

Assembly Questions and Answers

Disability Action and Community Transport

AQW 46006/11-15

Mr John McCallister (IND - South Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what impact assessment his Department has carried out on the funding reductions to Newry and Mourne Community Transport, in relation to older people and people with disabilities.

19/05/2015

The primary policy drivers for my department in regard to support for community transport schemes are the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and the Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS)

In 2012 and building on the RTS, a new Strategy, "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future": A New Approach to Regional Transportation was adopted. This was subject to an EQIA at this time. The ATS was also subject to an EQIA at this time.

As there has not been any change to the underlying policies, no Impact Assessment has been undertaken. However I can confirm that a High Level Equality Screening Assessment was carried out for the draft budget that was issued for consultation on 27th November 2014.

AQW 45834/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department is working with the Department for Regional Development to deliver the commitment to tackle poverty and social isolation, through providing rural community transport and protecting the existing services.

15/05/2015

Through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme my Department continues to fund the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) working in partnership with the Department for Regional Development (DRD). This Scheme provides free or half fare travel to those rural dwellers with a SmartPass (mainly the elderly and disabled) on Rural Community Transport Partnership vehicles across the north of Ireland.

AQW 45215/11-15

Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development how the proposed cuts to community transport are compatible with the pledge to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

28/04/2015

My Department is facing cuts and pressures of some £60 million on my Resource budget and those funding reductions have required me to take some difficult decisions, particularly when considering the impact on public safety.

My Department believes that through continued efficiencies and the use of all financial resources available to it, all community transport operators should be able to minimise the impact on service users.

AQW 44973/11-15

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail the percentage of funding cut to each community transport group for 2015/16.

23/04/2015

The table below shows the budget allocation for 2014/15 for RCTP's against the award for 2015/16.

2014/15 RCTP Funding			
RCTP	Initial 2014/15 Budget Allocation	Initial 2015/16 Award	% change
CDM	£554,119	£443,085	-20.04%
DDAT	£343,951	£323,543	-5.93%
Easilink	£414,295	£334,000	-19.38%
FCT	£352,151	£350,613	-0.44%
LVRT	£144,000	£125,587	-12.79%
NCCT	£486,796	£419,122	-13.90%
SACT	£155,361	£128,354	-17.38%
SAP	£299,328	£310,630	3.78%
Totals	£2,750,000	£2,434,934	-11.46%

In 2014/15 whilst the baseline budget was £2.75m, my Department's internal reallocations eventually raised the total budget to £3.6m.

AQW 44972/11-15

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development whether his decision to cut funding to North Coast Community Transport was subject to rural proofing.

23/04/2015

The policy to provide Rural Transport Fund support to Rural Community Transport Partnerships predated both the Rural Transport Strategy (RTS) and the Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS).

As there has not been any change to the underlying policy, rural proofing, which is a non-statutory process, was not therefore required to be carried out.

My department referred to rural proofing considerations in its draft budget consultation on its 2015/16 spending and saving proposals dated 27th November 2014. By its nature many of the services funded or provided by this department impact on rural areas.

AQW 44971/11-15

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development whether his decision to cut funding to North Coast Community Transport was subject to an equality impact assessment.

23/04/2015

The primary policy drivers for my department in regard to support for community transport schemes are the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and the Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS)

In 2012 and building on the RTS, a new Strategy, "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future": A New Approach to Regional Transportation was adopted. This was subject to an EQIA at this time. The ATS was subject to an EQIA in April 2005.

As there has not been any change to the underlying policies, no further EQIA exercises have not been carried out.

I can also confirm that a High Level Equality Screening Assessment was carried out for the draft budget that was issued for consultation on 27th November 2014. This referred at page 19 to a reduction in the grants for rural and community transport.

AQW 44970/11-15

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what impact the cuts to North Coast Community Transport will have on people with disabilities and mobility problems.

23/04/2015

Whilst I fully support the services provided by all community transport service providers, there will unfortunately be a reduction in the level of funding available and I have tried to minimise this. It should be noted that since becoming Minister, I have protected the baseline budget for community transport year on year and where possible supplemented with in-year funding.

Statistics from North Coast Community Transport (NCCT) for last year suggest that trips by disabled people (as defined by NCCT) accounted for 43% of the total trips.

My department believes that through continued efficiencies and the use of all financial resources available to it, all community transport operators should be able to minimise the impact on service users.

