
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions
Agriculture and Rural Development [p1]
Regional Development [p1]

£5.00

This document is available in a range of alternative formats.

For more information please contact the
Northern Ireland Assembly, Printed Paper Office,
Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX
Tel: 028 9052 1078

ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

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

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 05 September 2008

Written Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rivers Agency

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development at what time on Saturday 16th August 2008 did Rivers Agency initiate a major Incident Response Regime. (AQW 49/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): Following Met Office severe weather warnings issued on Friday 15th August, Rivers Agency was engaged in flood event preparations. This included liaison with other responding Agencies, placing staff on standby and debris removal from inlet grilles.

Rivers Agency staff also loaded crew cabs and lorries with sandbags, pumps were tested, and additional sandbags procured.

Industrial and engineering staff were mobilised on the morning of Saturday 16th August clearing grilles and attending flooding incidents. As the storm event developed towards mid-day, the Met Office issued further weather warnings and the Rivers Agency Senior Management instructed the opening of the Area Offices in response to the increasing volume of calls for assistance. These instructions were issued to the various offices between 12:00pm and 2:15 pm.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development if necessary action was taken by his

Department to reduce the volume of water in Spelga Dam on 16 and 17 August 2008. (AQW 13/09)

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it is a regular and normal occurrence when Spelga Dam is at full capacity for it to overflow to the River Bann. During the period 16 -17 August 2008, Spelga Dam was at full capacity and the overflow system was operating as normal. In the circumstances, there was no operational action required or taken by Northern Ireland Water to reduce the level of water in the Dam.

The damage to property and crops in the Hilltown and Rathfriland areas was therefore not caused as a result of any lowering of the water levels in Spelga Dam by Northern Ireland Water.

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the damage caused to property in the Hilltown and Rathfriland areas, as a result of the necessary lowering of the water levels in Spelga Dam on 16 and 17 August 2008. (AQW 14/09)

Mr C Murphy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it is a regular and normal occurrence when Spelga Dam is at full capacity for it to overflow to the River Bann. During the period 16 -17 August 2008, Spelga Dam was at full capacity and the overflow system was operating as normal. In the circumstances, there was no operational action required or taken by Northern Ireland Water to reduce the level of water in the Dam.

The damage to property and crops in the Hilltown and Rathfriland areas was therefore not caused as a result of any lowering of the water levels in Spelga Dam by Northern Ireland Water.

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the damage caused to potato and cereal crops in the Hilltown and Rathfriland areas, as a result of the necessary lowering of the water levels in Spelga Dam on 16 and 17 August 2008. (AQW 15/09)

Mr C Murphy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it is a regular and normal occurrence when Spelga Dam is at full capacity for it to overflow to the River Bann. During the period 16 -17 August 2008, Spelga Dam was at full capacity and the overflow system was operating as normal. In the circumstances, there was no operational action required or taken by

Northern Ireland Water to reduce the level of water in the Dam.

The damage to property and crops in the Hilltown and Rathfriland areas was therefore not caused as a result of any lowering of the water levels in Spelga Dam by Northern Ireland Water.

Incident Response Regime

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development what time on Saturday 16th August 2008 did the (i) Roads Services, (ii) Northern Ireland Water, (iii) Department for Regional Development, initiate a major Incident Response Regime. (AQW 48/09)

Mr C Murphy:

(i) Roads Service

Following the first early weather warning of heavy rain on Friday 15 August 2008, Roads Service activated its flooding emergency response plan and put all four Roads Service Divisions on emergency stand-by, particularly in areas affected by flooding earlier that week. Conference calls were also held on 15 August 2008 with other key responding organisations, including the two other drainage agencies (Northern Ireland Water and Rivers Agency), to confirm that preparations were in hand to deal with any emergency.

As the flooding situation worsened late on the afternoon of 16 August 2008, additional resources were called upon to help deal with the co-ordination of the incident. Roads Service tactical management arrangements were active in the early afternoon, soon after the volume of calls increased. The PSNI also set up a Silver Command at the Traffic Information and Control Centre, with Roads Service staff in attendance. Roads Service was also involved in two further conference calls on Saturday night.

(ii) Northern Ireland Water

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it activated its Major Incident Plan pre-emptively on 15 August 2008 in response to severe weather alerts from the Met Office. Staff and contractors were placed on high alert and a range of measures were put in train which ensured an effective response to the extensive flooding that occurred across the North, in terms of timeliness, resources, incident management and co-ordination.

By 3.30pm on 16 August an upsurge in call volumes to the Customer Relations Centre gave the first indications of possible extensive flooding. Incident management arrangements were initiated by 4.00pm and an Incident Management Team was actively responding to unfolding events from its Head Office

in Belfast by 5.00pm. These arrangements remained active over the weekend and throughout the following week. Tactical management arrangements were already active from 2.30pm from regional offices.

(iii) Department for Regional Development

I and senior staff in the Department were kept fully apprised of the situation and the measures being taken under the Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water flooding emergency response plans and by the emergency services and other agencies involved. The Department's Major Emergency Response Plan would not have provided any additional assistance on the ground and, therefore, was not invoked.

CORRIGENDUM

Written Answer Booklet of 30 May 2008

(Volume 31, No WA1)

In page WA58, col 1, replace the answer to question (AQW 7138/08) with;

There is no intention to underspend in Derry. All Neighbourhood Renewal funding for the North West will be directed at the priorities identified in the relevant Neighbourhood Action Plans. Departmental officials are in discussions with the Neighbourhood Partnerships and other Government Departments to develop services that will make a difference to those living in the most disadvantaged communities.

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Agriculture and Rural Development

Rivers Agency 1

Regional Development

Incident Response Regime 2

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam 1

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam 1

Volume of Water in Spelga Dam 1

Published by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online

www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

TSO

PO Box 29, Norwich, NR3 1GN

Telephone orders/General enquiries: 0870 600 5522

Fax orders: 0870 600 5533

E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk

Textphone 0870 240 3701

TSO Shops

16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD

028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401

71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ

0870 606 5566 Fax 0870 606 5588

TSO@Blackwell and other Accredited Agents