development if NI Water can confirm that TUPE regulation 1981 applies to the current NI water tender contract CO 71 and the supplier; and If not to detail why.

(AQW 8468/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

CO 71 Tender Contract

Mr B Leonard asked the Minister for Regional Development if NI Water can confirm that the Fixed-term Employees (prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002 apply to the current NI water tender contract CO 71; and if not to detail why.

(AQW 8469/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract C071 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

Independent Review into NI Water and DRD

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department has taken following the findings of the independent review team's report of 25 February 2010 into NI Water and his Department.

(AQW 8470/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My written and subsequent oral statements to the Assembly on 12 and 15 March respectively set out the immediate action I took following the completion and submission of the independent report on 25 February.

Since then my Department has taken forward an emergency process to appoint interim Board members to temporarily replace the four non-executive directors that were removed from the Board of Northern Ireland Water (NIW). The Department secured the support of the Commissioner for Public Appointments to deviate from the normal appointments process. I announced the appointment of the four new interim non-executive Directors to the Board of NI Water (NIW) on 30 June 2010. It is intended that the appointments will be for an initial period of up to 9 months, until a permanent appointment process is

conducted and while all future long-term governance arrangements of water and sewerage services are re-examined.

In addition the Action Plan that was produced in response to the findings and recommendations of the report has been agreed as a joint plan between NIW and DRD. Progress against this plan, which incorporates actions to enhance the Department's oversight of NI Water, is being monitored by the NIW Board and the Department. Given ongoing uncertainties and the continuing level of government subsidy (some 80% of NIW's income), greater control has been exercised over recent months, for example: DRD has revised the governance, audit and legal section of the Quarterly Shareholder Meeting (QSM) pack, insisting on a greater focus on these issues at each QSM meeting throughout the year; the Director of the Shareholder Unit now participates in all NIW Audit Committee meetings; and regular meetings now take place between the Shareholder Unit and the Heads of NIW Internal Audit and Corporate Governance.

The recent findings of the Chief Executive's further "deep dive" audit into procurement governance work was also published on the Department's website on 21 June. Policies relating to fair employment are currently being adhered to before the Chief Executive will be in a position to make final decisions on whether or not disciplinary action should be taken in relation to any of the executive board members or anyone else in the company.

Contracts Awarded to Deloitte

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all contracts awarded to Deloitte in relation to NI Water since April 2007, including the nature of the contracts, the cost of each contract and the number of consultants and sub-contractors engaged.

(AQW 8471/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised that 14 contracts have been awarded to Deloitte in relation to Northern Ireland Water (NIW) since 1 April 2007. Table 1 sets out the number of contracts awarded by NIW to Deloitte since April 2007 and Table 2 details the number of contracts awarded by the Department to Deloitte in relation to NIW since April 2007. Each table contains information on the nature of the contracts, the cost and the number of consultants and sub-contractors engaged.

TABLE 1**CONTRACTS AWARDED TO DELOITTE BY NI WATER SINCE 1 APRIL 2007**

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Forensic Accountancy Support & Expert Witness	NIW need to engage forensic accountancy support in the ongoing legal proceedings issued by Steria against NIW in support of the defence of those proceedings and in support of NIW's counterclaim against Steria. If the dispute goes to full trial the Forensic Accountant will be expected to act as an expert witness and give evidence to the court on that basis.	£250,000	4	No	No
Customer Hub 2009/10 Subject Matter Expert Provision	Accelerated maturity/ progression of the Customer Services functions within Service Performance, Customer Interface and Data Quality. Skills transfer in Root Cause Analysis, process design and mapping, Change Option development, appraisal/ presentation and Risk Assessment and Mitigation.	£194,500	2	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Data Quality Implementation Team	In order to address Corporate Risk 11 [inaccurate, incomplete, insecure and unreliable data for decision making and reporting throughout the business] and NIW's "Legal Undertakings" to the regulator, a number of Data Quality Improvement projects were identified for immediate commencement. Allocation of external assistance to project teams will assist with mitigating against the risk of NIW failing to resolve "Corporate Risk 11" and failing to meet their "legal undertakings" within the allotted deadlines.	£119,250	2	No	No
Financial Model Scoping	Scoping and design of long term financial model which will enable the business to benefit from improved financial modelling, management forecasting, business planning, shareholder reporting and scenario modelling and submissions to the Utility Regulator in Regulatory Reviews - in particular PC13.	£100,000	3	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Internal Audit Annual Information Return End to End Reviews 2009	Staff Substitution as appropriate resources not available in-house. Purpose - to achieve better understanding of realistic confidence grade for Annual Information Return and management action plan to improve confidence grading.	£29,250	1	No	No
Information Management Scoping Study	Specialist knowledge required to undertake a scoping study to scope and plan a project that will develop the policies, controls and infrastructure required to implement good information management techniques.	£21,900	2	No	No
Secondment to Regulation & Business Performance Team	Staff substitute in Regulation and Business Performance team at time when team was absent a number of key positions. Worked on a project to establish a framework for ensuring that business improvement recommendations made by the Reporter in the course of their audits of NI Water Regulatory outputs could all be captured and assigned to business areas for implementation in a way that enabled verification of action.	£14,300	1	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Behavioural Competency Framework	Describe, implement and manage a clearly defined behavioural and competency framework for all grades within the new organisational structure which spans a diverse range of roles.	£12,400	1	No	No
Independent Review of Internal Audit Function	Relevant knowledge of best practice internal audit transferred to internal audit team as appropriate.	£9,980	1	No	No
Board Effectiveness Review	Under the Combined Code of Corporate Governance it is best practice for a Board to conduct a review of its effectiveness on an annual basis. External expert appointed to facilitate review.	£9,950	1	No	No
Corporate Resource Planning	Development of a succession planning strategy which identifies employees to fill critical roles in the short term to ensure business continuity; development of a talent management strategy which will identify high-potential employees who will become long-term successors, build internal bench-strength and retain the best talent within NI Water; building internal capability and thereby reducing the need to fill senior roles externally.	£7,500	1	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Forensic Support for Internal Investigation	Evidence to support ongoing Steria investigation. Transfer of forensic skill to the internal audit team.	£5,000	1	No	No
Total		£774,030			

TABLE 2

CONTRACTS AWARDED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO DELOITTE IN RELATION TO NI WATER SINCE APRIL 2007

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Independent Review Team Report	To provide the IRT with specialist knowledge of best practice public sector corporate governance arrangements.	£24,450	2	No	Yes
Assessment of NI Water Internal Audit Methodology	Appointed by DRD to support recommendation of IRT that the methodology used by NI Water Internal Audit should be independently validated.	£6,300	1	No	Yes
Total		£30,750			

Overall Total (DRD and NI Water)	£804,780
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Board of NI Water.: Appointment of Interim Members

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development whether procedures in relation to the Code of Practice for public appointments were followed in the appointment of the new interim Board of NI Water.

(AQW 8472/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In circumstances where the Department had to move quickly pending the running of a full public appointments process I agreed to the Department using an emergency process to fill the four non-executive positions. The Department then discussed the proposed process with the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Felicity Huston) to seek her support to deviate from the normal appointments process.

The Commissioner gave her consent on 24 March 2010 to the Department's proposed arrangements for the interim appointments, on the basis that there would be a demonstrable element of independent participation in the assessment process. Selection criteria for the four interim appointments were

based on business and stakeholder needs. A 'long list' of potential candidates was drawn up and these individuals were contacted to gauge their level of interest. Potential candidates were asked to submit CV's if they wished to be considered. Interviews or "conversations with a purpose" were then held by a panel which included an Independent Assessor. Recommendations were then made to me for consideration.

CO 71 Contract

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how a breach of the CO71 Contract impacts upon the CO71 Contract.

(AQW 8477/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that both the Terms and Conditions of Contract CO71 and the day to day operation of this Contract are the subject of legal action by a member of the contractor's staff. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to disclose information that may impact upon the ongoing litigation or which could in any way help to circumvent the legal process.

Department for Social Development

Funding to the Community Sector

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to list all the funds, programmes and schemes by which his Department provides funding to the community sector.

(AQW 7915/10)

Minister for Social Development (Mr A Attwood): My Department provides funding to the voluntary and community sector through the following funds, programmes and schemes.

Areas at Risk

- Community Cohesion Programme
- Community Development Programme
- Community Investment Fund
- Community Safety Programme
- Community Support Programme
- Community Volunteering Small Grants Scheme
- Modernisation Fund Capital
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Regional Infrastructure Programme
- Small Pockets Of Deprivation
- The Dunclug Community Chest
- Volunteer Bureau Initiative
- Volunteering in Sports, Arts and Faith Based Organisations – A Pilot Initiative
- Women's Centres Childcare Fund

Funding Programmes for the Community Sector

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has any plans to review the structure of his Department's funding programmes for the community sector, in order to simplify the funding process.

(AQW 7916/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department currently has no specific plans to review the structure of funding programmes for the voluntary and community sector, in order to simplify the funding process.

My Department is currently in the process of conducting a review of the Regional Infrastructure Programme to ensure that it is geared to provide the necessary support for the voluntary and community sector through a challenging period of increasing demand and limited resources.

The procedures and processes used to administer all the Department's funding are continually scrutinised to identify opportunities to simplify processes and reduce bureaucracy. In recent years steps have been taken to simplify the funding process and a risk based approach to payment verification has been fully implemented by the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group within DSD.

The Department has embarked on the creation of a policy and strategy framework for urban regeneration and community development. This may in time lead to a simplification of the funding process.

Disability Living Allowance Appeals

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance appeals, from the North Down constituency, were processed to completion in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7917/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Appeals Service does not maintain statistical data on the basis of constituency areas.

The Appeals Service arranges Disability Living Allowance appeals to be heard in Tribunal Centres throughout Northern Ireland, statistical data can be broken down on the basis of each Tribunal Centre. These Tribunal Centres are situated in the following locations:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| ■ Armagh | ■ Enniskillen |
| ■ Ballymena | ■ Limavady |
| ■ Ballymoney | ■ Londonderry |
| ■ Banbridge | ■ Lurgan |
| ■ Belfast | ■ Magherafelt |
| ■ Cookstown | ■ Omagh |
| ■ Coleraine | ■ Newry |
| ■ Downpatrick | ■ Newtownards |
| ■ Dungannon | ■ Strabane |

Information can be supplied for any of these specific centres if requested.

The table below relates to the number of DLA appeals which were processed to completion over the past five years falling within the Newtownards Tribunal Centre. It is important to note that this Tribunal Centre covers a much wider catchment area than the North Down constituency area.

Newtownards Tribunal Centre – Number of DLA Appeals processed to completion	
Year	Volume
2005/06	284
2006/07	344
2007/08	352
2008/09	428
2009/10	427

Funding Allocation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the total amount of funding allocated by his Department to the (a) Local Community Fund; (b) Areas at Risk Fund; (c) Modernisation Fund; (d) Community Volunteering Scheme; and (e) Community Support Programme, in each of the last three years; (ii) the cost of administering the funding for each scheme; and (iii) the number of staff employed by his Department to administer the funding.

(AQW 7960/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details funding allocated by the Department for Social Development, in each of the last 3 years to (a) Local Community Fund; (b) Areas at Risk Fund; (c) Modernisation Fund; (d) Community Volunteering Scheme; and (e) Community Support Programme.

Funding Area	2007/08 £000s	2008/09 £000s	2009/10 £000s
Local Community Fund	1,913	2,002	1,000
Areas at Risk Fund	405	898	898
Modernisation Fund	1,093	2,900	6,600
Community Volunteering Scheme	1,000	1,112	330
Community Support Programme	5,100	5,151	6,289

All of the programmes listed are administered by the Department's Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU). The cost of administering funding for each scheme and the number of staff employed to administer this funding are not readily available because of the range and varying complexity of these and other programmes administered by VCU .

However, and by way of illustration, in 2009/10, VCU administered total funding of £24.173m, through deployment of 17.5 staff at an administration cost of £546k. Administration costs of the VCU are therefore calculated at 2.25%.

Funding Allocation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the total amount of funding allocated by his Department to the (a) Women's Centre Childcare Fund; (b) Regional Infrastructure Programme; (c) Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; (d) Small Pockets of Deprivation Fund; and (e) Community Investment Fund, in each of the last three years; (ii) the cost of administering the funding for each scheme; and (iii) the number of staff employed by his Department to administer the funding.

(AQW 8021/10)

Minister for Social Development: The tables below detail funding allocated by the Department for Social Development, in each of the last 3 years to (i) (a) Women's Centre Childcare Fund; (b) Regional Infrastructure Programme; (c) Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; (d) Small Pockets of Deprivation Fund; and

(e) Community Investment Fund (ii) the cost of administering the funding for each scheme; and (iii) the number of staff employed by his Department.

TABLE 1 – FUNDING ALLOCATED

Funding Area	2007/08 £000s	2008/09 £000s	2009/10 £000s
Women's Centre	-	900	900
Regional Infrastructure	3,438	3,648	3,793
Neighbourhood Renewal	21,201	32,029	36,024
Small Pockets of Deprivation	640	640	480
Community Investment Fund	2,000	2,000	2,000

Note: Funding refers to the opening allocations in the respective years.

TABLE 2 – COST OF ADMINISTERING

Funding Area	2007/08 £000s	2008/09 £000s	2009/10 £000s
Women's Centre	N/A	11	11
Regional Infrastructure	19	20	21
Neighbourhood Renewal	350	373	378
Small Pockets of Deprivation	0	0	0
Community Investment Fund	31	32	33

Note: Administration costs equates to the full time equivalents of finance staff within Directorates administering projects along with general administration costs.

TABLE 3 – NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED IN ADMINISTERING

Funding Area	2007/08 Numbers	2008/09 Numbers	2009/10~ Numbers
Women's Centre	N/A	0.5	0.5
Regional Infrastructure	0.9	0.9	0.9
Neighbourhood Renewal	20	20	20
Small Pockets of Deprivation	0	0	0
Community Investment Fund	1.4	1.4	1.4

Gilford Police Station

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister for Social Development why the Housing Executive withdrew authority from the South Ulster Housing Association to buy the old Gilford police station site for social housing. (AQW 8074/10)

Minister for Social Development: When support was given for the purchase of the old Gilford police station site in August 2007 it was on the basis of projected need in Gilford and nearby settlements. As the level of need that was originally anticipated did not materialise prior to the site being bought support for the purchase was withdrawn.

Village Regeneration Area

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Social Development if he would consider introducing a compensation scheme for people in the Village Regeneration Area who experience negative equity as a result of the vesting of their homes.

(AQW 8084/10)

Minister for Social Development: The level and amount of compensation currently payable when homes are acquired for redevelopment is set out in the Land Compensation (NI) Order 1982.

Due to the collapse of the land and property market the level of compensation available could now be significantly lower than that allowed for. This matter is currently being considered by a Land Registry Tribunal following an earlier redevelopment scheme elsewhere in Belfast. I will await the outcome of that Tribunal before considering the matter further.

Disability Living Allowance Appeals

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance appeals from the East Antrim constituency were processed to completion in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8118/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Appeals Service does not maintain statistical data on the basis of constituency areas.

The Appeals Service arranges Disability Living Allowance appeals to be heard in Tribunal Centres throughout Northern Ireland, statistical data can be broken down on the basis of each Tribunal Centre. These Tribunal Centres are situated in the following locations:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| ■ Armagh | ■ Enniskillen |
| ■ Ballymena | ■ Limavady |
| ■ Ballymoney | ■ Londonderry |
| ■ Banbridge | ■ Lurgan |
| ■ Belfast | ■ Magherafelt |
| ■ Cookstown | ■ Omagh |
| ■ Coleraine | ■ Newry |
| ■ Downpatrick | ■ Newtownards |
| ■ Dungannon | ■ Strabane |

Information can be supplied for any of these specific centres if requested.

The table below relates to the number of DLA appeals which were processed to completion over the past three years within the Belfast and Ballymena Tribunal Centres. Both these Tribunal Centres would hold hearings for Appellants from the East Antrim constituency area however both these Tribunal Centres also hold hearings for Appellants from other constituency areas.

NUMBER OF DLA APPEALS PROCESSED TO COMPLETION (BY TRIBUNAL CENTRE)

	Ballymena	Belfast
2007/08	281	2087
2008/09	352	2357
2009/10	297	2245

Convictions for Benefit Fraud

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many convictions have been secured for benefit fraud in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8122/10)

Minister for Social Development: The number of benefit fraud convictions secured is set out in the table below. Information is only held in respect of the last four years.

Financial Year	Number of Convictions
2006/2007	307
2007/2008	393
2008/2009	530
2009/2010	455

Benefits Freephone

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made to rectify the problems with the Benefits Freephone number following complaints that it was failing to connect the public with Social Security Offices.

(AQW 8150/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Benefits Freephone number - 0800 022 4250 - has been introduced by the Agency in its North District as part of the Customer First pilot. There have been no significant problems that the Agency is aware of on this number with the service operating exactly as it was designed. The purpose of the Benefits Free phone number is to provide customers with improved access to the Agency and have their enquiries on Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Social Fund dealt with at the first point of contact. This service is provided by a central team of experienced benefit advisors. To date performance has been excellent with 99% of calls answered, and first contact resolution rates in excess of 90%. The service handles approximately 12,000 calls per month.

Only a very small proportion of customers now need to telephone their local office. Where this is required, the central telephone team transfer the call to the local office, or arrange a call back at a more convenient time for the customer.

Housing Executive Tenants

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development what assistance is available to help Housing Executive tenants to move from one Housing Executive property to another.

(AQW 8151/10)

Minister for Social Development: Housing Executive tenants do not routinely receive financial assistance when they transfer homes. However, Housing Executive District Managers have discretion in exceptional circumstances to approve a payment of Redecoration Allowance to a transfer applicant who accepts the tenancy of a dwelling which has been or is likely to prove difficult to let because it is in poor decorative order. In certain circumstances the Housing Executive may make an emergency payment to persons displaced following civil disorder, bomb attack or intimidation as a result of civil disturbance or racial attack. Although not applicable to routine transfer cases, the Housing Executive may also provide financial or other assistance:-

- to tenants who may be decanted due to scheme works;
- to affected residents within redevelopment/vesting areas; and
- where a tenant is moved from one Housing Executive property to another as a consequence of being made homeless, furniture may be removed and stored by the Housing Executive in certain circumstances.

Depending on an individual's circumstances, financial help may also be available from the Social Security Agency under the Social Fund Scheme to assist with specific associated costs incurred as a result of moving from one Housing Executive property to another.

Winter Fuel Payment

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7836/10, if he can confirm that there were exactly 20,206 claimants in both the North Down and Strangford constituencies in 2008/09 or whether the figures quoted for either constituency were inaccurate.

(AQW 8160/10)

Minister for Social Development: I can confirm that the information provided is correct.

Social Housing Maintenance Work Planned for Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what social housing maintenance work is planned for Rasharkin in (i) 2010/11; and (i) 2011/12.

(AQW 8163/10)

Minister for Social Development: An External Cyclical Maintenance Scheme is programmed for 2010/11 for 390 dwellings in Rasharkin at an estimated cost of £814,000 further to the 08/09 kitchen replacement scheme involving 83 dwellings, 18 in Rasharkin. However, the delivery of this scheme is dependent on the availability of funding. No schemes are currently planned for Rasharkin for 2011/12.

Social Housing at Church Road in Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the provision of social housing at Church Road in Rasharkin by 2012/13.

(AQW 8164/10)

Minister for Social Development: Triangle Housing Association propose to build 11 units of general needs accommodation at Church Road Rasharkin. This scheme had initially been programmed to start last year however I understand that Triangle cannot obtain planning approval because NI Water has refused all new connections to the main sewer in Rasharkin.