AQW 44969/11-15

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to list the service routes that are being affected by cutbacks to North Coast Community Transport. [Priority Written]

23/04/2015

My Department provides a grant to North Coast Community Transport (NCCT) in support of the services it decides to provide as an independently constituted charity. My officials have issued a letter of offer to NCCT but, at the time of writing, this has still to be formally agreed and returned. My Department receives statistics through the year on dial a lift trips, active membership and reasons for trips but I have not received anything relating to this year as yet.

My Department believes that through continued efficiencies and the use of all financial resources available to it, NCCT and other community transport operators should be able to minimise the impact on service users.

AQW 44966/11-15

Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to outline the rationale for the reduction of the Door 2 Door budget by over 20 per cent for 2015/16.

23/04/2015

The Door 2 Door scheme ceased on 31/03/13 and was replaced by the interim Disability Action Transport Scheme, operated by Disability Action.

I am facing £60 million of pressures for this financial year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services. It was necessary to reduce grant to the Community Transport budget impacting on the Rural Transport Fund, Disability Action and other smaller grants.

Last year the community transport budget was £7.15m. This year it totals £4.99m. This represents a reduction of 30%. As shown in the table below the reduction in grant to Disability Action was 21%. Services provided by Disability Action Transport scheme are targeted at those over 80, registered blind and in receipt of either the Mobility or Care component of Disability Living Allowance. This service is provided in 29 towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

	2014/15	2015/16	£ Reduction	% Reduction
Disability Action	£2.95m	£2.32m	£0.63m	21%
RCTPs	£3.63m	£2.43m	£1.2m	33%
Other	£0.57m	£0.24m	£0.33m	58%
Total				

The department believes that through continued efficiencies and the use of all financial resources available to it Disability Action should be able to minimise the impact on service users.

AQW 44959/11-15

Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of the Rural Transport Fund is spent on salaries for office staff, such as managers, transport managers, administration and booking line staff; and what percentage is spent on front line delivery such as vehicle operations, drivers salaries and access provisions.

23/04/2015

The table below details the level of funding allocated to the Rural Community Transport Partnership's (RCTP) together with costs based upon estimates provided by the Partnerships. My Department have restricted the percentage on non front line costs to administration staff costs and direct accommodation costs.

It should be noted that this is an estimate of the costs as actual cost information will only be available when full Audited Accounts for 2014/15 are received from each RCTP.

Funding 14/15	Administration staff % costs
£3.63m	30%

AQW 44544/11-15

Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to outline the rationale for the level of cuts in funding for groups who provide transport for people with disabilities.

15/04/2015

I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me. My Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on my Department's services 24 hours a day. However, I am facing £60 million of pressures for this financial year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services.

However, while I fully support the services provided by all community transport service providers, there will unfortunately be a reduction in the level of funding available and I have tried to minimise this. It should be noted that since becoming Minister, I have protected the baseline budget for community transport year on year and where possible supplemented with in-year funding.

My Department will be working closely with the service providers to explore ways of delivering the service in a more cost efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

AQW 44543/11-15

Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development when groups in receipt of departmental funding, for the provision of transport for people with disabilities, were notified of the cuts to their 2015/16 funding.

15/04/2015

I can advise that letters of offer were issued to Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPs) on 30 March 2015 and Disability Action (DA) on 02 April 2015.

However, my officials had discussions with the RCTP's on 11 March and with DA on 12 March 2015 to discuss budget allocations. These meetings were arranged as soon as practicably possible after my Department's budget allocation was confirmed.

AQW 44542/11-15

Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development how much funding for transport for people with a disability his Department provided to Down Community Transport in (i) 2014/15; and (ii) 2015/16.

15/04/2015

Down Community Transport received funding from the Rural Transport Fund to provide Dial-a-lift services to its members. These services are available to its members with a disability.

In 2014/15 their funding totalled £428,303 and in 2015/16 funding was £323,542.

AQW 44541/11-15

Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development how much funding for transport his Department provided to Disability Action in (i) 2014/15; and (ii) 2015/16.

15/04/2015

The funding provided to Disability Action is as follows:

2014/15 £2,946,819

(ii) 2015/16 £2,315,000

Based on the 2013/14 audited accounts, my Department currently provides up to 43% of the Disability Action total funding.

