

From the Office of the Minister



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Northern Ireland Assembly  
Room 218  
Parliament Buildings  
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BT4 3XX

05 February 2013

Dear Jim

**AQW 17830/11-15 and AQW 17832/11-15**

Thank you for your recent Assembly Questions regarding tourism related planning applications and holiday cottages. Please accept my apologies for not providing a full response at the time of tabling.

I am aware you have subsequently written to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board regarding a specific planning application within your Constituency. Mr Alan Clarke will respond to you directly in respect of this.

***To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how many tourism related planning applications the Northern Ireland Tourist Board considered in each of the last five years; (ii) the number it supported; and (iii) the number it refused to support. [AQW 17830/11-15]***

This information is not readily available from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB). In the last few years the NITB has put in place specific resources to manage planning applications and the consultation process has evolved over this time period.

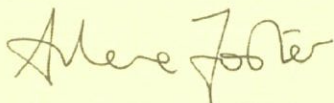
The Planning Service introduced a new online consultation system 'EPIC' from which Planning Service extract its own observations from each NITB response. In each response, NITB provides a local tourism context to the application site along with local tourism accommodation provision and occupancy levels where accommodation is proposed. As the consultation process has evolved, NITB has taken a more informative position on planning applications, allowing the Planning Service's case officers to exercise their own judgment and discretion in extracting the information from the NITB response they feel most relevant in coming to a decision.

***To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline why the Northern Ireland Tourist Board supports planning applications for holiday cottages in areas where there is already sufficient provision. [AQW 17832/11-15]***

NITB has a consultation arrangement with Planning Service through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed in August 2004. This MOU has provided NITB the opportunity to support the decision-making process through the provision of research, advice and background information on applications with a tourism interest. However, NITB is not a statutory consultee under current planning legislation. To that end, NITB endeavours not to take a definitive position to “support” or “reject” a routine planning application, rather to provide relevant information to help planning officers make an informed decision. NITB will provide a local tourism context along with local tourism accommodation provision and occupancy levels where accommodation is proposed.

I will arrange for copies to be e-mailed to the Speaker’s Office/Business Office (for Hansard), and that a copy of the letter will be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



**ARLENE FOSTER MLA**  
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment