

Keeper of the House

Introduction

The Speaker and the Assembly are served by the Keeper of the House, who is available to all Members individually for consultation and assistance.

The Keeper of the House directorate aims to deliver the best possible services to the Members, the public and all those who work in or visit Parliament Buildings.

The directorate is divided into five functional offices:

- Events Co-ordination Office;
- Facilities Office;
- Security Office;
- Building Management Office; and
- Health and Safety Office.

Events Co-ordination Office

FUNCTION

The Events Co-ordination Office provides Members with a comprehensive events co-ordination, planning and management service to ensure successful events in compliance with the requirements of the Assembly Commission.

Events fall into four categories – private, official, press and lobby. The Events Co-ordination Office has responsibility for the receipt, control and management of event bookings including the allocation of function facilities. An event planning service is also available to assist Members in the detailed planning of their events, incorporating catering, security, health and safety, and entertainment requirements. Events Co-ordination Office personnel attend events to assist in their smooth running.

At a Member's request the office will arrange to receive and provide guests with professional presentations covering the Building's history,

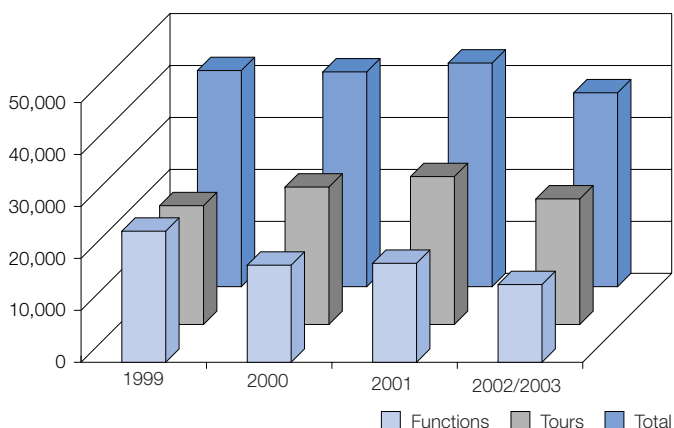
architecture and present usage. The Office is also responsible for the management, maintenance and control of equipment used during Assembly events.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2002 TO 31 MARCH 2003

The most notable visitors during the year were Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, who met Assembly Members on 14 May.

The majority of guests received came from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain. A significant number of other countries have also been represented. Since records began in January 1999 some 128 countries have been represented among the guests visiting Parliament Buildings.

A breakdown of the number of guests visiting Parliament Buildings in the year ending 31 March 2003 is set out below:



- 486 functions were held involving 14,961 guests; and
- 24,169 guests participated in 949 tours.

The service provided by the Events Co-ordination Office was used extensively by Assembly Members. All political parties, including 106 Members (98%), used the booking and event planning service.

All sections of Northern Ireland society held functions on the premises. Organisations facilitated included representatives from the arts, education, health, voluntary bodies, environmental groups and business sectors. Many school, youth, church and community groups were also hosted at Parliament Buildings during the year.

The Events Office was closely involved in the planning of the annual major outdoor concert held in the lawns of Parliament Buildings. On 27 July Rod Stewart, Gabrielle and Juliet Turner played to an audience of approximately 13,800.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2003-04

- To maintain the high quality and efficiency of services to Members;
- To develop a database to better monitor customer satisfaction levels; and
- To undertake a full review of regulations for events at Parliament Buildings.

Facilities Office

FUNCTION

The Catering and Functions Committee, supported by the Facilities Office, is responsible for the planning and delivery of catering services and the Assembly Gift Shop. Satisfaction, with regard to the quality of catering services provided to Members, visitors attending functions, and all those who work in Parliament Buildings, is paramount.

The principal services provided are contracted to a private support services contractor who also provides cleaning services, floral services, portage services and a help desk facility for enquiries and advice.

The Assembly Commission and the Catering and Functions Committee support the promotion of Fairtrade products in the Assembly. The current support services contract commits the contractor to purchase Fairtrade goods where possible.

CORE SERVICES

A wide range of dining services is available to Members, Secretariat staff and guests. In addition, Members and their guests may avail of facilities in the Members' Dining Room, where full silver service is available.