The Housing Association will continue to do everything they can to deliver this scheme but ultimately without planning approval they are powerless to proceed.

Maintenance Work on Housing Executive Houses

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding has been set aside for maintenance work on Housing Executive houses in the (i) Ballymena Borough Council; (ii) Ballymoney Borough Council; and (iii) Moyle District Council areas in the current financial year.

(AQW 8190/10)

Minister for Social Development: The anticipated expenditure for maintenance work on Housing Executive houses in the current financial year in the Ballymena, Ballymoney and Moyle Council areas is detailed in the table below:-

	Ballymena	Ballymoney	Moyle
Response Maintenance	£1,895,000	£755,000	£430,000
Planned Schemes	£1,400,000	£900,000	Nil

Social Housing

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what action he is taking to address the increased need for social housing.

(AQW 8273/10)

Minister for Social Development: When my predecessor Margaret Ritchie launched the new Housing Agenda back in 2008, there were 39,675 people on the waiting list for a social house.

However, by the start of this year, that number had fallen to 37,412, representing a decrease of nearly 6%.

Whilst this decrease is welcome, there is clearly much more to be done. Last year we delivered the largest number of new homes for over a decade and I plan “to build” on this success by starting even more new homes this year.

We have also brought more homes, including former Military housing, back into use. The introduction of greater levels of private finance and European Investment Bank funding has all helped contribute to this reduction in housing need.

However, it is important we continue to take this work forward and that will only be possible if we can secure the necessary funds in the forthcoming spending review otherwise those in housing need could increase again.

Employment Support Allowance

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what action he is taking to address the delay in processing Employment Support Allowance applications and payments.

(AQW 8274/10)

Minister for Social Development: There are currently no delays in processing and paying Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) applications. The average clearance time during May for an ESA claim was 15.2 days, inside the target of 17 days. The current number of outstanding fresh claims is well within the acceptable head of work.

There are occasions when applications can take longer to process and pay due to an individual's circumstances and the complexity of the benefit. These cases are closely monitored and dealt with as a priority when the necessary documentation is received.

Ballycraigy Estate Bonfire in Antrim

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the costs incurred by his Department in relation to the Ballycraigy Estate bonfire in Antrim in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 8293/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information relating to costs associated with bonfires at an estate level and, as the current contract arrangements have been in place since 2004, they do not hold records prior to this. However, the expenditure for the whole of the Antrim District from 2004 to 2009 is detailed below and, in this instance, the Housing Executive's District Office is also able to supply figures for the Ballycraigy Estate for 2008 and 2009;

Year	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Antrim District	£1,500 (Ballycraigy Estate £1,200)	£8,808 (Ballycraigy Estate £3,022)	£18,119	£7,185	£9,021	£8,850

Antisocial Behaviour in Housing Executive Properties

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department can take to reduce anti-social behaviour within Housing Executive properties.

(AQW 8294/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour wherever it occurs on its estates and has in place a Community Safety Strategy: 'Building Safer Communities 2008-2011'. This document sets out the strategic direction developed by the Housing Executive to address the wider issues of community safety and specifically anti-social behaviour. The strategic approach developed by the Housing Executive includes;

- The provision of mainstream housing services designed to address reported incidents of anti-social behaviour. To effectively achieve this objective the Housing Executive has in place robust Anti-Social Behaviour policy and procedures established under statutory directive in 2007. These policies provide a consistency of approach across all its 35 District Offices. The Housing Executive also has information sharing protocols in place with the PSNI and District Councils. These agencies, along with Youth Justice Agency and the Housing Executive, also form local Anti-Social Behaviour Forums.
- The Housing Executive also employs 65 neighbourhood wardens who are the first point of contact at estate level in reporting anti-social behaviour. They also address the fear of crime by working closely with communities, particularly those who may be marginalised or vulnerable. To supplement this warden daytime service, the Housing Executive now partners six Councils in the provision of night time warden services. The focus of night time services are to work with local communities and be the first point of contact in addressing incidents as and when they occur.
- Remedies used by the Housing Executive to address low level incidents include visits, warning letters, acceptable behaviour contracts and mediation. Legal powers are available in serious cases relating to the use of injunctions, anti-social behaviour orders and Decrees of Possession.
- Working in partnership with other statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations to address anti-social behaviour through increased joined up action, planned interventions, and the development and delivery of support and diversionary programmes.

Boiler Scrappage Scheme

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development if he has any plans to introduce a boiler scrappage scheme, in line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 8295/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department has launched a public consultation exercise on proposals for a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. The consultation commenced on 28 June and will run until 24 September. One of the proposals contained in the document is the feasibility of introducing a Boiler Replacement Scheme. The Scheme I would like to introduce would be a fuel poverty scheme and would not be administered on a 'first come, first served' basis as had been the case in England and Scotland.

I am keen to hear the public's view on how they would like to see a Boiler Replacement Scheme and I would urge everyone with an interest in tackling fuel poverty to read the consultation document and make their feelings known to the Department.

Housing Executive Homes Sold to Tenants

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive homes were sold to tenants in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 8296/10)

Minister for Social Development: The numbers of tenanted houses sold during the last three financial years are as follows:-

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
808	54	274

Disability Living Allowance Appeals

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance appeals were processed in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 8297/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the total number of Disability Living Allowance Appeals processed in each of the last three financial years:

Financial year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Number of DLA Appeals Processed	5,834	6,803	6,157

Housing Difficulties in the Rathgill, Bloomfield and Kilcooley Areas

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development when he will visit the North Down area to view the current housing difficulties in the Rathgill, Bloomfield and Kilcooley areas.

(AQW 8299/10)

Minister for Social Development: I currently have no plans to visit the Rathgill, Bloomfield and Kilcooley areas but would be happy to do so should the opportunity arise.

Compulsory Vesting of Homes within the Village Urban Renewal Area

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the compulsory vesting of homes within the Village Urban Renewal area, given that many home-owners will be at risk of substantial negative equity.

(AQW 8317/10)

Minister for Social Development: Whilst there was agreement that some form of intervention was necessary to address the high levels of housing unfitness across the Village, there was unfortunately no agreement on how that work should be delivered. Our plans have been criticised by some for not going far enough, whilst others, particularly those home owners in the area have been critical that they go too far.

Whilst many home owners took advantage of the opportunity to sell their home to the Housing Executive in advance of vesting, many did not. As a result, vesting became inevitable as the new housing planned for the area could not be started without first clearing away the old, mainly unfit housing it was to replace.

I am aware that because of the collapse of the land and property market, there may be some home owners who now find themselves in 'negative equity'. I understand this issue is currently being considered by the Lands Registry Tribunal. I will be happy to inform the Member on the outcome of that when it is known.

Vesting of Properties within the Village Urban Renewal Area

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has considered any further measures to compensate landlords affected by the vesting of properties within the Village Urban Renewal area.

(AQW 8318/10)

Minister for Social Development: There are already measures in place to compensate landlords affected by vesting and the level and amount of compensation payable is set out in the Land Compensation (NI) Order 1982.

I am aware that due to the collapse of the land and property market there may be some home owners or landlords who now face the prospect of this compensation being less than the borrowing they currently owe on the property being vested. I understand this is currently before the Lands Registry Tribunal and I will want to see what comes out of that before I assess if changes to the current scheme are necessary.

Social Housing Procurement Groups

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how much has been spent to date on professional fees by the Social Housing Procurement groups; and how this compares with any available data on the spend by Housing Associations prior to the establishment of the procurement groups.

(AQW 8319/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Procurement Strategy is a five year strategy designed to realise the maximum benefit for the public purse from more focused procurement activity and to ensure that all procurements are compliant with both European procurement law and public procurement policy. Whilst Procurement Groups have been established since 1 April 2009, they have continued to procure as individual Housing Associations subject to establishing framework agreements for professional construction-related services such as architects and quantity surveyors.

The Apex Procurement Group is the only Procurement Group so far to have procured a framework agreement for professional construction-related services. In effect theirs is the only comparison that can be made between the cost of professional fees before and after the establishment of their new Procurement Group.

Apex has been able to demonstrate that their average professional fees have decreased from 10.25% in 2008/09 to between 3.75% and 5.35% in the current financial year. Therefore, whilst the information available at this time is limited, it is nevertheless encouraging to see that the one Procurement Group which is procuring collaboratively through its framework agreement has been able to deliver on the key aims of the Procurement Strategy, namely a compliant procurement process and increased efficiencies.

Housing Executive: District Offices

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how much it costs annually to run the Housing Executive's network of district offices.

(AQW 8320/10)

Minister for Social Development: The total cost in 2009/10 to run the Housing Executive's network of District Offices was £16,280,369

Redevelopment of Queen's Parade, Bangor

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the redevelopment of Queen's Parade in Bangor.

(AQW 8398/10)

Minister for Social Development: In December 2009, my predecessor appointed Karl Greenfarm Properties Limited as the preferred developer for the site. The developer is currently in Pre Application Discussions with the Planning Service on the proposals for the site. It is expected to take until Spring 2011 to complete this process. The Department has established a Project Board to manage the regeneration scheme and a Community Engagement Partnership to liaise with the local community throughout the process.

Social Housing Waiting List

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7634/10, what percentage of the total social housing waiting list is made up of people aged 55 years and over.

(AQW 8412/10)

Minister for Social Development: As at 31 March 2010, 24% of applicants on the social housing waiting list were aged 55 years and over. This is the latest information available.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development which areas of his budget are dedicated to addressing drug and alcohol abuse.

(AQW 8448/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is the lead department in addressing alcohol and drug abuse.

There is no specific funding allocated within my Department's budget for addressing drug and alcohol abuse but such activities have received support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund. In the current CSR period £842,000 has been allocated to deliver drug and alcohol programmes within Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Examples of programmes/projects which have been allocated funding from the NRIF to address drug and alcohol abuse within Neighbourhood Renewal Areas are:

Name of Project/ Programme/ Group	AREA	Funding Period	Aims
HURT (Have your tomorrows)	North West	1/12/09-31/03/11	To support the treatment of, as well as providing education programmes for those marginalised through drugs and alcohol misuse.
FASA (Forum for Action on Substance Abuse/Suicide and Self-Harm)	Belfast	01/04/09-31/03/11	Services provided: prevention, intervention and client support work to individuals, families and communities affected by substance misuse, suicide or self-harm.
CODA – (Community Drugs Awareness)	Belfast	01/04/09-31/03/11	Empowering community members to take greater responsibility for tackling drug and alcohol issues in their communities.
Alcohol Support Project	Omagh	08/12/08-31/03/11	To support female alcoholics in the Omagh NRA.
SOLACE	Enniskillen	02/11/09-31/03/11	Befriending/advocacy support service aiming to reduce harm caused by chronic addiction to individuals, families and communities.
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	Craigavon and Newry	01/12/08-31/03/11; and 01/01/08-31/12/10	Provision of an alcohol and drugs community empowerment tool-kit which community representatives will be trained in and equipped to use in their own community. Provision of drug and alcohol awareness programme to target 16+ years with NCFE Certificate in Drugs & Anti-social behaviour levels 1&2.

Name of Project/ Programme/ Group	AREA	Funding Period	Aims
Kilcooley Community Forum	Bangor	01/04/10-31/03/11	Provision of advice to drug users.
Threshold	Coleraine	01/07/09-31/03/11	To address alcohol related problems in NRAs which have been continually brought to DSD's attention by various Agencies.

NB: The distribution of projects and funding is determined by the need identified and existing provision across neighbourhood renewal areas. It should not be assumed that where neighbourhood renewal funding has not been used for this purpose that services are not provided.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

The 70th Anniversary of the Death of Lord Craigavon

Mr M Storey asked the Assembly Commission what plans there are to mark the 70th anniversary of the death of Lord Craigavon in November 2010; and whether the anniversary will be used as an opportunity to promote information relating to his tomb to the general public.

(AQW 8016/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission has not given formal consideration to marking the 70th anniversary of the death of Lord Craigavon in November 2010.

However, you may wish to note that reference to Lord Craigavon is included in each tour of Parliament Buildings and all visitors made aware of the existence of his tomb and invited to view it, to the side of the upper east car park.

Northern Ireland Assembly Website

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission how many hits the Northern Ireland Assembly website has had in each of the last 24 months.

(AQW 8260/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr P Weir): Between July 2008 and June 2009, the Assembly website had 947,169 visits. Between July 2009 and June 2010, the Assembly website had 1,010,181 visits.

A 'visit' is defined as a period of interaction between a visitor's browser and a particular website, ending when the browser is closed or shut down, or when the user has been inactive on that site for a specified period of time.

For your information, the Assembly Commission now publishes monthly web statistics at <http://www.yourassembly.com>

Work Scheduled for Parliament Buildings

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission to detail any improvement works scheduled to take place in Parliament Buildings during the summer of 2010.

(AQW 8262/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): During the summer recess, major refurbishment and upgrade work will take place on the Ground Floor of Parliament Buildings.

A new Committee Room, adjacent to and similar in standard and quality to Room 30, will be created by merging Rooms 28 and 29, while existing committee facilities in Room 21 and in the Senate Chamber will also be improved.

Room 27 will be refurbished to dual as a small meeting room and as a waiting room for committees.

Room 54, adjacent to the Senate Chamber, will be refurbished to create an additional room for use by the Education Service.

Adjacent to the Assembly Chamber, the existing toilets are being modified to create two additional offices while still retaining a slightly reduced toilet facility.

Also, work is currently nearing completion on the creation of a new Control Room facility in the Basement in preparation for the installation of a new security management system.

Civil Service Sports Facilities

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission whether Members of the Assembly can use Civil Service sports facilities.

(AQW 8263/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): NICSSA membership is open to both civil servants and non civil servants and there are different rates available. If you would like to become a member you can contact NICSSA on 90520404 or via there website at www.nicssa.co.uk

Visitors to Parliament Buildings

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission how many visitors there have been to Parliament Buildings in each of the last 18 months.

(AQW 8264/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr P Weir): In the last 18 months Parliament Buildings has received a total of 71,249 visitors. The tables attached include a breakdown of the number of visitors by month as requested.

TABLE 1

Month	No. of guests attending functions, tours and educational visits ¹
Jun-10	6,118
May-10	6,881
Apr-10	3,779
Mar-10	4,658
Feb-10	3,245
Jan-10	2,833
Dec-09	2,757
Nov-09	4,948
Oct-09	4,101
Sep-09	3,970

Month	No. of guests attending functions, tours and educational visits¹
Aug-09	1,434
Jul-09	2,355
Jun-09	5,691
May-09	5,325
Apr-09	3,610
Mar-09	4,305
Feb-09	3,041
Jan-09	2,198
Total	71,249

TABLE 2

Month	No. of guests attending educational visits
Jun-10	2,223
May-10	1,795
Apr-10	1,296
Mar-10	2,025
Feb-10	1,615
Jan-10	1,532
Dec-09	1,222
Nov-09	1,745
Oct-09	1,073
Sep-09	1,018
Aug-09	216
Jul-09	237
Jun-09	1,951
May-09	1,749
Apr-09	1,487
Mar-09	1,862
Feb-09	1,217
Jan-09	744
Total	25,007

School Group Visits to Parliament Buildings

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission how many school groups have visited Parliament Buildings in each of the last 24 months.

(AQW 8265/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr P Weir): In the last 18 months Parliament Buildings has received a total of 735 school groups participating in an education visit and 217 school groups participating in a tour only. The following tables provide a breakdown of the number of schools by month as requested.

TABLE 1

Month	No of School Groups participating in the Assembly's Education Programme
Jun-10	53
May-10	49
Apr-10	40
Mar-10	60
Feb-10	44
Jan-10	42
Dec-09	25
Nov-09	51
Oct-09	24
Sep-09	17
Aug-09	0
Jul-09	2
Jun-09	46
May-09	39
Apr-09	36
Mar-09	47
Feb-09	27
Jan-09	22
Dec-08	21
Nov-08	38
Oct-08	23
Sep-08	27
Aug-08	1
Jul-08	1
Total	735

TABLE 2

Month	No of School Groups visiting Parliament Buildings for a tour
Jun-10	19
May-10	9
Apr-10	8
Mar-10	18
Feb-10	16
Jan-10	8
Dec-09	3
Nov-09	13
Oct-09	5
Sep-09	5
Aug-09	2
Jul-09	5
Jun-09	10
May-09	12
Apr-09	8
Mar-09	20
Feb-09	12
Jan-09	13
Dec-08	5
Nov-08	9
Oct-08	7
Sep-08	3
Aug-08	3
Jul-08	4
Total	217

Assembly's Youth Council

Mr B McElduff asked the Assembly Commission whether the planning group of the Assembly's Youth Council is representative on geographic and constituency grounds; and if the location of future meetings of the Youth Council will be rotated geographically.

(AQW 8309/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr P Weir): The Assembly Youth Panel was recruited in early 2010 using a process developed in consultation with stakeholders including the Equality Commission and the Commission for Children and Young People. The Youth Panel will work with Assembly Secretariat Staff to develop a policy proposal for a Youth Assembly by March 2011.

The opportunity for young people to nominate themselves for membership of the Youth Panel was widely advertised. Two hundred and fifty nine self-nominations were received. Of these, one hundred randomly selected self-nominees attended a peer selection event at which 25 Panel Members were elected. Five places on the Youth Panel were reserved for young people with a disability.

The home addresses provided by Youth Panel Members are located by constituency as follows:

Constituency	Number of Panel Members
Belfast East	1
Belfast North	2
Belfast South	4
Belfast West	1
East Antrim	4
Foyle	1
Mid-Ulster	1
Newry & Armagh	5
North Down	2
South Down	4
Upper Bann	4
West Tyrone	1

Between March 2010 and March 2011 Youth Panel members will participate in four residential meetings. The first residential meeting was held at the Derrynoid Centre, Draperstown and future residencials are planned to take place in counties Antrim, Fermanagh and Down. In addition a planned series of shorter meetings with stakeholders will be rotated geographically. Young people from all areas will be given opportunities to contribute to the work of the Youth Panel.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 27 August 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Community Relations Work

Lord Browne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the total expenditure by their Department on community relations work during this year to date.

(AQO 142/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): We have invested £29m in good relations work in the current CSR period – to build a shared and better future.

Expenditure to date by the Department for 2009/10 on good relations work is £15.8m (which includes PEACE III monies).

This money is invested in sponsorship of the Community Relations Council, which delivers our grant funding through several strategic schemes to community and voluntary groups, funding of the District Councils Community Relations Programme, direct funding of groups by OFMDFM, summer interventions programme work and funding to minority ethnic groups.

We provide match funding to EU funding under the PEACE III Programme. As the Accountable Department for three Priorities within the Programme, we are strategically placed to ensure co-ordination of local activities at the local level.

Programme for Government's Child Poverty Targets

Mr F Cobain asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the Programme for Government's child poverty targets.

(AQO 242/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Since 1998 there has been a downward trend in the numbers of children living in relative income poverty here in Northern Ireland. However, over the most recent period for which statistics are available the figures have remained fairly static at around 24% in 2007/08, on a par with the rest of the UK.

We fully recognise that the targets we have set ourselves in respect of eradicating child poverty here are extremely challenging, particularly in light of the current economic downturn.

The Executive, however, remains totally committed to meeting this challenge by working across government to ensure long-term sustainable progress. Through the workings of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion, we have asked our officials to undertake work with colleagues from the other Northern Ireland Departments to progress priority actions that will benefit those groups, including children, who are currently in greatest objective need.

Within this process, officials will seek to ensure that current initiatives which contribute to tackling child poverty are properly targeted and effective and also look to identify further opportunities for cross-cutting actions.

