
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 19 September 2008

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Fair Employment Monitoring

Dr Farry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the implications for the current approach to Fair Employment monitoring, arising out of the judgement of the European Court on Human Rights in the *Alexandridis v. Greece* case (2008), regarding the right not to disclose a religious identity. (AQW 116/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The *Alexandridis* case dealt with a specific issue within the Greek legal system and the decision of the European Court of Human Rights was highly dependent on the individual facts of the case. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), like most Convention Articles, does not confer absolute rights. If there is any interference with such rights, the Court will look for a clear legal basis and procedures for the interference, including whether the interference seeks to achieve a legitimate aim such as a pressing social need and whether the interference is a proportionate response to achieving the legitimate aim.

Monitoring the community background of the workforce in Northern Ireland is exercised under a clear legal framework, the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations which are made under that Order. Fair employment monitoring was introduced to enable the composition of those who belong to the Protestant or the Roman Catholic community to be ascertained. Such monitoring is essential to enable the proper assessment of progress being made towards fair participation in the workforce by both communities. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has a statutory role in overseeing and safeguarding the fair employment monitoring procedures.

The European Court of Human Rights accepts that there are areas in which national authorities are in a better position to decide what is best for their people. It is for each state to balance the rights and to act proportionally and for good reason in interfering with such rights. We believe that the *Alexandridis* case does not have implications for the current system we have for recording and monitoring the community background of employees locally.

Community Heating Schemes

Ms Anderson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the possibility of using community heating schemes will form part of the response to the Child Poverty Inquiry recommendations. (AQW 123/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We are currently finalising our formal response to the OFMDFM Committee's final report on its Inquiry into Child Poverty here.

The response deals with all recommendations made and will be forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible.

Sustainable Development Commission

Mr Ford asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the post of the Commissioner on the Sustainable Development Commission became vacant; and when it is anticipated that the post will be filled. (AQW 305/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The post of the Northern Ireland Commissioner of the UK wide Sustainable Development Commission became vacant on 1 April 2008.

We would refer you to our answer to your earlier question AQW 137/09.

Sustainable Development Commission

Mr Ford asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Executive relates to the work of the Sustainable Development Commission in the absence of a Northern Ireland Commissioner. (AQW 306/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Notwithstanding the vacancy in the post of the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Commissioner, there continues to be good communication between Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) officials and the Sustainable Development Unit within OFMDFM. The SDC has an established Secretariat

here, which is currently working with OFMDFM officials on the delivery of the Sustainable Development training programme, and in consultation with OFMDFM officials, it contributed to the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The SDC Secretariat has also corresponded with, and given evidence before, the OFMDFM Committee.

Programme for Government

Mr Hamilton asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress the Department is making in delivering its Programme for Government and Public Service Agreement commitments. (AQW 430/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Office of the First and deputy First Minister is making good progress in delivering its Programme for Government (PfG) and Public Service Agreement (PSA) commitments.

To date in Year 1 of the PfG, achievements include:

- Extension of the Northern Ireland Bureau's representation to New York to promote Northern Ireland's interests and develop further key contacts in the US.
- Appointment of 2 new honorary consuls for Malta, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- Provision of additional budget provision to fund both the appointment from 1 September of 14 additional Panel Commissioners, and a number of appointments to senior levels within the Planning Appeals and Water Appeals Commission. These additional resources are targeted on addressing the backlog of appeals cases.
- All Departments have nominated a 'Champion for Children and Young People' to liaise on children's issues and to encourage departments to ensure children's and young people's interests are fostered and their views sought on policy and strategy issues. The Children's Champions hold regular meetings chaired by OFMDFM and report to the Children and Young People's Strategy Planning and Review Group which is chaired by the Junior Ministers.
- The Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children was established on 31 January 2008 and there has been 3 meetings held to date. The Sub-Committee has established 6 key priorities and has set up cross departmental sub-groups to take these forward.
- The Ilex Urban Regeneration Company has taken forward the Ebrington masterplan and is developing capital infrastructure projects for site transport, open space, car parking and event infrastructure.

- We have commissioned a new sustainable development strategy – the first draft of which we are currently considering – and sustained our funding for the sustainable development commission.
- Through the co-ordination and drafting of the Executive's legislative programme, we helped secure the Introduction of 17 Bills during the 2008/2009 Assembly Session compared to the 15 which we announced in October last year; and
- We have made significant progress in delivering the 10-year Investment Strategy to renew our vital infrastructure.

We have also taken forward a range of cross-cutting issues in conjunction with DSD and DHSSPS in the delivery of our commitments under PSA 7, Making People's Lives Better.