Further services provided include a Gift Shop, Post Office, vending machines, water dispensers and an automatic bank teller machine. In conjunction with Facilities office and Events Co-ordination Office, the support services contractor has provided extensive catering services for all events and functions in Parliament Buildings and for the annual concerts in Stormont estate.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2002 TO 31 MARCH 2003

A consultancy report was commissioned in 2002 to make recommendations on the most appropriate way to develop the Assembly Gift Shop with a view to maximising its potential. The Catering and Functions Committee is considering the consultant's recommendations, including accessibility for people with varying degrees of disability.

Catering, functions and the Assembly Gift Shop have shown a steady increase in trade over the last four years as detailed below.

Year	Annual Sales
1999	£487,000
2000	£554,000
2001	£688,000
2002	£631,000

The environmentally friendly policy on recycling, managed by Facilities Office in co-operation with the support services contractor, ensures that a much greater percentage of paper, bottles, cans and newspapers are recycled. The Office of the Keeper of the House is committed to maximising participation in this policy.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2003-04

Implementation of the recommendations regarding the development of the Assembly Gift Shop.

Building Management Office

FUNCTION

The Building Management Office (formerly Works) provides a proactive service to Members and all those who work in the Building in relation to all accommodation and associated services. This includes the allocation of accommodation and the provision and allocation of all furniture requirements and subsequent office layouts, building management and maintenance, energy management, fixed fire-safety systems and the provision of telephone systems, voicemail, mobile phones and fax machines.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD

1 APRIL 2002 TO 31 MARCH 2003

- Procurement of building services: consultants, recommendations following their review of present provision is expected May 2003;
- Lighting, CCTV and Press Bar:
 - new light fittings have been installed in the upper plateau car parking areas and approach roads;
 - CCTV surveillance system has been upgraded;
 - Press Bar has been refurbished;
- Parenting Facilities: parenting room for members of the public and a similar facility for Members and staff has been provided;
- Access: counter induction loops have been installed in the Members' Bar, the Press Bar and the Senate Chamber, providing a full induction loop coverage;
- Ormiston House:
 - Planning Service decision is awaited in respect of Crown development approval for temporary office accommodation;
 - A detailed inspection and condition survey has been carried out of Ormiston House, mews and the entrance gatelodge. This survey also encompassed a measured survey of the existing floor plan layouts of all the buildings, resulting in detailed drawings to scale for record purposes. A photogrammetric survey of the existing elevations of Ormiston House was undertaken; and
 - Remedial work to the roof of Ormiston House has been carried out.

REFURBISHMENT, ADDITIONS AND REPAIRS

Three additional offices and a Members/staff shower facility have been created. Refurbishment work has been undertaken to 13 offices, the Lower Ground Floor corridor and the flooring in the Long Gallery. Repairs have been carried out to the Great Hall ceiling and chandeliers

Walk-in fridges and freezers have been installed in the basement restaurant, and improved ventilation and air-handling units have been provided in a number of locations throughout Parliament Buildings.

An asset management register for movable contents and equipment has been compiled and is held electronically

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2003-04

- The most challenging task ahead will be the development of the Ormiston House site to provide permanent accommodation for the Assembly Secretariat. The setting of Ormiston House and the building's listed status will be a major consideration in the overall development of the 13-acre site;
- The review of the provision of building services within Parliament Buildings, including building maintenance, planned preventative maintenance and associated contract works, is presently being undertaken by a consultant. Completion of this review and implementation of the chosen option will be a major task in the coming year;
- Further upgrading of Parliament Buildings to meet the accessibility requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is planned;

- Review of the fire alarm system, which will include installation of a deaf alerter system and intercom link to refuge areas throughout the Building;
- Provision of CCTV surveillance system to the lower east car park;
- Election planning challenges during dissolution in 2003;
- Redecoration of Members' offices, their support staff offices, Committee Rooms, corridors and staircases throughout Parliament Buildings; and
- Allocation of accommodation to new Members post election.