AQW 44501/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the amount of money provided for each Rural Community Transport Partnership in 2015/2016; and (ii) the number of trips, and cost per trip, proposed by each Partnership in their funding application.

14/04/2015

The table below provides the requested information.

RCTP	Funding Offer 2015/16	Projected Trips 2015/16	Grant Per trip	Funding Requested	Cost Per trip
CDM	£443,085	56,950	£7.78	£623,693	£10.95
DDAT	£323,543	14,670	£22.05	£423,632	£28.88
Easilink	£334,000	38,000	£8.79	£520,000	£13.68
FCT	£350,613	27,000	£12.99	£484,447	£17.94
LVRT	£125,587	7,920	£15.86	£212,431	£26.82
NCCT	£419,122	50,000	£8.38	£620,000	£12.40
SACT	£128,354	16,450	£7.80	£184,644	£11.22
SAP	£310,630	29,220	£10.63	£429,471	£14.70
Total	£2,434,934	240,210	£10.14	£3,498,319	£14.56

AQW 44500/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development whether the Rural Transport Fund is intended to fund the Rural Community Transport Partnerships as organisations, or to fund the services which they provide.

14/04/2015

The Rural Transport Fund (RTF) is administered by my Department and has been in existence in Northern Ireland since November 1998. Its primary objective is to support transport services designed to give people in rural areas improved access to work, education, healthcare, shopping and recreational activities and by so doing assists in reducing their social isolation.

The RTF offers support through two primary means of assistance:

Subsidy for new rural services provided by Translink which are economically unviable but socially necessary; and

revenue and capital funding for Rural Community Transport Partnerships that offer a range of complementary services to the public transport network for their members.

AQW 44499/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 43696/11-15, to detail the funding reduction to each Rural Community Transport Partnership for the year 2015/2016, by (i) per cent; and (ii) the raw figures calculated.

14/04/2015

The table below shows the budget allocation for 2014/15 for RCTP's. DRD internal reallocations eventually raised the total budget to £3.6m

2014/15 RCTP Funding						
RCTP	Initial 2014/15 Budget Allocation	Internal Reallocations	Final 2014/15 budget	Initial 2015/16 Award	Change vs Initial Allocation	% change vs Initial Allocation
CDM	£554,119	£37,407	£591,526	£443,085	-£111,034	-20.04%
DDAT	£343,951	£84,352	£428,303	£323,543	-£20,408	-5.93%
Easilink	£414,295	£107,384	£521,679	£334,000	-£80,295	-19.38%
FCT	£352,151	£223,097	£575,248	£350,613	-£1,538	-0.44%
LVRT	£144,000	£51,639	£195,639	£125,587	-£18,413	-12.79%
NCCT	£486,796	£173,921	£660,717	£419,122	-£67,674	-13.90%
SACT	£155,361	£58,402	£213,763	£128,354	-£27,007	-17.38%
SAP	£299,328	£141,315	£440,643	£310,630	£11,302	3.78%
Totals	£2,750,000	£877,519	£3,627,519	£2,434,934	-£315,066	-11.46%

AQW 44446/11-15

Mr John McCallister (IND - South Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail the level of funding provided by his Department to Disability Action Transport Services in (i) 2013/14; (ii) 2014/15; and (iii) 2015/16.

14/04/2015

I can advise that my Department provided funding to Disability Action for the delivery of Disability Action Transport Services in:

2013/14 - £2,946,819;

2014/15 - £2,946,819;

2015/16 - £2,315,000.

AQW 44423/11-15

Mr David McNarry (UKIP - Strangford) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he is giving to reviewing the funding for Community Transport.

13/04/2015

I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me. My Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on my Department's services 24 hours a day. However, I am facing £60 million of pressures for this financial year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services.

However, while I fully support the services provided by all community transport service providers, there will unfortunately be a reduction in the level of funding available. I have tried to minimise this. It should be noted that since becoming Minister, I have protected the baseline budget for community transport year on year and where possible supplemented with in-year funding.

My Department will be working closely with the service providers to explore ways of delivering the service in a more cost efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

AQW 44415/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 43698/11-15, (i) how the percentage of staff costs to total costs for the year 2013/2014 was calculated for each Rural Transport Fund Partnership; and (ii) to give a breakdown of actual figures used. [Priority Written]

13/04/2015

The percentage costs used were taken from the Audited Annual Accounts 2013/14 that were submitted by each of the Rural Transport Partnerships. The table below shows the breakdown of figures used.