Progress against 3 of the targets allocated to OFMDFM in the PfG has taken a little longer than planned:

- PSA 7 includes a target date of March 2008 for the establishment of a Victims and Survivors Forum – this has not been achieved. Legal responsibility for establishing the Victims and Survivors Forum rests with the Commission for Victims and Survivors, which was not established until the beginning of June 2008. The Commission is currently considering plans for establishing a Forum as part of its overall work programme.
- The target date of July 2008 for the agreement of expected outcomes from the Older People's Strategy, again in PSA 7, has been deferred to Autumn 2008, pending the appointment of the Older Person's Advocate. The appointment of an Older Person's Advocate is progressing and is expected to be complete by October 2008. The newly appointed Advocate will co-chair a reactivated Older People's Panel with OFMDFM officials; and
- The consolidation of 70% of NICS Departmental and agency websites by March 2009, as set out in PSA 20, will not be achieved due to recent problems with the security of some departmental websites.

Transfer of Former Military Sites

Mr Bresland asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the transfer of former military sites from the United Kingdom Government. (AQO 21/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We can reassure the Member that we are taking every opportunity to press the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State on this important issue.

In addition to regular official meetings on the subject, the First Minister personally pressed the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on this point in Parliament during Northern Ireland Question Time on 25 June this year.

To date we have not received a decision but remain hopeful of a positive outcome and will continue to press for the gifting of sites.

Credit Crunch

Mr McCausland asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action the Executive is taking in relation to the credit crunch. (AQO 75/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The “credit crunch” is, of course, a global phenomenon. As a small open economy we cannot remain immune from global economic events such as the difficulties in the world banking sector and the rise in commodity prices. We are keenly aware that the combination of restricted access to credit, falling property prices, increasing inflation, rising food and energy prices, may in the short term, undermine business and consumer confidence and seriously impact on the well-being of all our people.

We have been keen to hear direct from local stakeholders and have their view on the particular impacts that the economic slowdown is having locally. We have planned a series of meetings with local interest groups to canvas their views, not just on the scale and types of problems we face, but also to discuss what mitigating steps we might take. In this regard we have already met with the banking sector, the Institute of Directors, and representatives of the local construction industry. Further meetings are planned.

We intend to report on our meetings to other Ministers and it is our intention to have this issue as a regular feature on Executive business to ensure that we are collectively addressing the problem across the full width of government.

There have been some encouraging local developments on the housing front. Since our meeting with local banks, one has announced a new scheme in alliance with local property developers that protects first time buyers from some of the volatility of the property market. Also, the Minister for Social Development recently launched the “own a home” pilot in Portadown. We also welcome the stamp duty “holiday” announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The worldwide economic outlook is challenging, but we are determined that we do not talk ourselves into economic despondency. We need to be mindful

that, despite the pressures and challenges we face locally as a result of current global conditions, it is very important that as well as trying to do what we can to address these issues, we must not get caught in the trap of focusing on the short term issues to the exclusion of our longer term goals. We must continue to plan and build for the future. We have a secure budget and programme for government, and a sizeable investment strategy to take forward our key aim of growing a dynamic innovative economy.

Review of the Civic Forum

Mr Paisley Jnr asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the review of the Civic Forum. (AQO 32/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The review of the Civic Forum has sought to canvass as wide a spectrum of opinion as possible on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the structure, operation, composition and membership of the Civic Forum and to determine the most appropriate mechanism and arrangements for engaging with, and obtaining the views of, civic society on social, economic and cultural matters.

The consultation phase of the review was launched on 29 May and, by the closing date for responses on 29 August, over 50 written submissions had been received.

During the period May to August, meetings were held with a wide range of stakeholders, including the former Chair and members of the Forum, civic society organisations and academics.

Members of the review team have conducted visits to examine mechanisms for engagement with civic society in other jurisdictions.

Details of existing arrangements for engagement with civic society by Northern Ireland Departments have been collated.

The review team is currently analysing the information assembled, including consultation responses, with a view to presenting recommendations and options to us in the near future.

Department Staff Numbers

Mr Craig asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many staff are employed in the Department; and the projected number of staff by the end of the Comprehensive Spending Review period. (AQO 30/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: On the 1st of September 2008, there were 393 full and

part-time staff directly employed by the Department and 8 staff loaned from other Northern Ireland Civil Service departments working in areas such as statistics and research.

It is important to recognise that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister covers a wide range of functions, many of them conferred on it by statute and that much of our work facilitates the business of other Ministers and their departments. For example, through the Office of the Legislative Counsel, the Executive Information Service, our offices in Brussels and Washington, and through our support of the work of the Executive including the North South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Council.

As we move further into the Comprehensive Spending Review period, we are continuing to seek to improve efficiency and maximise effectiveness and we will, of course, keep our staffing levels under review.

Cancelled Executive Meeting

Mr Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the meeting of the Executive, due to take place on 24 July 2008, was cancelled. (AQO 15/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Executive meeting scheduled for 24 July 2008 was cancelled because there was no agreement that this meeting should take place.

Executive Meeting

Mr McCarthy asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to state the dates the Executive will meet in the next 2 months. (AQO 88/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: As co-chairs of the Northern Ireland Executive we have agreed a schedule of dates for Executive meetings as follows:

- 18 September 2008
- 2 October 2008
- 16 October 2008
- 30 October 2008
- 13 November 2008
- 27 November 2008

This schedule of meetings may be altered in response to changing circumstances.