The Northern Ireland provisions of the Child Poverty Act will also be a significant step towards focusing efforts within government to meet our challenging PfG commitments of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The provisions of the Act specifically require us to produce and present to the Assembly, by 25 March 2011, a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. There will be an ongoing requirement for strategies to be produced every three years and for annual reports to the Assembly.

Child Poverty

Mr D Hilditch asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on eradication of child poverty by 2020 and what cross-departmental strategy has been devised to achieve this goal.

(AQO 586/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The three statistical measures which have been used to assess child poverty here are firstly the relative income poverty measure; secondly the absolute income poverty measure; and a third measure which combines both low income and material deprivation. These three measures reflect slightly different aspects of poverty and together provide a more comprehensive picture than could be achieved using only one measure of child poverty.

Since 1998, there has been a downward trend in the numbers of children living in relative income poverty here in Northern Ireland. However, over the most recent period for which statistics are available the figures have remained fairly static at around 24%, on a par with the rest of the UK.

In terms of absolute income poverty, 29% of children were in poverty in 1998/99 with the most recent estimate for 2007/08 being 16%. However, as with relative income poverty over more recent years, the figures have remained fairly static.

The mixed income and material deprivation measure was first recorded in 2004/05. At that time it estimated 21% of children to be poor compared to 20% in 2007/08.

We fully recognise that the targets we have set ourselves in respect of eradicating child poverty here are extremely challenging, particularly in light of the current economic downturn.

The Executive, however, remains totally committed to meeting this challenge by working across government to ensure long-term sustainable progress. Through the workings of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion, we have asked our officials to undertake work with colleagues from the other Northern Ireland Departments to progress priority actions that will benefit those groups, including children, who are currently in greatest objective need.

Within this process, officials will seek to ensure that current initiatives which contribute to tackling child poverty are properly targeted and effective and also look to identify further opportunities for cross-cutting actions.

The Northern Ireland provisions of the UK Child Poverty Act will also be a significant step towards focusing efforts within government here to meet our challenging PfG commitment of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The provisions of the Act specifically require us to produce and present to the Assembly, by 25 March 2011, a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. There will be an ongoing requirement for strategies to be produced every three years and for annual reports to the Assembly.

Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 3615/10, to list the participants in the current review of the Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags.

(AQW 4195/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The working group set up to look at the current Flags Protocol and to review it has met on two occasions on 7th October and 23rd November 2009. The group does

not have a set membership and participants included OFMDFM, DRD, DSD, DOE, NIO, PSNI, Equality Commission, Community Relations Council, Housing Executive, BT, NIE, Queen's University Belfast, Ballymena and Larne Borough Councils.

Department Websites

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much has been spent by each Department and its associated arm's length agencies on maintaining their websites in each of the last three years; and if he has identified any scope for savings along similar lines to those proposed in other parts of the UK.

(AQW 8358/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The consolidation of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) web presence, similar to the process taking place in Great Britain, is an important step in improving government's online communication and will lead to efficiencies. A number of existing government websites will be consolidated onto NI Direct, the main government site for citizens. In the last year, NI Direct has delivered 5.3 million page impressions and 1.6 million visitors demonstrating the value of having citizen-facing information in one location.

The consolidation of government websites will lead to a marked reduction in website numbers - from 90¹ to approximately 25 and eventually a saving in the resources required to manage government websites. The completion of the consolidation project will further enhance the position of NI Direct as the key government channel for online citizen information.

Below is a breakdown of the costs for each departmental website for the last three financial years.

	2009/2010	2008/2009	2007/2008
OFMDFM	£73,893.49	£81,086.20	£54,888.53
DARD	£128,609.00	£371,061.00	£236,408.00
DCAL	£284,201.00	£225,686.00	£194,673.00
DE	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
DEL	£102,247.00	£117,918.00	£232,138.00
DETI	£626,420.68	£791,056.31	£628,679.65
DFP	²		
DHSSPS	³		
DOE	£191,024.10	£152,518.64	£93,949.75
DOJ	⁴		
DRD	£96,543.70	£65,091.43	£44,163.18
DSD	£388,504.00	£191,725.00	£140,007.00
Total	£1,896,442.97	£2,001,142.58	£1,629,907.11

- 1 This figure does not include arms length bodies'.
- 2 DFP response -It is not possible to provide a figure on the cost of maintaining all websites associated with the Department as figures for site maintenance are not held centrally and would attract a disproportionate cost to obtain
- 3 DHSSPS figure unavailable at this time
- 4 DOJ came into existence on the 12 April 2010 and therefore is unable to provide figures for the last three financial years.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration and; (b) £1 million entered into by her Department in each of the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts; (iii) whether there were break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8340/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The Central Procurement Directorate acts as a Centre of Procurement Expertise on behalf of my Department.

The attached Annex A details those contracts of either £1m or more in value and more than 12 months in duration which CPD has procured on behalf of DARD since it was established on 1 April 2002.

Information on contracts awarded prior to 2002 could only be obtained in part and at disproportionate cost.

**ANNEX A
TABLE 1**

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2003/04	DARD	0013B70403	Construction of Bacteriology Laboratory	No	No	No
2006/07	DARD	1685/06	Framework for Civil Engineering Consultancy & Related Professional Services (Rivers Agency)	No	Yes	No
2007/08	DARD	16031/07	DARD NI Fallen Animal Collection, Disposal and TSE Sampling	*	Yes	No
2008/09	DARD	0206130408	Redevelopment of Agri Food & Biosciences	No	No	No
2008/09	DARD	929/08	Rivers Agency Framework fo Minor Watercourse Maintenance	No	Yes	No

(i) contracts with a value exceeding £1m (excluding VAT) and a duration of more than 12 months				(ii) Any year-on-year overruns beyond minimum period (years)	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break Clause has been exercised
Year Awarded	Funding Dept	CPD Reference	Title			
2009/10	DARD	project_214	DARD Fisheries Division Design and Build of Fisheries Protection Vessel	*	Yes	No
2009/10	DARD	project_258	DARD Manging Agent for Administration & Delivery of Axis 1 Measures of the NIRD	*	Yes	No
2005/06	DARD	13758/04	DARD LMC Certification Services	*	Yes	No
2005/06	DARD	14257/05	DARD managing agent for dard research vessel-corystes	*	Yes	No
2007/08	DARD	14301/05	dard-afbi-library services	*	Yes	No
2006/07	DARD	14666/06	dard provision of facilities services for cafre at 3 colleges	*	Yes	No
2008/09	DARD	15459/06	dard extension to aphs	*	Yes	No

Department of Education

Common Funding Formula

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education when the terms of reference for the review of the Common Funding Formula will be published.

(AQW 5714/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): This will be a wide reaching exercise which cover all aspects of schools funding including the Common Funding Formula and other sources of funding provided by the ELBs to schools. My objectives for this review are to ensure that: more funding is invested in Early Years and in Primary schools; as much funding as possible goes directly to the classroom; funding

genuinely targets Social Need to counter the disadvantages that many children face because of where they live; and post primary schools are funded consistent with progress towards full implementation of the Entitlement Framework. I want to ensure that the outcomes from the Education budget are maximised consistent with the implementation of my priorities for Education and that will be a central tenet of the Review. In taking forward this review I want to ensure that there is full engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers unions. I hope to be able to confirm full details of the review including the Terms of Reference shortly.

Post-Primary Schools with the Highest Results

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education to list the 20 post-primary schools with (i) the highest GSCE results; and (ii) the highest A Level results in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7367/10)

Minister of Education: Tá eolas ar iarbhunscoileanna ar fáil ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne Oideachais ag www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/appinstitutes/instmain.aspx.

Léirítear eolas ar scrúduithe ag leibhéal scoile aonair i dteannta le sonraí comhthéacsúla lena n-áirítear teidlíocht saorbhéilí scoile agus líon na ndaltaí i ngach cohórt.

Information on post primary schools is available on the Department of Education website at www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/appinstitutes/instmain.aspx.

Examination information is presented at individual school level along with contextual data including free school meal entitlement and number of pupils in each cohort.

Appeals for Admission into Post-Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education how many appeals for admission into post-primary schools have been made this year, broken down by Education and Library Board area and by named school.

(AQW 7433/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne in iúl gur mar atá mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos atá líon na n-achomharc ar iontráil go h-iarbhunscoileanna a rinneadh i mbliana. I gcásanna ina bhfuil * curtha in áit an fhigiúir, seasann sé do níos lú ná cúig chás.

The Education and Library Boards have advised that the number of appeals for admission into post-primary schools that have been made this year, are as detailed in the tables below. Where a figure has been substituted with * it denotes fewer than five cases.

BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School Name	Number of Appeals
Aquinas Grammar School	*
Ashfield Boys School	*
Ashfield Girls School	*
Belfast Royal Academy	*
Bloomfield Collegiate	5
De La Salle School	*
Dominican College	*
Grosvenor Grammar School	*
Hazelwood Integrated School	*

School Name	Number of Appeals
Hunterhouse College	*
Methodist College	*
Rathmore Grammar School	*
RBAI	*
St Dominic's College	*
St Malachy's College	*
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	*
Strathearn Grammar School	*
Victoria College	8
Wellington College	*
Total Appeals	61

WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School Name	Number of Appeals
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh	*
Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen	*
Drumragh Integrated College	14
Foyle and Londonderry College	*
Lumen Christi College	*
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	6
Oakgrove Integrated College	*
St Cecilia's College	13
St Columb's Grammar School	*
St Joseph's Boys' School	*
St Mary's College, Derry	14
St Michael's College	5
Strabane Grammar School	*
Thornhill College	*
Total Appeals	72

NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School Name	Number of Appeals
Ballymena Academy	*
Ballyclare High School	*
Ballyclare Secondary School	*

School Name	Number of Appeals
Cambridge House Grammar	*
Carrickfergus Grammar School	*
Coleraine Academical Institution	6
Coleraine High School	6
Dalriada School	*
Dominican College, Portstewart	*
Dunclug College	6
Larne Grammar School	*
Loreto College	*
Rainey Endowed School	*
Slemish Integrated College	13
Sperrin Integrated College	*
St Louis Grammar School	*
St Patrick's College, Maghera	*
St Paul's College, Kilrea	11
Ulidia Integrated College	*
Total Appeals	75

SOUTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

SCHOOL NAME	Number of Appeals
Assumption Grammar School	5
Bangor Grammar School	*
Bangor Academy & Sixth Form College	12
Down High School	*
Friends' School	*
Glastry College	*
Glenlola Collegiate	*
Lagan College	9
Nendrum College	*
Our Lady & St Patrick's College	7
Regent House Grammar School	*
Saintfield High School	*
Shimna Integrated College	*
St Columbanus' College	5

SCHOOL NAME	Number of Appeals
St Patrick's Grammar School	9
Strangford Integrated College	*
Sullivan Upper School	*
Wallace High School	*
Total Appeals	77

SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

SCHOOL NAME	Number of Appeals
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	5
Banbridge Academy	6
Markethill High School	*
New-Bridge Integrated College	6
Our Lady's Grammar School	5
Royal School, Armagh	5
Royal School, Dungannon	*
Sacred Heart Grammar School	*
St Catherine's College, Armagh	*
St Ciaran's College	7
St Colman's College	11
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore	6
St Louis' Grammar School	*
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	8
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	10
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	23
Total Appeals	107

Capital Expenditure

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to outline the amount of capital expenditure in each of the schools which have had a development proposal approved since January 2007; and the number of pupils in each of these schools.

(AQW 7435/10)

Minister of Education: Tá eolas cuimsithe sa tábla thíos ar chaiteachas caipitil sna blianta airgeadais 2007/08 go 2009/10, agus ar líon na ndaltaí i ngach ceann de na scoileanna ar faomhadh a dtogra forbartha ó mhí Eanáir sa bhliain 2007.

Capital expenditure, in the financial years 2007/08 to 2009/10, and pupil numbers in each of the schools which have had a development proposal approved since January 2007 are contained in the table below.

School	Description of Proposal	Capital Spend (£000s)	Pupil Nos.
Armagh Integrated College	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	0	61
Ballee Primary School	Closure Ballee Primary School with effect from 31 August 2010	5	40
Ballymoney Model Primary School	Acquisition of controlled integrated status with effect from 1 September 2009	184	253
Ballysally Primary School	Establish a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Learning Support Centre from September 2008	45	198
Balmoral High School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008	36	58
Benburb Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	-3	11
Blackwater Integrated College	A new Grant Maintained Integrated College with effect from 1 September 2008 (incorporate pupils from Down Academy C and the independent Rowallane Integrated College.	73	342
Blythefield Primary School, Belfast	To cease nursery education provision with effect from 31 August 2008	102	93
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	An Irish-medium Nursery Unit with effect from 1 September 2010	143	174
Bunscoil Uí Chléirigh	A new Irish-medium school with effect from 1 September 2008	0	Not opened yet
Castle High School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	23	62
Charley Memorial Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007	0	10
Christian Brothers' Primary School, Armagh	An Irish Medium Nursery Unit with effect from September 2009	16	361
Christian Brothers' Primary School, Armagh	A Key Stage 2 Learning Support Class with effect from 1 September 2008 - revised to 1 September 2009		
Cliftonville Primary School	To change from controlled to controlled integrated status with effect from 31 August 2008	1,037	186
Clogher Valley Integrated Primary School	New Grant Maintained Integrated Primary with effect from 1 September 2008	0	17
Collone Primary School, Armagh	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008	0	24
Conlig PS	Closure with effect from 1 September 2008	160	43

School	Description of Proposal	Capital Spend (£000s)	Pupil Nos.
Crumlin Primary School	Acquisition of controlled integrated status with effect from 1 September 2010	36	194
D H Christie Memorial Primary School	Establish a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Learning Support Centre from September 2008	384	394
Donaghadee High School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	741	126
Down Academy	Closure with effect from 1 September 2008	0	340
Dromore High School	A Sixth Form be established with effect from 1 September 2010	239	787
Drumaghlis Primary School, Crossgar	Change in the school's status from a Maintained to a Controlled Primary School with effect from 1 September 2007	0	36
Drumbo Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007	0	12
Fair Hill Primary School, Kinallen	A single nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2009	772	232
Fort Hill Primary School, Lisburn	Acquisition of controlled integrated status with effect from 1 September 2009	47	234
Gaelscoil an Damba	Closure of Gaelscoil an Damba with effect from 31 August 2008	3	29
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	Irish medium nursery unit from 1 September 2009	451	148
Gaelscoil Eanna, Glengormley	A new Irish-medium primary school from the 1st September 2007 (Year 1 – 7 pupils, Year 2 – 16 pupils and Year 3 – 11 pupils)	0	34 (three classes)
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	A new Irish-medium primary school in Crumlin from the 1st September 2007 (Year 1 – 15 pupils, Year 2 – 13 pupils, Year 3 – 10 pupils, Year 4 – 3 pupils, Year 5 – 5 pupils, Year 6 – 7 pupils and Year 7 – 1 pupil)	0	54 (three classes)

School	Description of Proposal	Capital Spend (£000s)	Pupil Nos.
Gaelscoil Na Daroige	A new Irish Medium primary from 1 September 2007	0	39 (three classes)
Gaelscoil na Daroige	A new Irish Medium primary from 1 September 2009 (Year 1 – 15 pupils, Year 2 – 6 pupils, Year 3 – 4 pupils, Year 4 – 4 pupils and Year 5 – 10 pupils)		
Glasswater Primary School	Crossgar and Drumaghilis Primary Schools amalgamated to form a new controlled primary school with effect from 1 September 2007 on the current premises of Crossgar	123	78
Guinness Primary School	Closure with effect from 1 September 2008	0	18
Harpur's Hill Primary School	Establish a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Learning Support Centre from September 2008	58	197
Hilden Integrated Primary School	Closure with effect from 30 November 2008	0	36
Hillhall Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007	0	39
Holy Trinity Primary School	An Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit be established within Key Stage 1 with effect from 1 September 2007	196	627
Hollywood Nursery School	From 52 part time pupils to 52 full time pupils - upon construction of new school October 2013	62	342
Kindle Primary School	Closure of Kindle with effect from 31 August 2008	0	32
King's Park Primary School	A single nursery unit to replace current reception class with effect from 1 September 2009	54	594
Lambeg Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007	4	23
Lisnagelvin Primary School	Learning Support Classes be established within Foundation Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 at Lisnagelvin Primary School with effect from 1 January 2008	4,245	525
Lisneal College	Learning Support Classes be established within Foundation Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 at Lisneal College with effect from 1 January 2008	5,290	893
Londonderry Model Primary School	An Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit be established within Foundation Key Stage 1 with effect from 1 January 2008	118	344

School	Description of Proposal	Capital Spend (£000s)	Pupil Nos.
Maghera High School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	34	133
Millington Nursery School	A 3rd nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2010	25	52
Minterburn Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008	0	11
Moira Primary School	A single nursery unit with effect from 1 January 2008	268	386
Newtownbreda Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	67	78
Omagh County Primary School	An Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit be established within Key Stage 1m with effect from 1 January 2008	152	360
Parkhall College	Acquisition of controlled integrated status with effect from 1 September 2009	872	677
Primate Dixon Primary School	A Key Stage 2 Learning Support Class with effect from 1 September 2008 - revised to 1 September 2009	49	486
Rowandale Integrated PS	Grant Maintained Integrated Nursery Unit with effect from 1 September 2007	12	64
Shanmullagh Controlled Primary School	Closure Shanmullagh PS with effect from 31 August 2008	0	24
St Brigid's College, Carnhill	Closure Irish Medium Unit at St Brigid's College, phased out with effect from 1 September 2008	276	722
St Brigid's Primary and Nursery School	Establishment of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit with effect from 1 September 2007	132	304
St Colman's Primary School, Moira	Closure with effect from 31 March 2009	0	2
St Colmcille's Primary School Armagh	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	9	15
St Columba's Primary School, Curley	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	0	16
St Francis de Sales Special School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008. See also DP No. 187 re Special Educational Needs unit	3	29
St Francis' Primary School, Lurgan	An additional nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2010	97	766
St Gabriel's College, Belfast	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008	127	93

School	Description of Proposal	Capital Spend (£000s)	Pupil Nos.
St John's PS, Glenn, Newry	Closure with effect from 31 August 2010	0	20
St Joseph's Boys High School, Newry	Two Learning Support Centres, from 1 September 2010	442	429
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore	To establish an Irish Medium Unit from 1 September 2010	326	527
St Killian's College	St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower ; St Aloysius' High School , & St Comgall's College to amalgamate to form a new co-educational 11-18 College with effect from 1 September 2008	0	Not opened yet
St Patrick's Primary School, Dungannon	Additional Full-Time nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2010	132	194
St Patrick's Primary School, Garvallah	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	0	14
St Patrick's PS, Creggan	Closure with effect from 31 August 2010	0	12
St Paul's Primary School, Ahoghill	St Joseph's Primary School, Ahoghill and St Patrick's Primary School, Aughercloney amalgamate onto the St Joseph's Primary School site with effect from 1 September 2007	0	30
St Teresa's PS	New Special Educational Needs unit to open (replacing provision at St Frances de Sales Special School)	719	391
Suffolk Primary School, Belfast	Closure with effect from 31 August 2009	520	76
The Lindsay Hospital School, Belfast	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007 or as soon as possible thereafter	0	7
Trillick Controlled Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2008	0	35
Tullymacarette Primary School	Closure with effect from 31 August 2007	0	14
Windmill Integrated Primary School, Dungannon	To transfer from part time to full time nursery status with effect from 1 September 2010	179	229

Capital Expenditure

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the planned capital expenditure for the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 7439/10)

Minister of Education: Tá staid an-dúshlánach roimh mo Roinn i dtaca le hinfheistiú in eastát na scoileanna sa bhliain atá le teacht, mar tá glanbhuiséad caipitil de £169.3 milliún aici don bliain 2010/11.