2013/14			
Partnership	Total Costs	Total Staff Costs	Percentages
CDM	£812,315	£386,644	47.6%
DDAT	£703,654	£373,394	53.1%
Easilink	£696,348	£345,730	49.6%
FCT	£584,891	£273,795	46.8%
LVRT	£327,427	£149,605	45.7%
NCCT	£905,718	£411,958	45.5%
SACT	£256,641	£102,822	40.1%
SAP	£906,062	£407,923	45.0%
TOTALS	£5,193,056	£2,451,871	47.2%

AQW 44411/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the money from his Department which was set aside for the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) in 2013/2014; (ii) the amount received by the RTF, including money from monitoring rounds; (iii) the amount of allocated funding for 2015/2016; and (iii) whether this amount represents a 33 per cent reduction.

13/04/2015

In 2013/14 the baseline budget for Rural Community Transport was £2.75m.

In 2013/14 the total amount of grant paid was the baseline budget of £2.75m. Following internal reallocations linked to monitoring rounds, a further £680,000 was awarded giving total for the year of £3.437m.

For 2015/16 the level of funding available is £2.43m and this is before any monitoring rounds.

The level of funding available for 2015/16 represents an 11% reduction in budget against the previous year's baseline.

AQO 7990/11-15

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his plans for ensuring that community transport remains an integral component of public transport.

21 April 2015

Mr Kennedy: First, I acknowledge the valuable services that the community transport operators provide to local communities and their members across Northern Ireland. Rural community transport partnerships can provide access to local essential services such as shopping, the post office or local health services, such as GPs, or they can link in with the wider public transport network to enable people to travel outside their local area. It is my intention, subject to EU rules and licensing arrangements, to continue to support those organisations. However, while I support fully the services provided by all community transport service providers, there will unfortunately be a reduction in the level of funding available. I have tried to minimise that, and it should be noted that, during my time as Minister, I have protected the baseline budget for community transport year on year and, where possible, supplemented it with in-year funding. I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me.

The Member will know that my Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on my Department's services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, I am facing £60 million of pressures in this financial year, and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services. My Department will work closely with the service providers to explore ways of providing the service in a more cost-efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

Mr Dallat: I have listened carefully to the Minister and the problems that he has in balancing the books, but does he agree with me that Causeway community transport, for example, faces cuts of over 30%? Does he agree with me that neither Translink or any other organisation can fill the gap that will be created when people who require specialist transport to hospitals or clinics are left? It is another case of the most vulnerable being the victims of these vicious austerity cutbacks.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. I share the concern about the potential impact. The Member has suggested that some rural community transport is being cut by one third or 33%. The effective cut in grant to rural community transport is from a baseline amount of £2.75 million to £2.4 million. That is an 11% reduction. The figure of 33% refers to the position after last year's in-year

monitoring rounds are included, and the Member will know that I have been successful in previous years in supplementing the awards to the groups through the monitoring rounds. I will continue to do that as we enter the new financial year. I do not underestimate the challenge, but what I am determined to do, through my officials, is to work with the providers and the groups to see where we can minimise the potential impact.

Mr G Robinson: Will the Minister state whether community transport services for the rural population, such as those in the Limavady area, will be retained to reduce the impact on social deprivation, isolation and health visits? I appreciate what his answer was to Mr Dallat.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. There is no proposal or intention by me to withdraw the services, but I face a fairly critical financial position in my resource budget. The Member will know that, the Assembly knows that and the Executive know that. I cannot spend money that I do not have. That said, we are working with providers and users to try to mitigate some of the issues on the ground, and we will continue to do that in all areas, in addition to the area that the Member mentioned.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Following on from that, will the Minister confirm the success or otherwise of integrated transport, including community transport, particularly in the mid-Ulster area?

Mr Kennedy: I have no doubt that they are successful projects that operate very successfully in areas and provide essential assistance to people who use the services, whether for social occasions or medical appointments, especially in rural areas. Representing a rural constituency, I am aware of the importance of connecting communities and people in local areas. We will continue to seek to do that, but it is a challenge, given the budget that I face.

Mr Swann: Has the Department tried to source funding from any other avenues?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. I can confirm that the Department made a bid for Delivering Social Change funding of some £2 million over the period 2014-16 to extend the services of local rural community transport partnerships in the evenings and at weekends. That initiative has been included as a measure in OFMDFM's draft Active Ageing strategy, but, as yet, the Department has not received confirmation that it will receive the necessary support from those funds.