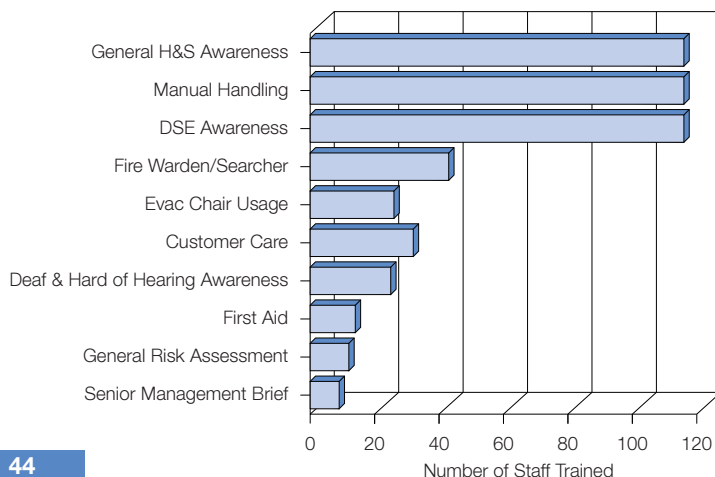
Health and Safety Office

FUNCTION

The Assembly Commission is committed to promoting a positive health and safety culture throughout the organisation. There is a health and safety policy statement for the information and guidance of the Assembly Secretariat, Members and their support staff.

The Health and Safety branch is available to provide information and advice to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, Members, their support staff and the Secretariat staff on all matters relating to health and safety.

Staff trained in health and safety, 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003



ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD

1 APRIL 2002 TO 31 MARCH 2003

- Secretariat staff have received health and safety training. However, it has not been possible to commence training for Members and their support staff;
- Each directorate has staff trained in general, display screen equipment (DSE) and manual handling risk assessment;
- Nominated staff have received refresher first aid and fire warden training;
- Draft health and safety manual available; and
- Health and safety auditing system has been established.

During the past year the office has also:

- Developed policies and procedures for a range of health and safety matters; and
- Carried out quarterly health and safety building inspections.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2003-04

- To ensure all Members, their support staff and Secretariat staff have an opportunity to receive health and safety training;
- To ensure each directorate will have an appropriate number of staff trained in undertaking general, DSE and manual handling risk assessments;
- To provide first aid and fire warden training for nominated staff;
- To finalise the health and safety manual and to make it available on the Assembly's web site; and
- To monitor the health and safety performance of the Assembly.

Security Office

FUNCTION

The purpose of the Security Office is to provide the two key services of security and door-keeping for Parliament Buildings, Members, their support staff, Assembly Secretariat and visitors.

Security Service

The security service is responsible for controlling access to Parliament Buildings and any other locations controlled by the Assembly. Additionally, the service screens deliveries to the Assembly; detects intruders through electronic or physical means; provides a vetting service; issues passes; advises on physical, electronic and procedural security; investigates and records any incidents; co-ordinates and controls emergency responses; and develops and tests business continuity and crisis management plans.

Doorkeeping Service

The doorkeeping service is responsible for a range of duties including the control of access to and within the Northern Ireland Assembly controlled buildings, escort and reception duties, light portage duties, mail collection, sorting and delivery, Chamber services and events support.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2002 TO 31 MARCH 2003

During the period covered by this report the Security Office has faced a number of challenges, most notably relating to the ongoing training of staff. Training packages have been developed which in a number of cases are suitable not only for Doorkeepers but also for Secretariat staff.

All staff have undergone refresher training in areas such as Assembly procedures, Chamber duties, customer care, first aid, radio

communication skills, team awareness/team leader, fire and evacuation procedures.

As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations Her Majesty The Queen visited Parliament Buildings to address Members in the Great Hall.

Additional security procedures had to be implemented for the visit, and these required a high degree of flexibility from Doorkeepers. This flexibility was also demonstrated during the summer when security staff played a vital role during the Rod Stewart concert.

Due to suspension the recruitment process for additional Doorkeepers had to be put on hold. However, the Deputy Head of Security was appointed in April 2002.

Suspension has also delayed the assumption of responsibility for the security of the immediate area around Parliament Buildings.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2003-04

- To complete the recruitment process for additional Doorkeepers;
- To assume responsibility for the security of the immediate area around Parliament Buildings as soon as the required number of suitable guards are recruited and trained;
- Continue to develop and deliver security-related training packages to meet the Assembly needs; and
- Continue to review and develop procedures in order to counter potential threats.