My Department is faced with an incredibly challenging position in the coming year regarding investment in the schools estate, with a net capital budget of £169.3 million for 2010/11.

There are seven projects scheduled to open in 2010/11 which will result in a capital commitment of £101m. In addition, a range of major conventional capital projects, with a projected total capital spend of £20.7 million in 2010/11, are currently under construction.

The remainder of the budget will be balanced across a number of other areas covered from the Education capital budget such as investment in transport, ICT projects, youth and early years as well as minor works in an estate of over 1200 schools.

I recently met with the Finance Minister to outline the serious nature of the funding position and have requested additional funding from the Executive to enable the school building programme to continue. We will, however, continue to invest all available resources in maintaining the fabric of the schools estate addressing priority improvement works.

Capital and Recurrent Costs

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to outline the (i) capital; and (ii) recurrent costs attached to each school that has had a development proposal approved since January 2007.

(AQW 7440/10)

Minister of Education:

(i) Capital

Tugadh i mo fhreagra ar cheist an Tionóil AQW 7435/10 eolas ar chaiteachas caipitil, sna blianta airgeadais 2007/08 go 2009/10, i ngach ceann de na scoileanna ar faomhadh a dtogra forbartha ó mhí Eanáir sa bhliain 2007.

My answer to Assembly question number AQW 7435/10 provided information on capital expenditure, in the financial years 2007/08 to 2009/10, on each of the schools which have had a development proposal approved since January 2007.

(ii) Recurrent

In terms of recurrent costs associated with Development Proposals approved since January 2007, ten of the proposals relate to the current financial year 2010/11 - as these have not yet been established, there is no recurrent funding data available for them.

Where Development Proposals relate to school or Unit closure (32), there are no recurring costs for these. In the case of the establishment of new Unit provision (18) within a school - for example new nursery class, Irish-medium or Special Unit - the recurrent funding to reflect costs, cannot be disaggregated from the overall financial data of the host school.

For schools that amalgamate, the net costs of any amalgamation proposals (4) cannot readily be identified or could only be assessed at disproportionate cost.

Of the remaining Development Proposals during this period:

- 3 relate to new schools – which were not subsequently established;
- 8 related to either a change in status or a change in the pattern of enrolment (the specific costs of which cannot be readily identified, but are likely to be negligible); and
- 3 others relate to new (primary) schools established during the period as a result of approved Development Proposals. The associated recurrent funding, since the schools opened, is shown below:

School Name	Date school opened	Total Recurrent Funding to March 2010 (£k)
Gaelscoil Eanna, Glengormley	1 September 2007	348
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	1 September 2007	342
Gaelscoil na Daroige	1 September 2009	151

NB: Financial data included for 09/10 Financial Year is still provisional

Data Source: Education and Library Boards

Early Years Strategy

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her Department's Early Years Strategy, (i) how long it has taken to formulate the strategy; (ii) how many people have been working on the development of this strategy; and (iii) when it will be issued for public consultation.

(AQW 7674/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir an Roinn Oideachais tús leis an phróiseas chun dréachtStraitéis na Luathbhlianta (0-6) a fhorbairt go mall sa bhliain 2006.

The Department of Education commenced the process of developing the draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy in late 2006.

The Department appointed an external specialist as Regional Co-ordinator, to take forward consideration and preparation of the draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy, early in 2007. This was a fixed term appointment and ended in August 2009. The number of administrative staff involved has varied during the development of the draft Strategy.

I launched the draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy for public consultation on 25 June 2010.

Irish-medium Sector

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children being educated in the Irish-medium sector and the associated costs in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 7706/10)

Minister of Education: Sa bhliain airgeadais 2010-11, bhí 2,788 dalta rollaithe i nGaelscoileanna agus bhí 795 dalta eile rollaithe in aonaid Ghaeilge a bhí ceangailte le hóstascoileanna Béarla, ag leibhéal bunscoile agus ag leibhéal iar-bhunscoile araon.

In the 2010-11 financial year, at both primary and post-primary level, there are 2,788 pupils enrolled in Irish-medium schools and a further 795 pupils enrolled in Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host schools.

All schools receive a delegated budget under the Common Funding Formula arrangements. Schools of similar size and characteristics receive similar levels of funding and the funding provided to schools in the Irish-medium sector are similar to equivalent schools in the English-medium sector.

The actual costs associated with educating children in the Irish-medium sector in 2010-11 will not be known until after the financial year closes. However, the total of the delegated budgets allocated to Irish-medium schools in 2010-11, under the Common Funding Formula arrangements, was £10,147k.

Information in relation to the budget share for pupils in Irish-medium Units, attached to English-medium host schools, cannot be provided as it is not possible to disaggregate the funding of the Unit from the host school.

Development Proposals

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of development proposals (i) approved in 2010; and (ii) currently awaiting a decision in the (a) controlled ; (b) maintained; (c) integrated; and (d) Irish-medium sectors; and (iii) to list the name of each school awaiting maintenance work at the highest priority level; and if any of these schools are in breach of health and safety regulations.

(AQW 7758/10)

Minister of Education: Tá 11 Togra Forbartha ann a faomhadh ó mhí Eanáir 2010. Tá 17 eile acu ann atá ag feitheamh ar chinneadh, agus seo mar a mhiondealaítear iad de réir earnála:

11 Development Proposals have been approved since January 2010 to date. There are 17 awaiting a decision, which are by sector:

Controlled	Maintained	Integrated	Irish-medium
4	6	0	7

Delay in Appointment of Councillors to Interim Education and Library Boards

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education to outline the reasons for the delay in the appointment of councillors to the Interim Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 7967/10)

Minister of Education: Chuaigh an Roinn i gcomhairle le Coimisinéir na gCeapachán Poiblí i dtaobh an phróisis roghnúcháin atá le húsáid i gcás ceapachán chuig na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

The Department consulted with the Commissioner for Public Appointments on the selection process to be used for appointments to the Education and Library Boards. The process involves several stages including: Councils are invited to put forward nominations; nominated councillors to complete application forms describing how they meet certain relevant criteria for appointment; an eligibility sift is undertaken on the applications; and 'conversations with a purpose' held with eligible candidates to confirm and validate the suitability of candidates for the posts. The timescale for appointments is therefore dependent upon the completion of all the necessary stages with the Councils and councillors involved. The process is continuing and appointments will be made at the earliest possible date.

Community Relations Programmes

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education what plans her Department has to provide community relations programmes in schools before her Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Strategy is implemented.

(AQW 7995/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) I am committed to encompassing a wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, and to ensuring that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. With this aim in mind, I plan to bring forward a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy later this year.

To facilitate this I am investing over £200 million for Special Educational Needs, £8m for Supporting Newcomer Pupils, £1.5m for the Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by the GAA and IFA and £28m for youth services to contribute to the wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. An additional £90 has also been made available per primary pupil, which is an increase of 3.1% compared to last year.

Training and capacity-building of the education workforce will be a key aspect of the new policy.

- (ii) Part (i): It is anticipated that the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will be subject to public consultation later this year with implementation in 2011.

Part (ii): The majority of the 2010/11 allocation of £1.11m for community relations funding (84.8%) will be used for preparing for the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy.

Part (iii): The core funding programme terminated on 31 March 2010 and the groups were informed of this in August 2009. However, provision was made to cover salary costs for all of the core funded organisations during April and May 2010 to facilitate the winding-down of programmes (a total allocation of £168,524). Dependency upon external organisations was identified as a weakness within the community relations policy and I have already indicated my intention to move away from this approach by embedding this work within educational establishments by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required. How this will be taken forward will form part of the implementation plan and no decisions have yet been taken on how expertise will be sourced.

- (iii) To ensure that community relations work and its implementation within schools is fully sustainable, I am seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings through the provision of a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required, and to redress the dependency upon external organisations which was identified as a weakness within the current community relations policy. Capacity-building is a key aspect to achieving this objective, and consequently is reflected in the CRED policy. The Department of Education is working closely with the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council in order to draw up plans for the implementation of the policy.
- (iv) Courses of initial teacher education (ITE) focus on developing and inspiring highly competent reflective teaching professionals with a sense of moral purpose and a commitment to the holistic development of their pupils and the betterment of society in general.

Currently, community relations training is addressed primarily through each University College's Diversity and Mutual Understanding programme, which forms an integral and significant element of all ITE courses in both St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges. As a mandatory component, community relations issues and preparation are dealt with in a large number of contexts ranging from philosophical concepts within Education Studies, through curriculum implementation aspects in a variety of Curriculum Studies and Education Studies courses, to very practical issues within school-based work. Outside the modular degree structure there is a full course programme of events, jointly planned and organised between both Colleges, which focus on professional issues in this area. There are also many examples of optional experiences in this field undertaken by various groups of students within the Colleges and in collaboration with other partner institutions.

- (v) Tá cinntí le deimhniú go fóill maidir leis an dóigh a leithdháilfear an £1.1 milliún agus tá mo chuid feidhmeannach i mbun plé leis na ELBanna, leis an Chomhairle Ógra agus le páirtithe eile leasmhara faoi láthair leis an tionchar is fearr a chinntiú don bhuiséad seo. Táthar ag súil leis go n-áireofar air seo tacaíocht do phoist atá ríthábhachtach do chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí nua chomh maith le hobair ullmhúcháin lena chinntiú go dtabharfar an polasaí isteach go mín.
- (v) Decisions have yet to be finalised on how the £1.1m will be allocated and my officials are currently in discussion with ELBs, the Youth Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum impact of this budget. This is expected to include support of posts which are critical to the implementation of the new policy as well as preparation work to ensure a smooth introduction.

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Strategy

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education (i) when she expects to implement the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Strategy; (ii) how much funding will be provided for the implementation of this strategy, and (iii) if she plans to use the expertise of the 26 core funding community relations organisations, whose budgets have been cut, to implement this strategy.

(AQW 7997/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) I am committed to encompassing a wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, and to ensuring that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. With this aim in mind, I plan to bring forward a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy later this year.

To facilitate this I am investing over £200 million for Special Educational Needs, £8m for Supporting Newcomer Pupils, £1.5m for the Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by the GAA and IFA and £28m for youth services to contribute to the wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. An additional £90 has also been made available per primary pupil, which is an increase of 3.1% compared to last year.

Training and capacity-building of the education workforce will be a key aspect of the new policy.

- (ii) Part (i): It is anticipated that the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will be subject to public consultation later this year with implementation in 2011.

Part (ii): The majority of the 2010/11 allocation of £1.11m for community relations funding (84.8%) will be used for preparing for the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy.

Part (iii): The core funding programme terminated on 31 March 2010 and the groups were informed of this in August 2009. However, provision was made to cover salary costs for all of the core funded organisations during April and May 2010 to facilitate the winding-down of programmes (a total allocation of £168,524). Dependency upon external organisations was identified as a weakness within the community relations policy and I have already indicated my intention to move away from this approach by embedding this work within educational establishments by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required. How this will be taken forward will form part of the implementation plan and no decisions have yet been taken on how expertise will be sourced.

- (iii) To ensure that community relations work and its implementation within schools is fully sustainable, I am seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings through the provision of a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required, and to redress the dependency upon external organisations which was identified as a weakness within the current community relations policy. Capacity-building is a key aspect to achieving this objective, and consequently is reflected in the CRED policy. The Department of Education is working closely with the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council in order to draw up plans for the implementation of the policy.
- (iv) Courses of initial teacher education (ITE) focus on developing and inspiring highly competent reflective teaching professionals with a sense of moral purpose and a commitment to the holistic development of their pupils and the betterment of society in general.

Currently, community relations training is addressed primarily through each University College's Diversity and Mutual Understanding programme, which forms an integral and significant element of all ITE courses in both St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges. As a mandatory component, community relations issues and preparation are dealt with in a large number of contexts ranging from philosophical concepts within Education Studies, through curriculum implementation aspects in a variety of Curriculum Studies and Education Studies courses, to very practical issues within school-based work. Outside the modular degree structure there is a full course programme of events, jointly planned and organised between both Colleges, which focus on professional issues in this area. There are also many examples of optional experiences in this field undertaken by various groups of students within the Colleges and in collaboration with other partner institutions.

- (v) Tá cinntí le deimhniú go fóill maidir leis an dóigh a leithdháilfear an £1.1 milliún agus tá mo chuid feidhmeannach i mbun plé leis na ELBanna, leis an Chomhairle Ógra agus le páirtithe eile leasmhara faoi láthair leis an tionchar is fearr a chinntiú don bhuiséad seo. Táthar ag súil leis

go n-áireofar air seo tacaíocht do phoist atá ríthábhachtach do chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí nua chomh maith le hobair ullmhúcháin lena chinntiú go dtabharfar an polasaí isteach go mín.

- (v) Decisions have yet to be finalised on how the £1.1m will be allocated and my officials are currently in discussion with ELBs, the Youth Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum impact of this budget. This is expected to include support of posts which are critical to the implementation of the new policy as well as preparation work to ensure a smooth introduction.

Community Relations Programmes: Teacher Training

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education whether she has any plans to provide additional training for teachers who are to implement community relations programmes in schools.

(AQW 7998/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) I am committed to encompassing a wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, and to ensuring that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. With this aim in mind, I plan to bring forward a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy later this year.

To facilitate this I am investing over £200 million for Special Educational Needs, £8m for Supporting Newcomer Pupils, £1.5m for the Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by the GAA and IFA and £28m for youth services to contribute to the wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. An additional £90 has also been made available per primary pupil, which is an increase of 3.1% compared to last year.

Training and capacity-building of the education workforce will be a key aspect of the new policy.

- (ii) Part (i): It is anticipated that the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will be subject to public consultation later this year with implementation in 2011.

Part (ii): The majority of the 2010/11 allocation of £1.11m for community relations funding (84.8%) will be used for preparing for the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy.

Part (iii): The core funding programme terminated on 31 March 2010 and the groups were informed of this in August 2009. However, provision was made to cover salary costs for all of the core funded organisations during April and May 2010 to facilitate the winding-down of programmes (a total allocation of £168,524). Dependency upon external organisations was identified as a weakness within the community relations policy and I have already indicated my intention to move away from this approach by embedding this work within educational establishments by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required. How this will be taken forward will form part of the implementation plan and no decisions have yet been taken on how expertise will be sourced.

- (iii) To ensure that community relations work and its implementation within schools is fully sustainable, I am seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings through the provision of a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required, and to redress the dependency upon external organisations which was identified as a weakness within the current community relations policy. Capacity-building is a key aspect to achieving this objective, and consequently is reflected in the CRED policy. The Department of Education is working closely with the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council in order to draw up plans for the implementation of the policy.
- (iv) Courses of initial teacher education (ITE) focus on developing and inspiring highly competent reflective teaching professionals with a sense of moral purpose and a commitment to the holistic development of their pupils and the betterment of society in general.

Currently, community relations training is addressed primarily through each University College's Diversity and Mutual Understanding programme, which forms an integral and significant element of all ITE courses in both St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges. As a mandatory component, community relations issues and preparation are dealt with in a large number of contexts ranging from philosophical concepts within Education Studies, through curriculum implementation aspects in a variety of Curriculum Studies and Education Studies courses, to very practical issues within school-based work. Outside the modular degree structure there is a full course programme of events, jointly planned and organised between both Colleges, which focus on professional issues in this area. There are also many examples of optional experiences in this field undertaken by various groups of students within the Colleges and in collaboration with other partner institutions.

- (v) Tá cinntí le deimhniú go fóill maidir leis an dóigh a leithdháilfear an £1.1 milliún agus tá mo chuid feidhmeannach i mbun plé leis na ELBanna, leis an Chomhairle Ógra agus le páirtithe eile leasmhara faoi láthair leis an tionchar is fearr a chinntiú don bhuiséad seo. Táthar ag súil leis go n-áireofar air seo tacaíocht do phoist atá ríthábhachtach do chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí nua chomh maith le hobair ullmhúcháin lena chinntiú go dtabharfar an polasaí isteach go mín.
- (v) Decisions have yet to be finalised on how the £1.1m will be allocated and my officials are currently in discussion with ELBs, the Youth Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum impact of this budget. This is expected to include support of posts which are critical to the implementation of the new policy as well as preparation work to ensure a smooth introduction.

Community Relations Programmes: Teacher Training

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education if he will ensure that Stranmillis and St Mary's Teacher Training Colleges provide extra training on the delivery of community relations programmes in schools, following the decision of the Minister of Education to cut the funding of 26 core funding organisations who provided those programmes.

(AQW 7999/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) I am committed to encompassing a wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, and to ensuring that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. With this aim in mind, I plan to bring forward a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy later this year.

To facilitate this I am investing over £200 million for Special Educational Needs, £8m for Supporting Newcomer Pupils, £1.5m for the Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by the GAA and IFA and £28m for youth services to contribute to the wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. An additional £90 has also been made available per primary pupil, which is an increase of 3.1% compared to last year.

Training and capacity-building of the education workforce will be a key aspect of the new policy.

- (ii) Part (i): It is anticipated that the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will be subject to public consultation later this year with implementation in 2011.

Part (ii): The majority of the 2010/11 allocation of £1.11m for community relations funding (84.8%) will be used for preparing for the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy.

Part (iii): The core funding programme terminated on 31 March 2010 and the groups were informed of this in August 2009. However, provision was made to cover salary costs for all of the core funded organisations during April and May 2010 to facilitate the winding-down of programmes (a total allocation of £168,524). Dependency upon external organisations was identified as a weakness within the community relations policy and I have already indicated my intention to move

away from this approach by embedding this work within educational establishments by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required. How this will be taken forward will form part of the implementation plan and no decisions have yet been taken on how expertise will be sourced.

- (iii) To ensure that community relations work and its implementation within schools is fully sustainable, I am seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings through the provision of a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required, and to redress the dependency upon external organisations which was identified as a weakness within the current community relations policy. Capacity-building is a key aspect to achieving this objective, and consequently is reflected in the CRED policy. The Department of Education is working closely with the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council in order to draw up plans for the implementation of the policy.
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- (v) Tá cinntí le deimhniú go fóill maidir leis an dóigh a leithdháilfear an £1.1 milliún agus tá mo chuid feidhmeannach i mbun plé leis na ELBanna, leis an Chomhairle Ógra agus le páirtithe eile leasmhara faoi láthair leis an tionchar is fearr a chinntiú don bhuiséad seo. Táthar ag súil leis go n-áireofar air seo tacaíocht do phoist atá ríthábhachtach do chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí nua chomh maith le hobair ullmhúcháin lena chinntiú go dtabharfar an polasaí isteach go mín.
- (v) Decisions have yet to be finalised on how the £1.1m will be allocated and my officials are currently in discussion with ELBs, the Youth Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum impact of this budget. This is expected to include support of posts which are critical to the implementation of the new policy as well as preparation work to ensure a smooth introduction.

Funding for Community Relations

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education where the remaining £1.1 million of funding for community relations in schools is to be allocated.

(AQW 8000/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) I am committed to encompassing a wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, and to ensuring that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. With this aim in mind, I plan to bring forward a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy later this year.

To facilitate this I am investing over £200 million for Special Educational Needs, £8m for Supporting Newcomer Pupils, £1.5m for the Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by the GAA and IFA and £28m for youth services to contribute to the wider approach to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. An additional £90 has also been made available per primary pupil, which is an increase of 3.1% compared to last year.

Training and capacity-building of the education workforce will be a key aspect of the new policy.

- (ii) Part (i): It is anticipated that the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will be subject to public consultation later this year with implementation in 2011.

Part (ii): The majority of the 2010/11 allocation of £1.11m for community relations funding (84.8%) will be used for preparing for the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy.