Ms Sugden: Are the cuts to each rural community transport partnership equally and strategically justified across Northern Ireland?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her question. I do not underestimate the challenge that is before the user groups and the operators. We have sought to apply the cuts as evenly as we can. That will be the case going forward as we seek to work with groups to address the underfunding situation. I will be grateful for any representations that the Member may wish to bring to me.

AQW 43698/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development for a breakdown, by organisation, of the funding for community transport in each of the last three years; and for his assessment of how this funding has been distributed.

13/03/2015

My Department funds a grouping of eight Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP). The funding for the last 3 years 2012-15 is broken down by each Partnership and is detailed in the table in Annex A.

Funding is allocated taking account of the requirements set out in each of their business plans and the financial position and costs of each RCTP.

Please note that the funding analysis statistics are not yet available for 2014/15.

Rural Community Transport Partnership (RCTP)	2012/13				2013/14				2014/15	TOTAL funding for last 3 years
	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	
CDM	£623,266	49.9%	48134	10.14	£564,285	47.6%	56,335	12.4	£591,526	£1,779,077
Down District CT	£443,314	49.1%	9915	29.34	£439,843	53.1%	13,084	24.4	£428,303	£1,311,460
Easilink (Strabane & Omagh)	£483,207	48.4%	36620	9.93	£534,627	49.6%	38,587	9.5	£521,679	£1,539,513
Fermanagh CT	£453,977	42.7%	31576	14.23	£517,469	46.8%	33,344	13.8	£575,248	£1,546,694
Lagan Valley (Lisburn)	£153,963	48.7%	5787	13.46	£209,359	45.7%	6,512	13.3	£195,639	£558,961
North Coast CT	£554,219	49.4%	40205	10.20	£605,224	45.5%	47,296	10.6	£660,717	£1,820,160
South Antrim CT	£153,963	51.3%	12126	11.28	£212,665	40.1%	14,021	13.9	£213,763	£580,391
Southern – Armagh, Lurgan, Newry & Mourne	£385,771	48.3%	30207	15.14	£392,247	45.0%	34,788	18.4	£440,642	£1,218,660
RCTP Totals	£3,251,680	48.6%	214570	12.46	£3,475,719	47.2%	243,967	13.4	£3,627,517	£10,354,916

AQW 43696/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact that cuts to core funding for community transport services will have on the most vulnerable in society. [Priority Written]

13/03/2015

I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me. My Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on our services 24 hours a day. However, I am facing £60million of pressures for next year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services.

Where I fully support and acknowledge the valuable services provided by all community transport service providers, there will however be a reduction in the level of funding available. I have tried to minimise this.

My Department will be working with the service providers to explore ways of delivering the service in a more cost efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

AQW 43362/11-15

Mr Seán Lynch (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone) To ask the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the funding provided by his Department to each of the eleven Rural Community Transport Partnerships during the 2013/14 financial year to provide Dial a Lift services; (ii) for a breakdown of the eleven Rural Community Transport Partnerships expenditure on (a) office staffing and administration; (b) rent; (c) overheads; and (d) operational costs such as drivers; (iii) to detail the number of Dial a Lift passenger trips provided by each partnership during the year; and (iv) how funding is apportioned between the partnerships.

06/03/2015

During the 2013/14 financial year, my Department made available, a total of £3,475,719.70 to 8 Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP's) to facilitate the 11 areas supported from Rural Transport Fund. The Table below provides a breakdown of funding and number of trips provided by each partnership for 2013/14 period together with the % of associated staff costs. The average mileage per trip per RCTP is also provided.

Funding & Trips 2013/14

Partnerships	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip
CDM	£564,284.74	47.6%	56,335	12.4
Down	£439,843.16	53.1%	13,084	24.4
Easilink	£534,627.42	49.6%	38,587	9.5
Fermanagh	£517,469.24	46.8%	33,344	13.8
Lagan Valley	£209,358.78	45.7%	6,512	13.3
North Coast	£605,224.00	45.5%	47,296	10.6
South Antrim	£212,665.39	40.1%	14,021	13.9
Southern (includes Armagh, DART, Newry)	£392,246.97	45.0%	34,788	18.4
Totals	£3,475,719.70	47.2%	243,967	13.4

The remaining information requested is not available in the format requested, as each of the RCTP'S report and detail this information differently in their accounts. A standardised approach to accounts will be introduced for 2015/16. Copies of all accounts for the RCTP'S are available from Companies House.