Part (iii): The core funding programme terminated on 31 March 2010 and the groups were informed of this in August 2009. However, provision was made to cover salary costs for all of the core funded organisations during April and May 2010 to facilitate the winding-down of programmes (a total allocation of £168,524). Dependency upon external organisations was identified as a weakness within the community relations policy and I have already indicated my intention to move away from this approach by embedding this work within educational establishments by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required. How this will be taken forward will form part of the implementation plan and no decisions have yet been taken on how expertise will be sourced.

- (iii) To ensure that community relations work and its implementation within schools is fully sustainable, I am seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings through the provision of a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required, and to redress the dependency upon external organisations which was identified as a weakness within the current community relations policy. Capacity-building is a key aspect to achieving this objective, and consequently is reflected in the CRED policy. The Department of Education is working closely with the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council in order to draw up plans for the implementation of the policy.
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- (v) Tá cinntí le deimhniú go fóill maidir leis an dóigh a leithdháilfear an £1.1 milliún agus tá mo chuid feidhmeannach i mbun plé leis na ELBanna, leis an Chomhairle Ógra agus le páirtithe eile leasmhara faoi láthair leis an tionchar is fearr a chinntiú don bhuiséad seo. Táthar ag súil leis go n-áireofar air seo tacaíocht do phoist atá ríthábhachtach do chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí nua chomh maith le hobair ullmhúcháin lena chinntiú go dtabharfar an polasaí isteach go mín.
- (v) Decisions have yet to be finalised on how the £1.1m will be allocated and my officials are currently in discussion with ELBs, the Youth Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum impact of this budget. This is expected to include support of posts which are critical to the implementation of the new policy as well as preparation work to ensure a smooth introduction.

Suspended Teachers

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of teachers who have been suspended on (a) full pay; and (b) part pay in each of the last five years; and (ii) the total of the (a)

salaries; (b) national insurance; and (c) pension contributions paid in respect of these employees during their period of suspension, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 8047/10)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas sa tábla thíos: -

Information provided in table below: -

	05/06		06/07		07/08		08/09		09/10	
	No	Costs £	No	Costs £	No	Costs £	No	Costs £	No	Costs £
BELB	4	87,621.03	6	91,318.21	11	135,303.02	13	255,918.23	7	165,287.85
WELB	6	149,203.50	7	107,093.70	4	65,902.50	6	73,577.21	13	189,823.42
NEELB	7	47,913.97	2	33,035.31	3	47,122.89	1	39,151.42	5	31,788.69
SEELB	3	39,968.05	4	57,125.82	3	27,454.48	2	26,237.27	4	60,813.71
SELB	3	62,190.95	3	56,498.18	9	253,878.63	8	260,517.72	13	182,705.27

Appointment of New Members to the South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to appoint new members to the South Eastern Education and Library Board in place of the Commissioners appointed under Direct-Rule.

(AQW 8198/10)

Minister of Education: I am moving towards the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority and look forward to all parties supporting that change. I do not believe that Boards are the appropriate model for the efficient and effective delivery of education services.

Ag an phointe seo, níl sé beartaithe agam na Coimisinéirí a athrú ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt nó ní bheadh sé ceart cur isteach ar an chóras ag an am seo agus muid ag iarraidh struchtúir agus próisis níos cuíchóirithe bheith ann.

At this point I have no plans to replace the Commissioners on the South Eastern Education and Library Board as it would be wrong to disrupt the system at this time when our focus must be on having more streamlined structures and processes.

Southern Education and Library Board: Administration and Management Savings

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education to provide a breakdown of the savings made by the Southern Education and Library Board in relation to administration and management in each of the last two years.

(AQW 8211/10)

Minister of Education: Níl fail ar an eolas san fhormaid a iarradh agus níorbh fhéidir é a chur ar fail ach ar chostas díréireach.

Information is not available in the format requested and could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

Senior Management Bonuses

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Education to detail the bonuses received by senior management in each Education and Library Board in the last ten years.

(AQW 8253/10)

Minister of Education: The Executive decided in September 2009 that senior public sector officials here should not be awarded bonuses in respect of the 2008/09 reporting year unless there is a clear contractual commitment to do so. DFP have further advised that where the bonuses (in the case of

the DE senior remits they relate to performance related pay) are found to be contractual it must be ascertained whether there is a contractual obligation to a specific amount or percentage.

The Department is conscious of the need to bring the pay remit process to a conclusion as soon as possible and are seeking to obtain clarity on the complex outstanding matters in order to satisfy pay policy requirements and ensure that staff can receive the pay to which they are entitled under that policy.

Tá córas pá i gcoibhneas le feidhmíocht i bhfeidhm don ardbhainistíocht sna Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne agus socraítear arduithe pá bunaithe ar fheidhmíocht, ar athluacháil agus ar dhul chun cinn tríd an scála pá.

The Education and Library Boards operate a performance related pay (PRP) system for their senior management and pay uplifts are determined as a result of performance; revalorisation and progression through the pay scale.

The Chief Executives of the ELBs have confirmed the payments awarded to senior management in the last ten years and these are outlined below.

With regard to 2009/10 financial year, the pay remits are still being considered by my Department in light of public sector pay policy.

BELB

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Executive	0-5	5-10	10-15	5-10	-	0-5	-	5-10	5-10	-
Chief Finance Officer	0-5	0-5	5-10	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	5-10	-
Chief Administrative Officer	0-5	0-5	10-15	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Senior Education Officer	0-5	0-5	10-15	0-5	0-5	0-5	-	-	0-5	-
Director RTU	0-5	0-5	5-10	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Chief Librarian	0-5	0-5	10-15	0-5	0-5	0-5	-	-	0-5	-
Director PPP	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-	-
Director of PQH	0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chief Librarian	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	-
Senior Education Officer	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	-

NEELB

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Executive	-	-	-	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	-
Senior Education Officer	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Administrative Officer	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Chief Finance Officer	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	0-5	-
Director of Corporate & Library Services	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Chief Librarian	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-

SEELB

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Executive	0-5	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	-
Chief Finance Officer	0-5	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	-
Chief Legal Adviser	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Chief Librarian	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Chief Administrative Officer	0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	-
Senior Education Officer 1	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Senior Education Officer 2	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-	0-5	-
ESAIT Finance (CFO Scale)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-

SELB

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Executive	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Head of Corporate Services	0-5k	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Chief Librarian	0-5	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-	-
Chief Architect/ Head of Property Services	0-5	-	-	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Head of Education Services	0-5	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	-

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Administrative Officer	0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Head of Children & Young People Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-
Inter Board Services Manager 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	-
Inter Board Services Manager 2	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-

WELB

	2000/01 (000s)	2002/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Chief Executive	-	-	-	5-10	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Chief Finance Officer	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	-
Director of Services – C2K	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Central Support Manager	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Chief Administrative Officer	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Head of Libraries & Corporate Services	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	5-10	-
Head of Teaching, Learning, Curriculum & Youth Services	-	-	-	0-5	5-10	0-5	0-5	0-5	5-10	-

Education and Skills Authority

Mr P Givan asked the Minister of Education when the Education and Skills Authority will release funding to allow the Education and Library Boards to streamline their services and provide shared services to enable efficiency savings, thus protecting front-line services, such as, special needs provision.

(AQW 8310/10)

Minister of Education: Tá bunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna fós mar phríomhthosaíocht do mo Roinn agus creidim nach dtugann na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne samhail oiriúnach le haghaidh soláthar éifeachtach agus éifeactúil na seirbhísí oideachais.

The creation of the Education and Skills Authority remains a key priority for my Department as I do not believe that the Education and Library Boards provide the appropriate model for the effective and efficient delivery of education services. I remain committed to the establishment of ESA and look forward to Executive support in the implementation of plans for its establishment. In the interim, the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) is working with the existing organisations

to develop and implement a Convergence Delivery Plan which will streamline management and administration across a range of services. This will lead to a reduction in posts and it is intended that affected staff will be released through Voluntary Severance, subject to the agreement of the Education and Library Boards and the Department. All expenditure in this area will be subject to the completion of a business case approval process. I am ready to bring forward the Education and Skills Authority and look forward to all parties supporting it, including the Member's own.

Department Underspend

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education if there has been any underspend in her Department, in this financial year to date.

(AQW 8322/10)

Minister of Education: Faoi láthair, tá an Roinn Oideachais ag súil le lánchaiteachas i gcoinne an bhuiséid sa bhliain airgeadais 2010-11. Déantar monatóireacht ghníomhach ar bhuiséid ar feadh na bliana le huas-úsáid na n-acmhainní atá ar fáil a chinntiú.

The Department of Education is currently anticipating full spend against budget during the 2010-11 financial year. Budgets are actively monitored throughout the year to ensure maximum use of available resources.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Education to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by her Department in the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8345/10)

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas a iarradh ar fáil go réidh agus ní fhéadfaí é a fháil ach ar chostas díréireach.

The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education what residential accommodation or alternative arrangements have been offered to pupils at the Middletown Autism Centre since it became operational.

(AQW 8356/10)

Minister of Education: Ní thairgeann Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin lóistín do dhaltaí scoile faoi láthair.

Middletown Centre for Autism does not currently offer any residential accommodation to school pupils.

Four key services are to be delivered by the Centre; a Training and Advisory Service, Autism Research and Information Service, Educational Assessment Service and a Learning Support Service. The Training and Advisory Service began in December 2007, closely followed by its Research and Information Service. It is planned that the remaining two services to be delivered by the Centre are to be phased in alongside the completion of the building project at the Centre. Residential facilities will only be offered when delivery of the two remaining services commences at the Centre. The North/South Ministerial Council joint communiqué in December 2009 stated that "the Ministers of Education and Science and the Minister for Education propose to prepare an updated phased multi-annual plan for the future development of the Centre, in conjunction with the Board and taking account of international best practice and the development of autism services on the island of Ireland since the Centre was established." In light of this announcement, the Centre has been developing its provision of advice and guidance to be delivered prior to the completion of the building project.

Advice and guidance is being offered by the Centre to children and young people, previously referred to the ASD Advisory Services in the north, who despite focused first level intervention continue to experience difficulties within their educational setting. The Centre's staff will further assess and identify the strengths and needs of children and young people referred to the Centre and make recommendations for the implementation of relevant strategies. This process will be carried out in partnership with families and the existing first level services.

Capital Expenditure

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how much capital expenditure her Department (i) allocated; and (ii) spent on average per primary level and secondary level pupil in the (a) controlled sector; (b) maintained sector; (c) integrated sector; and (d) Irish medium sector since May 2007. **(AQW 8376/10)**

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas a iarradh ar fáil san fhormaid a iarradh agus ní fhéadfaí é a chur ar fáil ach ar chostas díréireach.

The information sought is not available in the format requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

However, information is available in respect of major capital works in the last three financial years, ie from April 2007 to March 2010, and is set out in the tables below.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sector	Major Works Capital Spend 2007/08-2009/10 £s	Average Capital Spend Per Pupil 2007/08-2009/10 £s
Controlled	53,291,000	736
Maintained	20,499,000	284
Integrated	1,617,000	214
Irish Medium	124,000	64

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sector	Major Works Capital Spend 2007/08-2009/10 £s	Average Capital Spend Per Pupil 2007/08-2009/10 £s
Controlled	100,397,000	2,117
Maintained	51,638,000	1,264
Integrated	11,969,000	1,032
Irish Medium	907,000	1,722

Other non-major capital work expenditure (eg for minor works, schools transport etc) by my Department in the last three financial years totals £357,807,000. It is not possible to disaggregate this figure as requested except at a disproportionate cost.

Staff Performance Bonuses

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education to detail the amount and number of performance bonuses paid to staff in all organisations that administer education in (i) 2007/08; (ii) 2008/09; and (iii) 2009/10. **(AQW 8378/10)**

Minister of Education: As you may be aware the Executive decided in September 2009 that senior public sector officials here should not be awarded bonuses for performance in the 2008/09 reporting year (2009/10 financial year) unless there is a clear contractual commitment to do so. DFP have further advised that where the bonuses are found to be contractual it must be ascertained whether there is a contractual obligation to a specific amount or percentage.

The Department is conscious of the need to bring the pay remit process to a conclusion as soon as possible and are seeking to obtain clarity on the complex outstanding matters in order to satisfy pay policy requirements and ensure that staff can receive the pay to which they are entitled under that policy.

Foilsítear an luach saothair a fhaigheann feidhmeannaigh shinsearacha i mo Roinn de ghnáth i gCuntais Acmhainní na Roinne, a bhfuil fáil orthu ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne. I dtaca leis na comhlachtaí éagsúla ar neamhchomaoin a riarann oideachas, tá córas pá i gcoibhneas le feidhmíocht i bhfeidhm don ardbhainistíocht sna Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, i gComhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil agus sa Chomhairle Curaclaim, Scrúdúcháin agus Measúnaithe agus socraítear arduithe pá bunaithe ar fheidhmíocht, ar athluacháil agus ar dhul chun cinn tríd an scála pá.

The remuneration of senior officials in my Department is routinely published in the Departmental Resource Accounts, which are available on the Department's website. With regard to the various arms length bodies that administer education, the Education and Library Boards; CCMS and CCEA operate performance related pay (PRP) systems for their senior management and pay uplifts are determined as a result of performance; revalorisation and progression through the pay scale.

The Chief Executives of these organisations have confirmed the payments awarded to senior management in the last three years and these are outlined below.

Organisation	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	No.	Amount 000s	No.	Amount 000s	No.	Amount 000s
BELB	7	<50*	8	<65*	DE to approve	
NEELB	5	<45*	5	<40*	DE to approve	
SEELB	4	<20*	8	<40*	DE to approve	
SELB	6	<30*	6	<30*	DE to approve	
WELB	7	<65*	7	<55*	DE to approve	
CCMS	4	11	4	12	DE to approve	
Staff Commission	0	0	0	0	0	0
CCEA	53	201	53	184	DE to approve	

* The ELB performance bonuses are published in £5k bands

For the 2009/10 financial year senior pay remits for the Education & Library Boards; CCMS and CCEA are still being considered by my Department in light of public sector pay policy.

Education and Skills Authority

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education for an update on the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 8386/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé dá chomhghleacaí páirtí Naomi Long (AQW 6227/10), a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 23 Aibreán 2010. Tá an staid reatha amhlaidh go fóill.

I refer the Member to the answer I gave to his party colleague Naomi Long (AQW 6227/10), published in the Official Report on 23 April 2010. This remains the current position.

South Eastern Education and Library Board: Running Costs

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the running costs of the South Eastern Education and Library Board in 2005/06 financial year, prior to the appointment of the Commissioners to the Board; and (ii) the running costs of the South Eastern Education and Library Board in (a) 2006/07; (b) 2007/08; (c) 2008/09; (d) 2009/10; and (e) 2010/11 financial year to date. **(AQW 8392/10)**

Minister of Education: Leagtar amach sa tábla thíos costais iomlána reatha Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt do na blianta airgeadais 2005-06 go dtí 2009-10. Léiríonn na figiúirí seo caiteachas athfhillteach de réir mar atá leagtha amach i gCuntais Deiridh Iniúchta Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt.

The total running costs of the South Eastern Education and Library Board for the financial years 2005-06 to 2009-10 are set out in the table below. These figures reflect recurrent expenditure as detailed in the Final Audited Accounts of the South Eastern Education and Library Board. Year to date figures for 2010-11, representing the first quarter of the financial year are not yet available.

SEELB RUNNING COSTS 2005-2010

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£,000s				
Schools	234,166	234,991	248,302	253,431	263,975
Youth	4,291	4,120	4,724	5,138	4,987
Total DE Recurrent Expenditure	238,457	239,111	253,026	258,569	268,962

Notes:

1. Data in respect of 2009-10 reflects unaudited figures.
2. Year to date figures (2010-11) representing the first quarter of the financial year are not yet available.
3. Figures shown exclude non-cash costs e.g.: depreciation on assets.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education how much funding the Middletown Autism Centre has received in each of the last five years; and how many young people have attended the centre. **(AQW 8417/10)**

Minister of Education: Since its establishment in March 2007, the Middletown Centre for Autism has been allocated the following funding by my Department:

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
£210,282.23	£435,136.37	£641,642.50	£160,000.00 (To end of June 2010)

Tá Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin á chómhaoiniú ar bhonn 50/50 ag an Roinn Oideachais agus ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna sa deisceart.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is funded jointly on a 50/50 basis by the Department of Education and the Department for Education and Skills in the south.

Four key services are to be delivered by the Centre; a Training and Advisory Service, a Research and Information Service, Educational Assessment Service and a Learning Support Service. The services proposed for the Centre are being phased in order to coincide with the completion of the building refurbishment programme.

The Training and Advisory Service began in December 2007, closely followed by its Research and Information Service. To date, training has been delivered to over 3,000 professionals and over 300 parents. A specialist programme of training for parents in the north commenced on 13 April 2010 and ran for five weeks in each of five locations.

The Centre's Research and Information Service has completed research bulletins covering issues such as diet and autism and also the subject of transitions for those on the Autism Spectrum. A further research bulletin in relation to educational assessment is to be published shortly.

The remaining two services to be delivered by the Centre are a Learning Support Service and an Educational Assessment Service. It was planned that these services would be commenced alongside the completion of the building project at the Centre.

The North/South Ministerial Council joint communiqué in December 2009 stated that "the Ministers of Education and Science and the Minister for Education propose to prepare an updated phased multi-annual plan for the future development of the Centre, in conjunction with the Board and taking account of international best practice and the development of autism services on the island of Ireland since the Centre was established." In light of this announcement, the Centre has been developing its provision of advice and guidance to be delivered prior to the completion of the building project.

Advice and guidance is being offered by the Centre to children and young people previously referred to the ASD Advisory Services in the north who despite focused first level intervention continue to experience difficulties within their educational setting. The Centre's staff will further assess and identify the strengths and needs of children and young people referred to the Centre and make recommendations for the implementation of relevant strategies. This process will be carried out in partnership with families and the existing first level services.

The provision of advice and guidance will provide trans-disciplinary assessments and support to schools and families in the implementation of a specialist education plan developed from a comprehensive learning support plan. The model of advice and guidance provision will operate on a rolling basis. Two young people, referred by the Interboard Autistic Spectrum Disorder Group, are currently receiving such advice and guidance from the Centre.

Education and Library Boards: Subsidised Summer Schemes

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Education whether the Western Education and Library Board or any other Education and Library Board provides a subsidised summer scheme for its employees; and if so, to detail the level of subsidy provided.

(AQW 8440/10)

Minister of Education: I have been advised that the Western Education and Library Board, in partnership with the Housing Executive and Omagh District Council contribute to a summer scheme facilitated by NIPSA. The contribution from WELB for 2010-11 was £1800.

With regard to the rest of the Education and Library Boards I can confirm that none of them provide any subsidized summer schemes for their employees.

Department for Employment and Learning

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years; (ii)

any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8423/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The attached table provides detail of contracts in excess of 12 months' duration and £1 million in value awarded by the Department for Employment and Learning during the last ten years, based on the records readily available from the period.