In regard to (iv), funding was allocated taking account of requirement set out in each Business plan and the financial position of each RCTP.

AQW 42834/11-15

Mr Cathal Ó hOisín (SF - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development when community transport providers, that receive grant support through the Rural Transport Fund and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities, will receive confirmation of funding levels for the 2015-16 financial year. [Priority Written]

25/02/2015

The budget for the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) and Transport Programme for People with Disabilities for 2015-16 is part of the overall Departmental budget which I have only recently agreed. In view of the financial position there will have to be reductions in funding to community and rural transport. It would be expected that through improvements in service delivery there should be a limited impact on the level of service provided.

AQW 42085/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the dial a lift community transport service.

10/02/2015

My Department provides funding from the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) for the Dial A Lift scheme, managed by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP's). Dial A Lift is aimed at reducing social exclusion in rural areas for people with reduced mobility. This service is provided to all members of the scheme including people with disabilities who can avail of transport for various purposes that would include local shops, post office or bank, training and local employment, pharmacy, visiting friends or family and includes some local health service appointments.

In 2013/14 the Partnerships provided 243, 967 Dial A Lift Trips to 4780 active users. The grant from my Department in 2013/14 totalled £3.4 million.

The Partnerships also receive some financial support from Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) through the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme which allows individual members from the rural community to use their SmartPass to access transport through this scheme jointly funded by DARD.

Demand for Dial A Lift services has grown over the last number of years and each Partnership now has to prioritise services to ensure that transport is available to the most vulnerable members.

AQO 7444/11-15

Mr Seán Rogers (SDLP - South Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to ensure that Community Transport remains an integral part of the transport system.

15/01/2015

I am aware that there are a substantial number of Community Transport Service providers across Northern Ireland and of the valuable services that they provide to local communities and to their members. My Department's link to community transport is through grant support provided to 11 Rural Community Transport Partnerships in 8 operational areas under the auspices of the Rural Transport Fund which is administered by my Department. The primary objective of the Rural Transport Fund is to reduce social isolation in rural areas by improving or providing new transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility.

To meet this objective each partnership provides transport options to their members who live in rural areas. The type of services provided include a Dial-a-Lift scheme which is a transport service for

individuals which can provide access to local basic services such as shopping, post office or local health services such as GP, or link in with the wider public transport network to travel outside their local area.

The partnerships are voluntary and community organisations and are companies in their own right. They all have Boards of Directors who are responsible for the governance and strategic direction for the company. They all are required to operate under licensing arrangements which are the responsibility of DOE NI.

It would be my intention subject to EU rules and licensing arrangement to continue to support these partnerships next year and in later years. However the level of grant support next year available will be determined by the budget allocation made available to me.

AQW 41087/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the future of services facilitated through the Translink Rural Transport Fund.

21/01/2015

The detailed implication of the budget for 2015/16 is yet to be worked out. There will be difficult decisions to make regarding the future of services bearing in mind the overall funding to Translink and Community Transport has been reduced by at least £13m and £2m next year respectively.

AQW 40391/11-15

Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry) To ask the Minister for Regional Development what transport provision exists for people with visual impairment; and how cuts to his Department's budget will impact on this provision.

07/01/2015

I can advise that Translink services are available to all members of the public including those with visual impairments. I understand that making these services as accessible as possible can play a vital role in enabling people with a disability to fully participate in the community. My Department will continue to provide revenue support to Translink and I have been successful in securing additional resource from the Executive which will allow Translink to continue to provide much needed town services.

Additionally the Disability Action Transport Scheme operated by Disability Action and Dial-A-Lift services provided by Rural Community Transport Partnerships, that my Department also funds, offers specialised public transport options for people with all disabilities including those with visual impairments. It is my intention that my Department continues to support these schemes subject to EU rules and licensing arrangements, next year and in later years.

Specifically in regard to people with a visual impairment, I announced in October 2014 my Department's plans to commence the installation of Audio Visual (AV) systems on the Metro bus network in early 2015. The project will involve the installation of AV equipment on 294 Metro buses, including 30 Park and Ride vehicles, and at 191 key bus stops at a total cost of £700k. The Audio Visual (AV) systems will provide all passengers with real time information relating to bus location via a speaking voice and visual display.