(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised
Learning & Skills Development Agency 2003-05	N/A	N/A	N/A
Learning & Skills Development Agency 2005-07	N/A	N/A	N/A
Learning & Skills Development Agency 2008-09	Extended from Aug 2009 - July 2010	No break clause activated, however organisation was given 1 year notice of termination in May 2009	N/A
Workers' Educational Association 2007-08	N/A	N/A	N/A
Springvale Community Outreach Initiative 2003-07	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employment and Adapt Community Initiative Programme. 1994-99	N/A	Yes	N/A
EQUAL Community Initiative Programme. 2000-06	N/A	Yes	N/A
Workforce Training Services Ltd. 1996-2008	N/A	N/A	N/A
(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised

(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised
Rapid Advancement Programme. 2002-04	N/A	Yes	N/A
Premiere Graduate Management Development Programme. 2004-06	Extended from Aug 03 – July 04	Yes	N/A
'INTRO' Entry-to-Management Programme 2009–11	N/A	Yes	N/A
New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds and New Deal 25+ programmes. 2003-08	2006 – 12 month extension 2007- 12 month extension 2008 - 6 month extension	Yes	1
New Deal for Lone Parents / New Deal for Partners. 2003-08	2006 – 12 month extension 2007- 12 month extension 2008 - 6 month extension	Yes	N/A
New Deal Self-Employment. 2003-08	2006 – 12 month extension 2007- 12 month extension 2008 - 6 month extension	Yes	N/A
New Deal Core Gateway. 2003-08	2006 – 12 month extension 2007- 12 month extension 2008 - 6 month extension	Yes	N/A

(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised
New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds and New Deal 25+ programmes (Foyle). 2003-11	As above plus 2008 – 6 month extension 2009 - 12 month extension 2010 - 12 month extension	Yes	N/A
New Deal Core Gateway (Foyle). 2003-11	As above plus 2008 – 6 month extension 2009 - 12 month extension 2010 - 12 month extension	Yes	N/A
Steps to Work. 2008-11	N/A	Yes	N/A
Progress2Work. 2005-11	2007 – 12 month extension 2008 – 24 month extension 2010 – 12 month extension	Yes	N/A
Jobskills '99 – recontracted in 2003. 1999-2007	Extension of contract from 1 April – 2 September 2007	Yes	N/A
Training for Success 2007-11	Extension of contract from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011	Yes	3
DEL's IT line of Business Applications (LoBA) Contract with Fujitsu Services Ltd. 2009-12	N/A	Yes	N/A
Worktrack 2003	N/K	Yes	N/A

(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised
(i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; AND (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years	(ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years	(iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts	(iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised
Work Preparation Programme 2008-11	N/A	Yes	N/A
Employment Support Programme 2004-06	N/A	No	N/A
Employment Support Programme 2007-09	N/A	Yes	N/A
Transitional Employment Programme 2003-06	N/A	Yes	N/A
Job Assist Centres 2003-06	Extended to Apr 07	Yes	N/A
Job Assist Centres Derry 2003-06	Extended to Apr 07	Yes	N/A
Labour Market Intermediary Service 2004 -06	Extended to Mar 07	Yes	N/A
Local Intermediary Service (LEMIS) 2007-10	Single tender action for Apr 10 – Mar 11 (no extension possible)	Yes	N/A

Department of the Environment

Planning Applications: Consideration of Economic Factors

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration his Department and the Planning Service give to economic factors, including job retention and job creation, when determining planning applications.

(AQW 8246/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): There are many material considerations that may be relevant in the determination of a planning application and these will vary depending on the specific circumstances of each case. Economic considerations including job retention, job creation and the wider benefits to the regional or local economy are material planning considerations. These are matters for my Department to consider as part of the assessment and determination of a planning application where relevant.

The weight to be attributed to such economic impacts is a matter for the decision maker based on the specifics of each case and must be balanced against other considerations.

Quarries

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of the Environment how many (a) rock; (b) limestone; (c) shale; and (d) sand and gravel quarries there are in Northern Ireland; and (ii) to detail the training Planning Service staff receive to ensure they have the qualifications and experience to understand the technical differences between the quarries they inspect for compliance with planning consent.

(AQW 8269/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Planning Service does not hold information on the number of different mineral quarries there are in Northern Ireland. The Member may wish to refer her question to the DETI Minister or search the relevant DETI, Minerals Branch source on the attached link: <http://www.deti.gov.uk/deti-energy-index/minerals-and-petroleum/annual-mineral-statement.htm>.

Planning Service staff currently involved in processing mineral applications have either an academic and professional qualification in planning or a technical qualification in a related subject. Staff have access to specialist mineral planning guidance through the Royal Town Planning Institute or the Irish Planning Institute.

Specialist training in relation to quarry operations has been undertaken in conjunction with the Quarry Products Association for Northern Ireland.

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment to list (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration; and (b) £1 million in value entered into by his Department in the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts, in each of the last ten years; (iii) whether there are break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8421/10)

Minister of the Environment: Details of the contracts procured by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) on behalf of my Department since CPD was established on 1 April 2002, and which are in excess £1m or more in value and more than 12 months in duration, are included in the table below. Information on contracts awarded prior to 2002 by CPD could only be obtained in part and at disproportionate cost. The table also includes contracts awarded directly by my Department without the involvement of CPD.

(i) Contracts in excess of 12 months duration and in excess of £1 million	(ii) Any year- on year over runs in contract	(iii) Any break clauses attached to the contract	(iv) Break clause has been exercised
Advertising services and associated activity to promote road safety in NI (3 contracts – awarded 1999/00, 2005/06 and 2010/11)	No	Yes	No
Road Safety Education Materials for Primary and post Primary Schools	No	Yes	No
Booking Services Contract	2	No	No
Northern Ireland Vehicle Licensing System (NIVIS)	2	Yes	No
Theory Test	No	Yes	No
MOT2	No	Yes	No
ePIC Project	No	Yes	No
All-Ireland Fridge Disposal Contract	No	Yes	No
arc21 Dry Material Recovery Facilities for arc21 waste	No	Yes	No
Management of Disposal of Fridges and Freezers	No	Yes	No
Biodiversity & Conservation Biology Research Services	No	Yes	No
Management of Computer network	No	Yes	No
Cross Border Waste Awareness Media Campaign	No	Yes	No
EHS Site Maintenance	No	Yes	No

Department of Finance and Personnel

Hospitality

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent on hospitality by each Government Department and its agencies in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7722/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): The table below sets out the total spent on hospitality by each department and its agencies in each of the last three years:

Department	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
DARD	£55,931	£74,991	*£80,072
DCAL	£43,473	£64,452	£44,930
DE	£88,877	£74,495	£56,883
DEL	£35,455	£45,356	**£62,970
DETI	£17,026	£18,777	£19,868
DFP	£205,000	£209,000	£91,000
DHSSPS	£137,400	£196,700	£104,800
DoE	£124,238	£121,996	£102,009
DRD	£80,310	£55,695	£45,609
DSD***	£62,032	£129,483	£77,617
OFMDFM	£207,000	£238,000	£187,000
Total	£1,056,742	£1,228,945	£872,758

* Figures in respect of 2009/10 are provisional as resource accounts have not been finalised.

** It should be noted that expenditure in 2009-10 includes £10,382 that arose as a result of the resolution of disputed invoices for costs originating in 2007-08 (£3,122) and 2008-09 (£7,260).

*** The DSD figures include expenditure incurred by DSD in relation to services provided to DWP which is then recovered by DSD.

The Department of Justice came into existence on 12th April 2010. Details of payments on hospitality before that date are a matter for the previous department. Similar information to that requested is publicly available in Hansard in relation to the Northern Ireland Office (House of Commons reference: 26 June 2009: Column 1207W).

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Medical Negligence Claims

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the cost was to his Department of medical negligence claims in each Health and Social Care Trust, in the last financial year.
(AQW 1096/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The information requested has been set out in the table below.

COST OF MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE APRIL 2008-MARCH 2009

HSC Trust	No of Claims	Settlement	Third Party Legal Costs
Northern	102	£902,398	£927,381
Western	99	£1,275,000	£1,000,000
South Eastern	86	£5,314,977	£821,146
Southern	69	£1,157,149	£408,791
Belfast	184	£5,988,844	£1,982,729
NI Ambulance	3	£nil	£505

The above figures represent 0.61% of all the HSC Trusts' total operating costs for 2008/2009.

The Settlement figures in the table are payments made to Claimants by the Trusts. The Third Party Legal Cost figures are legal costs incurred by, or on behalf of, the Claimant which were reimbursed by the HSC Trusts. This figure also includes certain legal costs associated with the Trust's defence of the case.

It should be noted that the costs associated with a claim may not be paid out in the same financial year in which the claim is received.

Legal Action against Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of legal actions, including those settled out of court, taken against each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) the average time taken from commencement of the action to settlement; (iii) the cost of legal fees; and (iv) the total amount paid in settlements, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 1240/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is recorded below:

(i) the number of legal actions, including those settled out of court, taken against each Health and Social Care Trust:

NO. OF LEGAL ACTIONS (MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE)

Trust	Year				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast HSC*	178	174	173	130	184
Northern HSC*	72	58	86	63	102
NI Ambulance HSC	2	1	1	3	3
South Eastern HSC*	98	79	77	71	86
Southern HSC*	54	51	45	47	69
Western HSC*	59	75	52	59	99

* These HSC Trusts became operational from 1 April 2007 by merging the existing trusts. The merged Trusts are now referred to as 'Legacy Trusts'.

- (i) **Belfast HSC Trust merged:** Belfast City Hospital, Green Park Health Care, Mater Hospital, North & West Belfast, Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital, South & East Belfast HSST's
- (ii) **Northern HSC Trust merged:** Causeway Homefirst Community, United Hospitals HSST's

- (iii) **South Eastern HSC Trust merged:** Down Lisburn, Ulster Community & Hospitals HSST's (iv)
- (iii) **Southern HSCT merged:** Armagh & Dungannon, Craigavon Area Hospital, Craigavon & Banbridge Community, Newry & Mourne HSST's
- (v) **Western HSC Trust merged:** Altnagelvin Hospitals, Foyle, Sperrin Lakeland HSST.

No. of Legal Actions (Public Liability)**

Trust	Year			
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast HSC	13	17	17	21
Northern HSC	5	5	10	12
NI Ambulance HSC	0	2	0	3
South Eastern HSC	12	20	7	8
Southern HSC	2	8	2	0
Western HSC	14	22	16	3

** Figures pre 2005 are not available

(ii) the average time taken from commencement of the action to settlement:

The information requested is not available as it could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

(iii) the cost of legal fees:

COST OF THIRD PARTY LEGAL FEES (£000'S)

Trust	Year				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast HSC	556	1,538	975	1,328	1,983
Northern HSC	460	697	383	519	927
NI Ambulance HSC	3	26	2	0.21	0.51
South Eastern HSC	479	771	743	593	821
Southern HSC	2,705*	377*	4,193*	0.35	409
Western HSC	208	415	350	577	1,000

* The figures for Southern HSC Trust prior to 2007/08 represent the total amount paid in settlements and third party legal costs, as this information relates to legacy Trusts and is not held centrally within the Trust.

(iv) the total amount paid in settlements:

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID IN SETTLEMENT OF MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE CLAIMS (£000'S)

Trust	Year				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast HSC	1,504	1,103	3,180	5,094	5,989
Northern HSC	916	859	753	1,120	902
NI Ambulance HSC	0	0	0	7.25	0

Trust	Year				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
South Eastern HSC	404	1,950	499	1,479	5,315
Southern HSC	2,705*	377*	4,193*	0.5	1,157
Western HSC	544	1,425	1,210	589	1,275

* The figures for Southern HSC Trust prior to 2007/08 represent the total amount paid in settlements and third party legal costs, as this information relates to legacy Trusts and is not held centrally within the Trust.

** Figures pre 2005 are not available

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID IN SETTLEMENT OF PUBLIC LIABILITY CLAIMS (£000'S)**

Trust	Year			
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast HSC	11	30	81	36
Northern HSC	46	33	68	112
NI Ambulance HSC	0	308	0	1
South Eastern HSC	9	86	11	26
Southern HSC	7	25	53	14
Western HSC	23	22	37	30

Drugs issued to Patients

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1768/10, to detail the number of incidents where (i) the wrong drug has been issued to a patient; (ii) the wrong dose has been administered to a patient; and (iii) the wrong delivery method has been used to administer a drug to a patient, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2319/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below sets out the information requested, the data applies to all six Health and Social Care Trusts. Data for 2004/05 is not fully available.

Year	Wrong drug issued	Wrong dose administered	Wrong delivery method used to administer drug
2005/06	134	271	35
2006/07	133	248	28
2007/08	140	202	38
2008/09	161	231	27

The above figures reflect proportionately the most commonly prescribed drugs in the Northern Ireland Health Service such as insulin, antibiotics, analgesics and intravenous medicines.

It is important to note that the incidence of incorrectly issued, administered and delivered drugs is very low given that literally millions of prescriptions are dispensed to hundreds of thousands of patients annually throughout the Health Service.

A recent General Medical Council (GMC) report stressed that very few prescribing errors caused harm to patients because most were intercepted and corrected before reaching them. The intervention of nurses, senior doctors and, in particular, pharmacists was vital in picking up errors before impacting on patients

Medical Negligence Claims

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service of medical negligence claims for the last financial year.
(AQW 2597/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested has been set out in the table below.

COST OF MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE APRIL 2008-MARCH 2009

HSC Trust	No of Claims	Settlement	Third Party Legal Costs
Northern	102	£902,398	£927,381
Western	99	£1,275,000	£1,000,000
South Eastern	86	£5,314,977	£821,146
Southern	69	£1,157,149	£408,791
Belfast	184	£5,988,844	£1,982,729
NI Ambulance	3	£nil	£505

The above figures represent 0.61% of all the HSC Trusts' total operating costs for 2008/2009.

The Settlement figures in the table are payments made to Claimants by the Trusts. The Third Party Legal Cost figures are legal costs incurred by, or on behalf of, the Claimant which were reimbursed by the HSC Trusts. This figure also includes certain legal costs associated with the Trust's defence of the case.

It should be noted that the costs associated with a claim may not be paid out in the same financial year in which the claim is received.

Answers to Questions

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) when he expects to be in a position to respond to AQW 5682/10, AQW 4041/10, AQW 4479/10, and AQW 2319/10; and (ii) to detail the reason for the delay in answering these questions.
(AQW 6950/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Answers have now been provided for the following Assembly Questions, AQW 5682/10, AQW 4041/10 and AQW 4479/10.

Since May 2007, I have answered approximately 6000 written Assembly Questions, gathering information from across several HSC organisations. I can assure you that we always endeavour to answer questions as soon as the information becomes available.

Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy: The Law and Clinical Practice in Northern Ireland

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the revised 'Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy: The Law and Clinical Practice in Northern Ireland', (i) when the revised sections will be published for consultation; (ii) whether his Department will be open to receiving submissions on sections of the guidance, other than those sections on counselling and

conscientious objection; and (iii) what cost has been incurred as a result of the legal action taken against his Department for the publication of the guidance in March 2009.

(AQW 7582/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department will be issuing the revised Guidance for consultation during the week ending 23 July 2010.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek comments on the two revised sections of the Guidance, relating to conscientious objection and counselling. However, the Department will accept comments relating to the rest of the document where new evidence has emerged since the last public consultation on this Guidance.

The total legal costs incurred by my Department in relation to the publication of the Guidance in March 2009 have yet to be agreed.

Antrim Area Hospital Trolley Waits

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients who have had to wait on a trolley, until a bed became available, in the Antrim Area Hospital since the reconfiguration of accident and emergency services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7783/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Current HSC records note the delay associated with subsequent admission where a decision to admit to inpatient care has been made.

On this basis, since the reconfiguration of accident and emergency services, there were a total of 260 people waiting more than 2 hours in accident and emergency for admission to hospital.

Mid-Ulster Hospital Accident and Emergency Department: Job Advertisements

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many jobs were advertised by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for (a) doctors; (b) consultants; and (c) nurses, for the Mid-Ulster Hospital Accident and Emergency Department, in each of the last ten years; and (ii) whether each post was filled (a) permanently; or (b) temporarily.

(AQW 8082/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

(I) DOCTORS POSTS ADVERTISED FOR MID ULSTER A&E

Year	Posts advertised
2001/02	0
2002/03	3
2003/04	1
2004/05	2
2005/06	2
2006/07	0
2007/08	3
2008/09	1
2009/10	1

(b) No consultant posts were advertised for Mid Ulster A&E in the last 10 years.

- (c) Northern HSC Trust is unable to provide nursing posts advertised specifically for Mid-Ulster A&E in the last 10 years.
- (ii) Northern HSC Trust is unable to provide information on whether posts were filled permanently or temporarily.

Source: Northern Health & Social Care Trust

Storing Medical Records

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the annual cost to each Health and Social Care Trust of storing medical records.

(AQW 8355/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The identifiable costs associated with Records management by external providers, including retention and retrieval, by Trust are as follows:

Health and Social Care Trust	Total Identifiable Cost (£k)
Belfast	£549
Northern	£25.4
Southern	£82.3
South Eastern	£177.7
Western	£0
NIAS	£0.8

Different Trusts use different configurations of external provision dependent on their particular circumstances. Information on internal storage costs could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Different retention periods apply to different types of health records. Children's records are kept for 25 years, maternity records for 25 years, general patient records for 8 years and mental health records for 20 years. Depending on the organisation they have different arrangements for storing such files. For example maternity cases are usually stored in the hospital for a period of time and then sent to offsite storage.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the Cash Equivalent Transfer Values of all (i) senior employees; and (ii) directors in each Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2005/06; (b) 2006/07; (c) 2007/08; (d) 2008/09; and (e) 2009/10.

(AQW 8363/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Please see attachment. Information on CETVs is available from pension scheme records for all senior employees (including executive directors and functional directors operating at board level).

Complete information for 2005/06 is not available and information for 2006/07 for Southern Trust has been taken from financial accounts disclosures rather than the scheme records, as pension scheme data is not available.

As the information relates to personnel, no individual names or distinguishing information has been provided. Rather a range for each Trust has been provided.

HSC Trust	Year	Employees	Total	Lowest Value	Highest Value
		Total	CETV	£	£
BCH	2005/06	3	1,598,000	357,000	852,000
RGH	2005/06	7	2,085,000	80,000	680,000
Ulster	2005/06	10	3,193,000	69,000	525,000
Down/Lisburn	2005/06	*	0	0	0
S+E Belfast	2005/06	1*	492,000	492,000	492,000
N+W Belfast	2005/06	1*	940,000	940,000	940,000
Greenpark	2005/06	1*	280,000	280,000	280,000
Mater	2005/06	5	879,000	15,000	389,000
NIAS	2005/06	1*	170,000	170,000	170,000
Craigavon/Banbridge	2005/06	6	1,969,000	174,000	620,000
Craigavon	2005/06	2*	265,000	54,000	211,000
Newry/Mourne	2005/06	9	3,758,000	117,000	1,106,000
Causeway	2005/06	10	103,000	1,000	21,000
Homefirst	2005/06	8	2,749,000	209,000	690,000
Foyle	2005/06	1*	425,000	425,000	425,000
Sperrin Lakeland	2005/06	*	0	0	0
Armagh/Dungannon	2005/06	2*	888,000	175,000	713,000
Altnagelvin	2005/06	8*	2,968,000	235,000	468,000

* Only includes those whose consent to disclosure was not withheld which was lower than total no of senior executives

Claims for Medical Negligence by Age

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7595/10, in relation to the number of compensation claims for medical negligence (i) for the cases over 15 years old, to detail the number of years each case has been outstanding; (ii) for cases (a) between 5-10 years old; and (b) over 10 years old, how much has been paid out in legal fees by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 8454/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested has been set out in the tables below. This information has been provided by the Health & Social Care Board and Trusts.

(I)

	Total claims ongoing 15+ years	Breakdown by years ongoing
HSC Board	55*	1 case – 27 years 1 case – 21 years 1 case – 20 years 8 cases – 19 years 14 cases – 18 years 7 cases – 17 years 13 cases – 16 years 10 cases – 15 years
Belfast HSC Trust	4	3 cases – 15 years 1 case – 17 years

* In AQW 7595/10 this figure was recorded as 56. Belfast HSC Trust has since settled one case.

There was also one claim ongoing for more than 15 years recorded for the Southern HSC Trust in AQW 7595/10 – this case has now been closed.

(II)

	*Amount (£'s) paid in legal fees for Claims ongoing:		
	5-10 years	11-15 years	15+ years
HSC Board	81,159	140,595	233,459
Northern HSC Trust	143,619	5,450	0
Southern HSC Trust	102,890	63,336	0
Belfast HSC Trust	154,877	38,653	10,285
South Eastern HSC Trust	129,584	20,408	0
NI Ambulance HSC Trust	1,472	0	0
Western HSC Trust	204,184	49,843	0

*Fees paid for legal advice purchased from private legal practitioners (prior to the Directorate of Legal Services assuming sole responsibility for provision of legal advice to Health and Social Care organisations) are not included as this information is not available.

Bonfire Sites

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times fire crews were dispatched to bonfire sites during the period 1 May to 10 July, in each of the last five years; and the cost of dispatching these crews.

(AQW 8464/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table details the number of incidents which were attended by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and classified as bonfire incidents during the period 1 May to 10 July in each of the last 5 years.

Year	No of Bonfire Incidents	Cost of Bonfire Incidents (£)
2009	288	894,076
2008	276	822,681
2007	234	631,176
2006	271	696,425
2005	283	675,582

The costs recorded are estimates based on the average cost per mobilised incident.

Department of Justice

Job Offers to PSNI and Prison Service Applicants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each of the last five years, the number of job offers to (i) PSNI; and (ii) Prison Service applicants which have been withdrawn because the candidate failed a security check, broken down by job type and grade.

(AQW 8460/10)

Minister of Justice (Mr D Ford): The security checking of PSNI applicants 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, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

With regard to the Northern Ireland Prison Service, no job offers have been withdrawn due to the candidate having failed a security check. The process is such that an offer of employment is not made until the recruitment processes are complete. This includes a Counter Terrorist Check and an Access NI clearance.

Department for Regional Development

Director of Customer Services Delivery within NI Water

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) when the post of Director of Customer Services Delivery within NI Water was advertised; (ii) which companies received the advertisement; and (iii) to provide a copy of the advertisement.

(AQW 8092/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the post of Director of Customer Service Delivery was advertised in the Belfast Telegraph and The Sunday Times on 6 and 8 November 2009 respectively. It was also advertised on the recruitment website www.JobMarketNI.com on 6 November 2009. A copy of the advertisement is included below.

Northern Ireland Water, a Government owned company, is the sole provider of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland supplying over 800,000 domestic, agricultural, commercial and business customers. We have already committed to over £1 billion investment in improving water infrastructure and will increase this to over £3 billion within the next 10 years to keep pace with customer and regulatory requirements.

To meet these challenging demands and create a world-class operation we are reorganising and strengthening our management team and seeking two high calibre executives. Both posts command six figure remuneration packages.

Operations and Customer Service Director ref 801**The Role:**

- Manage the operational and customer service functions and deliver significant transformational change (service, efficiency, cost, and modernisation) and improvement in the way NI Water operates and services its customers
- Develop the efficient delivery of core services to customers with a focus on continuous improvement

The Person:

- Significant experience in the utilities sector or demonstrably similar
- Senior (director or head of department) level experience
- Proven track record in operational management or customer service at a senior level. (Experience in both is desirable)
- Has played a demonstrable and leading role in the management of significant change programmes/projects

Chief Information Officer ref 810**The Role:**

- To provide, develop and improve, at strategic and operational levels, the overall quality, timeliness, integrity, availability, security and accessibility of information at all levels within NIW
- Provide advice and guidance to the Chairman, the Board and Executive Team in all matters concerning Information Technology, Information Systems and information provision and associated services

The Person:

- Senior (director or head of department) level experience in an IT role
- Relevant experience in a large complex environment
- Gained within the utility sector or similar preferred
- Has played a demonstrable and leading role in the management of significant change programmes/projects
- Track record of managing large multiple projects and groups

More information and fuller job descriptions and person specifications can be found on www.jobmarketni.com. To apply please send a CV setting out how you meet the requirements including current package and job reference number before the closing date of Friday 27th November. For a confidential discussion please speak to our recruitment consultant Dr Forde May.

Forde May Consulting Ltd, Balmoral House, 77 Upper Lisburn Road, Belfast BT10 0GY. Phone: 028 9062 8877. Email: jobs@fordemayconsulting.com.

Northern Ireland Water welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants, irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, race, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants

Shortlisted candidates should be available to attend for interview in Belfast on 15th, 16th, 17th December. It may also be necessary to carry out on-line psychometric testing in advance of the interviews.

Board of NI Water: Salary and Expenses

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the salary and expenses paid to members of the Board of NI Water in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8286/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the salary and expenses paid to members of the Board of NIW in each of the last three years are as detailed in the table below. The Salaries and Expenses included for the Executive Directors are in respect of their roles as full time Directors of NIW and not for their membership of the Board. Executive Directors do not receive any additional payments for their Board Membership.

Board Members	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	Salary £	Expenses £	Salary £	Expenses £	Salary £	Expenses £
Chris Mellor – Chairman ^d	70,500	3,076	^a 159,167	^a 22,143	^a 91,215	^a 15,889
John Ballard – NED ^d	30,375	1,088	24,000	7,911	21,750	5,876
Ruth Thompson – NED ^d	26,167	633	24,750	3,994	21,750	3,691
Donald Price – NED ^d			12,000	0	20,250	0
Declan Gormley – NED ^d			12,000	71	23,250	22
Rose Hynes – NED ^d	4,728	0				
Katharine Bryan – Chief Executive ED	153,644	312	^b 118,056	0		
Laurence MacKenzie – Chief Executive ED					130,241	1,259
Ronan Larkin – ED	101,979	1,652	107,792	3,566	108,869	3,309
Phil Barker – ED	114,310	0	88,349	696		
George Butler – ED			35,907	^c 14,136	108,783	^c 19,209

Notes:

ED = Executive Director

NED = Non Executive Director

a These figures reflect the fact that for part of 2008/09 and part of 2009/10 the Chairman had undertaken a joint role as Chairman and Chief Executive within NIW.

b Includes payment of salary arrears of £80,843.50.

c Includes relocation expenses of £12,915 in 2008/09 and £17,828 in 2009/10.

d The Terms and Conditions of Appointment for the non executive members specify that they are not employees of either NIW or the Department for Regional Development and that nothing in their letters of appointment shall be construed as, or taken to create any contract of employment between themselves and NIW or the Department. Accordingly, members receive a fee rather than a salary.

Contracts Awarded to Deloitte by NI Water

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all contracts awarded to Deloitte in relation to NI Water since April 2007, including the nature of the contracts, the cost of each contract and the number of consultants and sub-contractors engaged.

(AQW 8471/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised that 14 contracts have been awarded to Deloitte in relation to Northern Ireland Water (NIW) since 1 April 2007. Table 1 sets out the number of contracts awarded by NIW to Deloitte since April 2007 and Table 2 details the number of contracts awarded by the Department to Deloitte in relation to NIW since April 2007. Each table contains information on the nature of the contracts, the cost and the number of consultants and sub-contractors engaged.

TABLE 1

CONTRACTS AWARDED TO DELOITTE BY NI WATER SINCE 1 APRIL 2007

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Forensic Accountancy Support & Expert Witness	NIW need to engage forensic accountancy support in the ongoing legal proceedings issued by Steria against NIW in support of the defence of those proceedings and in support of NIW's counterclaim against Steria. If the dispute goes to full trial the Forensic Accountant will be expected to act as an expert witness and give evidence to the court on that basis.	£250,000	4	No	No
Customer Hub 2009/10 Subject Matter Expert Provision	Accelerated maturity/ progression of the Customer Services functions within Service Performance, Customer Interface and Data Quality. Skills transfer in Root Cause Analysis, process design and mapping, Change Option development, appraisal/presentation and Risk Assessment and Mitigation.	£194,500	2	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Data Quality Implementation Team	In order to address Corporate Risk 11 [inaccurate, incomplete, insecure and unreliable data for decision making and reporting throughout the business] and NIW's "Legal Undertakings" to the regulator, a number of Data Quality Improvement projects were identified for immediate commencement. Allocation of external assistance to project teams will assist with mitigating against the risk of NIW failing to resolve "Corporate Risk 11" and failing to meet their "legal undertakings" within the allotted deadlines.	£119,250	2	No	No
Financial Model Scoping	Scoping and design of long term financial model which will enable the business to benefit from improved financial modelling, management forecasting, business planning, shareholder reporting and scenario modelling and submissions to the Utility Regulator in Regulatory Reviews - in particular PC13.	£100,000	3	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Internal Audit Annual Information Return End to End Reviews 2009	Staff Substitution as appropriate resources not available in-house. Purpose - to achieve better understanding of realistic confidence grade for Annual Information Return and management action plan to improve confidence grading.	£29,250	1	No	No
Information Management Scoping Study	Specialist knowledge required to undertake a scoping study to scope and plan a project that will develop the policies, controls and infrastructure required to implement good information management techniques.	£21,900	2	No	No
Secondment to Regulation & Business Performance Team	Staff substitute in Regulation and Business Performance team at time when team was absent a number of key positions. Worked on a project to establish a framework for ensuring that business improvement recommendations made by the Reporter in the course of their audits of NI Water Regulatory outputs could all be captured and assigned to business areas for implementation in a way that enabled verification of action.	£14,300	1	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Behavioural Competency Framework	Describe, implement and manage a clearly defined behavioural and competency framework for all grades within the new organisational structure which spans a diverse range of roles.	£12,400	1	No	No
Independent Review of Internal Audit Function	Relevant knowledge of best practice internal audit transferred to internal audit team as appropriate.	£9,980	1	No	No
Board Effectiveness Review	Under the Combined Code of Corporate Governance it is best practice for a Board to conduct a review of its effectiveness on an annual basis. External expert appointed to facilitate review.	£9,950	1	No	No
Corporate Resource Planning	Development of a succession planning strategy which identifies employees to fill critical roles in the short term to ensure business continuity; development of a talent management strategy which will identify high-potential employees who will become long-term successors, build internal bench-strength and retain the best talent within NI Water; building internal capability and thereby reducing the need to fill senior roles externally.	£7,500	1	No	No

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Forensic Support for Internal Investigation	Evidence to support ongoing Steria investigation. Transfer of forensic skill to the internal audit team.	£5,000	1	No	No
Total		£774,030			

Table 2

Contracts awarded by the Department for Regional Development to Deloitte in relation to NI Water since April 2007

Name of Contract	Description	Value of Contract	No. of Consultants	Sub Contractors Engaged	Single Tender Action
Independent Review Team Report	To provide the IRT with specialist knowledge of best practice public sector corporate governance arrangements.	£24,450	2	No	Yes
Assessment of NI Water Internal Audit Methodology	Appointed by DRD to support recommendation of IRT that the methodology used by NI Water Internal Audit should be independently validated.	£6,300	1	No	Yes
Total		£30,750			

Overall Total (DRD and NI Water)
£804,780

Department for Social Development

Contracts

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) all contracts in excess of (a) 12 months duration and; (b) £1 million entered into by his Department in each of the last ten years; (ii) any year on year over-runs in these contracts; (iii) whether there were break clauses attached to the contracts; and (iv) the number of break clauses that have been exercised.

(AQW 8343/10)

Minister for Social Development (Mr A Attwood): The information requested in respect of contracts over 12 months duration & worth in excess of £1m is set out below for each of the Department's Business Areas.

Social Security Agency

- Disability and Carers Support System (DACS) – contract issued in 2000;
- Post Office card account (POca) – contract issued in 2002;
- DSD Security Guarding – contracts issued in 2002 and 2009;
- State Pension Credit Application Front End – contract issued in 2003;
- SSA printed material & related services – contract issued in 2003;
- SSA giro reconciliation services – contract issued in 2004;
- SSA photocopiers refresh – contract awarded in 2005.

The 2002 security guarding contract included year on year overruns until a new contract was awarded in 2009; and there was a seven month extension/over-run at the end of the cheque reconciliation contract from April to October 2008. While all but the State Pension Credit contract contained break clauses, none were exercised in the last 10 years.

Child Maintenance & Enforcement Division

In 2005, the then Child Support Agency issued a Facilities Management contract. There have been no year on year over-runs and while the contract had a break clause included, this has never been exercised.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The list below details all contracts entered into by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last 10 years by programme category:-

2000

- 6 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x Grounds Maintenance schemes

2001

- 10 x Multi element scheme
- 1 x External cyclical maintenance scheme

2002

- 15 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x Heating replacement scheme
- 1 x District heating replacement scheme
- 2 x External cyclical maintenance schemes
- 2 x Environmental Improvement schemes

2003

- 14 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x External cyclical maintenance scheme
- 3 x Measured Term Repair Contracts

2004

- 22 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x External cyclical maintenance scheme
- 9 x Grounds Maintenance schemes
- 8 x Measured Term Repair Contracts

2005

- 19 x Multi element schemes
- 2 x Environmental Improvement schemes
- 1 x Special scheme

2006

- 17 x Multi element schemes
- 2 x Grounds Maintenance schemes
- 1 x Special scheme
- 1 x Special revenue scheme
- 1 x External cyclical maintenance scheme
- 3 x Environmental Improvement schemes

2007

- 14 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x Environmental Improvement scheme
- 1 x Special scheme

2008

- 11 x Multi element schemes
- 1 x Revenue replacement/ external schemes
- 1 x Structurally defect stock

2009

- 2 x Heating installations
- 1 x Environmental Improvement scheme
- 2 x Warm Homes
- 1 x Rathcoole Multi element

Eleven of these contracts had year on year over-runs; all planned schemes have “determination” clauses (which provide for the effective termination of the employment of the contractor/employer) and all term contracts have termination clauses. Four of these contracts were automatically determined due to the insolvency of the Contractors.

Urban Regeneration & Community Development Group

The list below details the contracts entered into by the Group within the last 10 years by programme category.

Nature & No. of Contracts	Years when awarded
Peace III projects - 7 contracts	2008(4); 2009(2); 2010(1)

Nature & No. of Contracts	Years when awarded
Building/refurbishment contracts - 18 contracts	2000 (1); 2001 (1); 2003 (2); 2007 (1)
(including 4 x Modernisation Fund)	2007 (2); 2008 (2); 2009 (8); 2010 (1)
Environmental Improvement schemes - 4 contracts	2006 (1); 2007 (1); 2008 (1); 2009 (1)
Public Realm schemes - 8 contracts	2004(1); 2007 (1); 2008 (2); 2009 (3); 2010 (1)
Regional Infrastructural programmes - 9 contracts	2003 (1); 2004 (1); 2005 (2); 2007(3); 2008 (1) 2009 (1)
Others e.g. framework agreement, community volunteering project etc. - 5 contracts	2003 (1); 2006 (2); 2007 (2)

There were no year-on-year over-runs on any of the 51 contracts; and, while 16 of the 51 contained break clauses (primarily the Regional Infrastructure and Modernisation Fund contracts), none were exercised.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 10 September 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Rioting Over the Twelfth of July Period

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many referrals were received by Social Services from the PSNI in relation to juveniles charged in connection with rioting over the Twelfth of July period.

(AQW 1/11)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The information requested is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Acute Neurological Service Unit in the Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many beds are currently available within the acute neurological service unit in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; and how many of these beds will be available under the new Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Plan due to take effect from October 2010.

(AQW 16/11)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 23 available beds in the acute neurological service unit within the Royal Victoria Hospital and this was also the average number of beds available during 2009/10.

The Belfast HSC Trust plans to reduce the number of available beds to 15 from October 2010 and bring the neurology service in line with comparable peers in other parts of the UK. The reduction in beds is being planned in parallel with an ongoing modernisation programme within the neurology service.

This programme includes a number of workstreams to review current neurology services and patient pathway models and includes a review of bed utilisation. The aim of the modernisation programme is to develop a more efficient and responsive service with reduced length of inpatient stays that will enable the same level of inpatient activity to be provided with a reduced number of beds.

Department for Regional Development

Investigation into NI Water

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has set aside for salaries and secretariat costs in relation to the investigation into NI Water by Sir Jon Shortridge.

(AQW 15/11)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): This matter is being dealt with by the office of the Head of the Civil Service. They have advised that any civil service staff costs arising from this investigation will be met from within existing resources and no budget has been set aside for this purpose.

Appointments to the Board of NI Water

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he consulted the Public Appointments Commission in relation to the appointments to the Board of NI Water in June 2010.

(AQW 34/11)

Minister for Regional Development: My officials consulted with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI) and secured her written agreement to an emergency appointments process being run as a deviation from the CPANI Code, subject to “a demonstrable element of independent participation” and conditional on the appointments being short-term in nature.

Budget Allocation for Cycling

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the budget allocation for cycling in (i) each Roads Service division; and (ii) each constituency for the (a) 2008/09; (b) 2009/10; (c) 2010/11; and (d) 2011/12 financial year.

(AQW 49/11)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service aims to provide safer roads for the vulnerable road users, including cyclists, utilising a range of measures that include road safety engineering, traffic calming and enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network.

Roads Service does not maintain figures for the provision of cycling measures on a constituency basis. However, details of the budget allocations for the provision of these measures, in each Roads Service Division, are shown in the table below:

Measures to provide safer roads for vulnerable road users			
Division	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
East	£575,087	£451,926	£8,000
North	£258,030	£265,442	£65,000
South	£430,775	£125,294	£0
West	£95,835	£138,532	£55,000
Total	£1,359,726	£981,193	£128,000

There has been a reduction in the 2010/11 budget allocation for cycling measures due to a reduction in the allocation for Local Transport and Safety Measures (LTSM's). However, this is largely in line with the planned level of expenditure arising from Budget 2008.

In addition to the capital investment in cycling measures by Roads Service, my Department also promotes the use of sustainable modes of transport, including cycling, through its Travelwise initiative. Travelwise expenditure during the period requested for the annual Bike Week campaigns, which related solely to the promotion of cycling, is shown in the following table:

Years	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Travelwise expenditure during the annual Bike Week campaigns	£39,700	£42,500	£69,500 (estimated)

Unfortunately, allocations are not yet set for 2011/12 and as such I am, at present, unable to provide figures for the next financial year.

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.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Child Poverty

In Bound Volume 49, page WA58, replace the answer to question (AQW 4943/10) asked by Mr Weir with:

We are writing to correct an error contained in our answer issued on the 26th February to an Assembly question which you tabled in relation to the measures used to define child poverty, namely AQW 4943/10. Our response referred to an estimate of absolute income poverty for children in 2007/08 of 15%. However, this was a typographical error. The actual figure is 16%.

For ease of reference, attached to this letter are the estimates of child poverty across the three measures, relative income poverty, absolute low income poverty and mixed low income and material deprivation for all years in which data are available

Please accept our apologies for this error.

We are copying this letter to the Editor of Debates and the Business Office.

TABLE 1 CHILD POVERTY RATES AND NUMBERS

Year	Relative income poverty		Absolute income poverty		Material deprivation and income poverty	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1998/99	135,000	29	135,000	29	-	-
2002/03	108,300	25	83,000	19	-	-
2003/04	111,600	26	71,200	16	-	-
2004/05	106,600	25	74,800	17	89,100	21
2005/06	108,400	25	70,000	16	87,100	19
2006/07	96,000	22	52,600	12	76,500	18
2007/08	102600	24	69600	16	84700	20

Source

1. 1998/99 figures "Rebasing Child Poverty Estimates for NI" OFMDFM (2007)
2. Households Below Average Income NI

Notes

1. Numbers rounded to the nearest hundred and percentages to the nearest whole number.
2. As with any sample survey there is a degree of error associated with the estimates provided.