AQW 39693/11-15

Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down) To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail the grants available from his Department for community groups.

03/12/2014

The table below provides information as to the programmes of funding and the schemes supported together with the level of funding for 2014/15.

PROGRAMME	ORGANISATION FUNDED	FUNDING
Rural Transport Fund (RTF)	*Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPS)	£3,627,519.00
	Community Transport Association (CTA)	£100,000.00
Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)	Disability Action	£3,200,190.00
	Shopmobility	£377,015.52
	Inclusive Mobility Transport Committee (IMTAC)	£68,000.00
	Volunteer Now	£82,114.00
TOTAL		£7,454,838.52

* DARD also provide grant support to RCTPS by way of support for the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme (ARTS). In 2014/15 this will be in the region of £500,000.

AQW 39669/11-15

Mr Cathal Boylan (SF - Newry and Armagh) To ask the Minister of the Environment to detail the programmes and grants that are under threat due to the recent proposed budget cuts; and the cost of each. [Priority Written]

02/12/2014

My Department published its assessment of the 2015-16 draft Budget as approved by the Executive on 27 November 2014. This assessment highlighted that the allocations proposed for the Department in the Executive's draft Budget would have significant adverse implications for the services provided by my department and for its clients, stakeholders and staff.

Under the draft budget proposals, my Department's non ring-fenced Resource DEL budget was reduced by 15.1% (£17.6 million). Allocations were also made to my department of £2 million for local government and £2.7 million for other purposes. Therefore the net reduction to the opening budget under these proposals would be £12.9 million (11.1%).

My Department's assessment of the draft Budget proposals indicates that in order to meet these reductions a wide range of grants, contracted services, road safety advertising and educational materials and professional fees paid would have to be significantly reduced or ceased completely.

Based on the current assessment of the draft Budget, proposals for addressing the £12.9 million of reductions include reducing the two main Local Government grants the Department administers (De-Rating Grant and Rates Support Grant) by £6.7 million.

In seeking to address the proposed budget reductions of £12.9 million my department has also had to bear in mind some inescapable elements of cost including those contracted and pay bill services as well as any new inescapable costs for 2015-16. In effect this has meant some of the more discretionary

budgets such as those for grants programmes; road safety advertising and educational materials; contracted out services; and professional fees would need to be reduced significantly.

I am continuing to press the Finance Minister to bring forward alternative proposals in his final Budget to address my most serious concerns about the DOE's draft Budget position. In particular I am seeking ring fenced protection for key grants paid to local government and for some easement in the excessive reductions proposed for our other services in the draft Budget.

The table below provides the current year allocations (2014-15) for the programmes and grants which are under threat due to the proposed budget cuts.

Programmes and Grants	Current Allocations for 2014-15 £million
Road Safety Advertising Programme	1.8
Constructions Product Grant	0.2
Emergency Planning Grant	0.5
JNCC Grants	0.3
Listed Building Grants	2.2
Litter Grant	0.1
Civic Pride Funding	0.1
Eco Schools Grant	0.1
Challenge Fund	1.3
Community Waste Fund	0.2
NILGA Support Grants	0.1
National Trust Grant	0.1
Natural Heritage Grants Programme/ Fund	2.2
UAHS and AHF Grant	0.05
Townscape Heritage Initiative Grant	0.07
PDSU – Waste Resources Grant	0.01
Community Places Grant	0.07
WRAP Grant	0.6
Local Air Quality Grant	0.4
PLACE Grant	0.01
Community Transport Association Grants (Road Safety Grants & admin fee)	0.2
Sustainability Innovation Fund	0.4
Disability Action Grant	0.03

Contracted services for environmental related activities	4.9
Road Safety Educational Materials	0.4
Professional fees paid for environmental related activities	0.4

In addition to the reductions in the programmes and grants outlined above, other grants that are under threat due to the recent proposed budget cuts are the De-Rating Grant and the Rates Support Grant. The current 2014-15 budget for the De-Rating Grant is £25.8 million and under the draft budget proposals a reduction of 15.1% (£3.9 million) would be made. The current 2014-15 budget for the Rates Support Grant is £18.3 million and a 15.1% reduction to this grant would mean a reduction of £2.8 million.