Agencies and Bodies Funded by the Department

In Bound Volume 52, page WA84, replace the answer to question (AQW 7144/10) asked by Mr Craig with:

We are writing to correct an error contained in our answer of 2 June 2010 to an Assembly question which you tabled in relation to the running costs of agencies and bodies associated with and funded by our Department, namely AQW 7144/10.

Our response represented the overall total of monies expended by our arms length bodies and included, in addition to running costs, programme costs and grants paid out by several of our arms length bodies. This latter information should not have been included nor should information on the District Council community relations programme which is a single funding stream going to all 26 councils for good relations work. The bodies principally affected are the Community Relations Council,

the Strategic Investment Board, ILEX and the Commissioner for Children and Young People. In addition running costs for the Equality Commission have risen slightly to reflect income from other sources.

A revised table with corrected information on running costs is attached. Please accept our apologies for this error.

We are copying this letter to the Editor of Debates and the Business Office.

AQW 7144/10 REVISED

(i) All the agencies and bodies funded by, and associated with OFMDFM	(ii) The total running costs of each agency or body for each of the last five years				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
NI Civic Forum*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	7.065m	6.984m	7.037m	7.260m	7.360m
Community Relations Council	0.772m	0.788m	0.873m	1.040m	1.179m
Commission for Victims and Survivors	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.574m	1.069m
Children and Young Peoples Commissioner	1.487m	1.463m	1.468m	1.445m	1.514m
Economic Research Institute of NI	1.144m	0.84m	0.92m	0.924m	0.993m
Ilex Urban Regeneration Company	0.410m	0.482m	0.454m	0.712	0.832m
Planning and Water Appeals Commissions	1.905m	1.858m	1.914m	2.347m	2.642m
Commissioner for Public Appointments	0.116m	0.117m	0.138m	0.189m	0.250m
Strategic Investment Board	3.753m	4.240m	4.210m	3.870m	3.478m
Older People's Advocate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.150m**
Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Attorney General for Northern Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* NI Civic Forum last sat in 2002. A Review of the Civic Forum commenced in May 2008. Options and recommendations are under consideration by the Review Project Board prior to final submission to Ministers.

** the Advocate was appointed in December 2008 but figures for the period from December 2008 to March 2009 cannot be disaggregated. Environment

Reform of the Planning Service

In Bound Volume 54, page WA45, replace the answer to question (AQW 7827/10) asked by Mr Hilditch with:

The then Environment Minister formally announced a comprehensive programme of reform for the planning system in November 2007. Preparatory work had begun on the programme within Planning Service for a number of months prior to this formal announcement. The reform programme addresses all of the key elements of the planning system and has been taken forward in the context of the decisions agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to the Review of Public Administration under which the majority of planning functions are to transfer to local government.

A dedicated programme team based in Planning Service Headquarters has been responsible for managing the process of planning system reform and RPA implementation, taking the work forward as one integrated programme. It is not feasible therefore to accurately separate the costs of planning reform from those associated with RPA. The table below therefore reflects the overall costs associated with the integrated programme.

The table details the salary, GAE, consultancy and other programme costs associated with the Planning Reform and RPA programme which have totalled £2,628,752 since the Planning Reform programme's inception in 2007/08 until the end of the 2009/10 business. This figure includes a broad range of areas which extend well beyond the immediate scope of the core planning reform programme team and the associated reform measures recently approved by the Executive. For instance, salary figures incorporate the funding of salary costs associated with additional staff resources allocated to support the introduction of Pre Application Discussions (PADs) across the Agency; the establishment of multi disciplinary teams in the Strategic Projects division at headquarters; and staff costs associated with the revised procedures for the validation process for planning applications. Similarly, the consultancy costs detailed in the table include a number of complex and technical exercises undertaken in support of the work to rationalise Permitted Development rights, as well as other projects such as the accessibility evaluation pilot which was carried out in the Belfast Divisional Office in advance of the introduction of NI Direct.

PLANNING REFORM PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE

Financial year	Salaries	GAE	Consultancy	Other Programme costs
2007/08	369,235	13,181	7,188	0
2008/09	782,425	3,271	217,510	35,231
2009/10	1,091,680	4,171	72,454	32,406
Total	2,243,340	20,623	297,152	67,637
Overall total:	£ 2,628,752			

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Review of Public Administration

In Bound Volume 52, page WA305, replace the answer to question (AQW 7182/10) asked by Mr McGlone with:

The total cost to date of implementing the Review of Public Administration is £74.93m. The majority of this has been spent on early retirements and voluntary redundancies that will facilitate the achievement of £53m recurring savings from administration.

Compensation Claims for Medical Negligence

In Bound Volume 54, page WA66, replace the answer to question (AQW 7595/10) asked by Mr O'Dowd with:

The information requested has been set out in the table below. The figures include claims relating to the legacy health and social care organisations, which existed prior to the Review of Public Administration.

	No. of Claims not settled or closed that have been going through the legal process for:		
	5-10 years	11-15 years	15+ years
HSC Board	56	34	56
Northern HSC Trust	64	10	0
Southern HSC Trust	45	17	1
Belfast HSC Trust	227	54	4
South Eastern HSC Trust	63	22	0
NI Ambulance HSC Trust	2	0	0
Western HSC Trust	83	7	0

Review of Public Administration Spending

In Bound Volume 54, page WA85, replace the answer to question (AQW 7863/10) asked by Mr McGlone with:

To date, the Department has spent £74.93 m on the Review of Public Administration. Of that, £70.33m has been spent on voluntary early redundancy/early retirement for HSC staff affected and £4.6m designing and implementing the structural change. These are one off costs but new simplified and focussed structures introduced by the Review of Public Administration will deliver £53 million annually in savings that can be directed back into front line services.

Justice

Fixed Penalty Notice

In Bound Volume 53, page WA52, replace the answer to question (AQW 7334/10) asked by Mr Ross with:

The table below sets out the total revenue received through Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for the last three years by type of FPN issued and amount.

TABLE: REVENUE RECEIVED THROUGH ISSUE OF FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

	Non- Endorsable	No Vehicle Test Certificates	Conditional Offers	Endorsable	No Insurance	
	£30 penalty	£60 penalty	£60 penalty	£60 penalty	£200 penalty	Total Revenue
2007	£864,232.74	£1,800.00	£716,220.00	£1,201,320.00	£2,000.00	£2,785,572.74
2008	£371,081.27	£29,640.00	£735,420.00	£1,607,100.00	£19,600.00	£2,762,841.27
2009	£343,434.70	£53,100.00	£1,033,680.00	£1,660,200.00	£56,000.00	£3,146,414.70
Total	£1,578,748.71	£84,540.00	£2,485,320.00	£4,468,620.00	£77,600.00	£8,694,828.71

This information is not held by policing district, or with reference to specific offences.

However, the police have provided information on the number of FPNs issued in each police district for the last three years by offence. This information is attached in an Annex.

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Public Museums and Art Galleries

In Bound Volume 54, page WA136, replace the answer to question (AQW 7739/10) asked by Mr Burns with:

The attached Appendix A contains the details in answer to the above questions.

ANNEX A

YEAR 2010

	No of items	Description	Time recorded as missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	American Eight Day Gingerbread Clock	02.04.2009	No	£300	
	1	Pair of wire rimmed spectacles	00.06.2009	No	£20	
	1	Staffordshire earthenware ornament	04.06.2009	No	£500	
Lost						
Misplaced	1	species: Melitaea didyma	2010 Audit	No	£15	
	1	species: Chesias rufata	2010 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: ICHNEUMON	2010 Audit	No	£2.50	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass plate negative; species: Nymphaea alba Stamp from South Australia: 6 pence, surcharged 5 pence	2010 Audit	No	£10	
	1	Fire Dog	2010 Audit	No	£3.75	
	1	Shoemaker's knife	2010 Audit	No	£70-£100	
	1	Shop's advertisement	2010 Audit	No	£40	
	1	Draw knife	2010 Audit	No	£40-£50	
	1	Cardboard Tags	2010 Audit	No	£40-£55	
	1	School book	2010 Audit	No	£15	
	1	Doll	2010 Audit	No	£30-£40	
	1	Handle	2010 Audit	No	£60-£125	
	1		2010 Audit	No	£3	

YEAR 2009

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	Library Book-Edwardian Belfast: A Social Profile (Explorations in Irish History)	2009 Audit	No		£10
	1	Doll's Clothes	2009 Audit	No	£40-£50	
	1	Tea cosy cover	2009 Audit	No	£125	
	1	Patchwork bedcover	2009 Audit	No	£300-£500	
	3	Augers	2009 Audit	No	£40-£60	
	1	Canal lock gate equipment	2009 Audit	No	£150	
	1	Silversmith's sandbag	2009 Audit	No	£50-£80	
	1	Mason's stone hammer	2009 Audit	No	£50-£80	
	1	String holder	2009 Audit	No	£60-£80	
	1	Basket makers cleaver of 'splitter'	2009 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Green-glass hanging lamp	2009 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Piece of bog butter	2009 Audit	No	n/a	
	1	Crimping tongs	2009 Audit	No	£40	
	3	Jelly moulds	2009 Audit	No	£60-£100	
	1	Black leather pocket book	2009 Audit	No	£25	
	1	Auger	2009 Audit	No	£20	
	1	Weighing machine	2009 Audit	No	£200	
	1	Bottle, medical	2009 Audit	No	£5	
	1	Washing board	2009 Audit	No	£20	
	1	Helmet; Civil defence	2009	No	£25	
	1	Card Game	2009	No	£10	
	1	C.D Brassard [Civil Defence Armband]	2009	No	£10	

YEAR 2008

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	turf barrow	2008 Audit	No	£400	
	1	plane	2008 Audit	No	£20	
	1	spectacles	2008 Audit	No	£40	
	1	lamp	2008 Audit	No	£30	
	1	bottle, ink	2008 Audit	Yes 2010	£10	
	1	jam jar	2008 Audit	Yes 2010	£10	
	1	Library Book – How it is Made c.1941	2008 Audit	No	£5	
	1	Cassette	2008 Audit	No	£2	
	1	Baby brush and comb set	2008 Audit	No	£70	
	1	Fleece	2008 Audit	No	£80	
	1	Overskirt	2008 Audit	No	£60-£100	
	1	Sampler	2008 Audit	No	£250	
	1	Blouse	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Scarf Lace	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Clerical Hat	2008 Audit	No	£200	
	1	Doll	2008 Audit	No	£350	
	1	Bedsread	2008 Audit	No	£300	
	1	Baking board	2008 Audit	No	£60	
	1	Tongs (broken)	2008 Audit	No	£15	
	1	Round plane	2008 Audit	No	£60-£70	
	1	Wheelwright's hoop dog	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Object, Ballycastle glass	2008 Audit	No	£100	
	1	Linen cart	2008 Audit	Yes 2008	£2000-£3000	
	1	2 Horse reaper	2008 Audit	No	£700-£900	

YEAR 2007

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2006

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced	1	Disc, ground	2006	No	£10	
	1	Pointed implement, double	2006	No	£100	
	1	Axe	2006	No	£100	
	1	Facetted hammer, round	2006	No	£50	
	1	Rubber	2006	No	£100	
	6	Photographic Prints	2006	No	£5 each	

YEAR 2005

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	Gilt Pocket Watch	20/11/2005	No	£70	
	1	Decorative Watch Stand	21/11/2005	No	£30	
	1	Nickel Plated Gents Pocket Watch	22/11/2005	No	£60	
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2004

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2003

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen	1	Large Wooden Beetle	September 2003	No	£70-£100	
	1	Medium sized cast Iron Kettle	September 2003	No	£70-£125	
	2	Metal milk / Billy cans, one without a lid	September 2003	No	£30	
	1	Small American clock, in working condition	September 2003	No	£150-£200	
	1	Small white enamel candleholder	September 2003	No	£20	
	2	Pair of framed Prints (colour Portraits of King Edward VII & Queen Alexandra)	September 2003	No	£100-£250	
	1	Small hand oil lamp, clear glass reservoir	September 2003	No	£60-£70	
	1	Framed text 'The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want'	September 2003	No	£70	
Lost						
Misplaced	1	PRINT; The Rialto Bridge from the West, Venice	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	PRINT; David Hartley	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£250	
	1	PRINT; Abstraction	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£75	
	1	BROOCH; (copy of Tara brooch)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£400	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	Brooch, gilt dragon	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£100	
	1	Painting, James McQuitty, Esq. (1922)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£800	
	1	Painting, Portrait of Unknown Woman (1903?)	2003 Audit	No	£500	
	1	Drawing, At Cushendall (1858)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£800	
	1	Drawing, The land-rail or corn crake (Crex crex)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£4000	
	1	Paten	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£5000	
	1	COFFEE-POT; Coffee Pot: Bateson	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£30000	
	1	core: dual opposed	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	BELT; Sam Brown Belt with frog	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Belt	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£50	
	1	COIN; halfpenny	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; shilling ; forgery	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; half mark	2003 Audit	No	£1	
	1	COIN; two cash	2003 Audit	No	£2	
	1	COIN; penny	2003 Audit	No	£12	
	1	TOKEN; half penny	2003 Audit	No	£15	
	1	photographic lantern slide	2003 Audit	No	£20	
	1	photographic print	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Photographic print	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	PHOTOGRAPH; Glass negative	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Bookplate	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Tetraxis pellucida</i> Hedw.	2003 Audit	No	£5	
	1	species: <i>Ceratodon purpureus</i> (Hedw.) Brid.	2003 Audit	No	£5	
	1	species: <i>Rubus wahlbergii</i> Arrh.	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Gibbula pennanti</i> (Philippi, 1846)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Anomia ephippium</i> Linne, 1758	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: <i>Delias doytes</i> ssp. <i>Doylei</i>	2003 Audit	No	£15	
	1	species: <i>Hypopimnas missippus</i>	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Anartia jatrophae</i> L	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Boloria selene</i> (Dennis: Schiffermueller 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	species: Euphydryas aurinia (Rottemburg 1775)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Pieris napi (Linnaeus 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£257.50	
	1	species: Euxoa tritici (Linnaeus 1761)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£5	
	1	species: Pyrrhia umbra (Hufnagel 1766)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Lycia zonaria (Schiff)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Epirrata dilutata (Denis and Schiffermuller)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Erebia pandrose Borkhausen 1788	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£25	
	1	species: Pyrgus alveus Huebner 1803	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£15	
	1	species: Maculinea arion Linnaeus 1761	2003 Audit	No	£25	
	1	species: Gastrophysa polygoni Linnaeus, 1758	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Notiophilus germinyi Fauvel, 1863	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Platyderus ruficollis (Marsham, 1802)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Megatoma undata (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	WASP	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	FLY	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Adalia 7-punctata	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Adalia conglobata	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPHS; Glass plate negative	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	PHOTOGRAPHS; Glass plate negative	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Empis (Euempis) tessellate	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Empis (Euempis) tessellata Fabricius, 1794	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Bicellaria sulcata Zett., 1842	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Barylypa insidiator (Foerster)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Hilara brevistyla Collin, 1927	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Eristalis (S. G. Eoseristalis) intricarius (Linnaeus)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Bicellaria vana Collin, 1926	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Empis S. Anachrostichus verralli Collin, 1927	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Glypta bicornis Boie, 1850	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Cleorodes lichenaria (Hufnagel 1767)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Halictus S. Seladonia tumulorum (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Leucozona lucorum (Linne)	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Xantholinus linearis	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	species: Maculinea teleius Bergstrasser, 1779	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Maculinea teleius Bergstrasser, 1779	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Rhingia campestris Meigen	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	species: Zizeeria knysna Trimen	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£30	
	1	species: Glaucopsyche alexis Poda, 1761	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£20	
	1	species: Sphaerophonia menthrasti	2003 Audit	Yes 06 decant	£10	
	1	Sketch for Poster: Palm Trees	2003 Audit	No	£500	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	HYMENOPTERA	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Larentia flavicincta	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eupithecia pulchellata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eupithecia scabiosata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Xanthorhoe montanata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Xanthorhoe fluctuate	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eucosmia certata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Maniola jurtina	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Tachinus signatus	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Aloconota gregaria Erichson	2003 Audit	No	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	species: Tachyporus atriceps	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Hadenas serena	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Proctos faruncula	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Antitype chi	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Griposia aprilina	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Agrochola lota	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Scotopteryx luridata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Lithomoia solidaginis	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Pristiphora alnivora (Hartig, 1840)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Melitaea didyma Esper, 1779	2003 Audit	No	£20	
	1	species: Mellicta parthenoides Keferstein, 1851	2003 Audit	No	£20	
	1	species: Meloboris ischnocera Thomson	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Lathrobium fennicum	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Pieris napi brittanica Verity, 1911	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Abrostula triplasia Linne	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Anticlea badiata	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	MOTH; Grey Pine Carpet	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	FLY	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	WASP	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Eudoria basistrigalis Knaggs, 1866	2003 Audit	No	£10	

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Misplaced	1	species: Alucita hexadactyla (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Euzophera pinguis (Haworth, 1811)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Acleris hastiana (Linnaeus, 1758)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Aethes nartmanniana (Clerck, 1759)	2003 Audit	No	£10	
	1	species: Drymus sylvaticus	2003 Audit	No	£10	

YEAR 2002

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2001

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

YEAR 2000

	No of items	Description	Length of time missing	Found	Estimated Value	Cost of replacement
Stolen						
Lost						
Misplaced						

Please note with the exception of a trial in 2003 at the Ulster Museum, formal physical verification exercises were not introduced until 2008 and now occur on an annual basis across all of National Museums (NMNI) sites i.e. Ulster Museum Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Ulster American Folk Park and Armagh County Museum. As illustrated, items classified as misplaced continue to be subsequently located as NMNI progresses its storage and documentation arrangements. In relation to costs incurred in replacement, as illustrated, to date they are modest and confined to one library book.

With regard to art galleries The Arts Council is not a public museum or an art gallery.

British Transplant Games

In Bound Volume 54, page WA154, replace the answer to question (AQW 8389/10) asked by Mr Shannon with:

Responsibility for promoting the British Transplant Games to transplant patients rests, in the first instance, with Transplant Sports UK in conjunction with the Local Organising Committee. Responsibility for the promotion of the event in sports clubs and leisure centres rests with the owners of sports clubs and district councils. I would, however, add my own personal support for this important sporting event which I am aware will be held in Belfast in 2011.

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Performance-related Bonuses for Senior Staff

In Bound Volume 54, page WA266, replace the answer to question (AQW 8172/10) asked by Mr McGlone with:

As Health and Social Care Trusts have only been in existence in their current configuration since April 2007 details of the bonus payments made to the Chief Executives and Directors are only available from that date; these are as follows:

HSC Trust	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Belfast HSC Trust	£4,680	£6,568	£ nil
Northern HSC Trust	£4,275	£3,097	£ nil
Southern HSC Trust	£4,680	£4,867	£ nil
Western HSC Trust	£3,525	£3,468	£ nil
South Eastern HSC Trust	£4,354	£ nil	£ nil
Totals	£16,834	£18,000	£ nil

There were no bonuses paid to Trust Chief Executives and Directors in April 2009; in relation to the April 2008 to March 2009 performance period.

Justice

Court Appearances by Mr Torrens Knight

In Bound Volume 53, page WA201, replace the answer to question (AQW 7550/10) asked by Mr Dallat with:

There was an error contained in my answer of 24 June 2010.

The answer stated that “The total cost of court appearances for Torrens Knight in the last 2 years amounted to £2,152.30 plus VAT”.

This should have read “The total cost of court appearances for Torrens Knight in the last 2 years amounted to £2,152.30 including VAT”.

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