Peace and Reconciliation Activities

Mr Dallat asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans it has for the promotion of peace and reconciliation activities in the run up to Christmas and the new year. (AQO 7/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We remain fully committed to addressing the divisions within our society and to achieving measurable reductions in sectarianism, racism and intolerance.

Our Department funds on an ongoing basis throughout the year a range of initiatives and programmes aimed at the promotion of peace and reconciliation and the development of good relations through the Community Relations Council, the District Councils Community Relations Programme and our Minority Ethnic Communities Fund.

Our Department's sponsorship of the Community Relations Council in the region of £3.3m enables it to fund a broad range of regional and local activities and initiatives including the core-funding of interface workers; conflict resolution workers and programmes; small grants for cross-community events and research on good relations issues.

Funding of £2.5m is made available annually to the 26 District Councils to operate community relations based programmes such as small grant schemes for community groups engaged in cross-community activities. Other projects include bonfire initiatives which are aimed at challenging sectarian behaviours, youth-based activities targeting issues around sectarianism and racism and integration of minority ethnic people into host communities. In addition, funding of almost £1m has been made available this financial year to promote good race relations.

The past 3 years have seen significant progress in improved relationships, with historically low levels of violence and tension. We want to ensure that improved relationships within the whole community continue and we want to address the challenges that face new and host communities. Therefore, we have committed an additional £7.5m direct expenditure over the next three year – 2008/2011, making a total of £29m on good relations and good race relations.

Devolution of Policing and Justice Powers

Mr B McCrea asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the current state of proposals for the devolution of policing and justice powers. (AQO 28/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is for the Assembly to request the devolution of policing and justice powers and its report, submitted to the

Secretary of State in March 2008 in accordance with Section 18 of the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006, recorded consensus that there should be a single policing and justice department and on the range of matters which might be devolved. The report recommended that the political parties commit to further discussions on the Ministerial arrangements for a new department and on when a request might be made.

We have reached a view that justice and policing powers should reside with a single Minister elected from the Assembly in a way which would ensure cross-community support, and we wrote to the Chair of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on 28 July 2008 inviting that Committee to consider producing a further report within this framework. Our officials have conducted prudent preparatory work to plan for the administrative and resource implications of devolution, in the event of political agreement to proceed.

Programme for Government

Mr Poots asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what measures have been put in place to ensure delivery of targets for the Programme for Government. (AQO 122/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Programme for Government is framed under five priority areas which set out a range of key goals and commitments for the Executive collectively to deliver. These are in turn supported by a detailed framework of 23 cross-cutting Public Service Agreements (PSAs) which confirm the key actions and targets departments will take forward over the next three years in support of the Executive's priorities.

The Executive recognise that many of the outcomes and targets set out in the PSA framework will only be achieved where departments work closely together and co-ordinate their approach. In light of this, departments have worked together over recent months to develop detailed Delivery Agreements for each PSA. These Delivery Agreements, to be published on departmental websites, set out in more detail how departments intend to ensure delivery of the targets and actions set out in the PSA framework and will provide the basis upon which the Executive will monitor and report on progress at departmental level.

Emergency Flooding Relief

Mr K Robinson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what measures it has co-ordinated within the Executive in relation to

emergency flooding relief, since the last meeting of the Assembly in July 2008. (AQO 26/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Following extremely heavy rain on Saturday 16 August, flooding occurred in locations across Northern Ireland. To ensure a co-ordinated and effective strategic response, the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of the Environment convened a meeting of the Crisis Management Group on Sunday 17 August with senior officials from the relevant organisations and agreed a range of response measures. In parallel, the Minister of the Environment agreed with the Minister of Finance and Personnel that a scheme of emergency financial assistance should be made available to district councils, including payments to affected householders. This was agreed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Details of this scheme were released by the Department of the Environment on Monday 18 August and councils immediately implemented the emergency financial assistance grants, with all householders who qualified within the terms of the scheme being entitled to a payment of £1,000. This payment was provided by the Executive as practical assistance to those who had suffered severe inconvenience, to ensure that homes were made habitable as quickly as possible. It was not a compensation payment.

In addition to the payments to individual households, district councils will be able to apply to the DOE for financial assistance with the direct and indirect costs of the flooding, including collection, retention and disposal of damaged household goods; assistance to private householders to clean up their homes and gardens; and provision of dehumidifiers to dry out homes.

As agreed at the Crisis Management Group meeting, other agencies, including the Chief Medical Officer, the Social Security Agency and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency also offered practical advice and assistance to those affected.

Up to Friday 12 September, district councils had paid an emergency financial assistance grant to 1,431 households.

Northern Ireland Bureau

Mr McQuillan asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the work of the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington. (AQO 5/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington, D.C. is playing an important role in supporting the work of the Executive and the Assembly in all matters

which have a United States dimension. The Bureau works closely with the US administration, the British and Irish Embassies and key business and political interests in advancing the Executive's international priorities and economic and cultural objectives.

The Bureau's work focuses on presenting Northern Ireland as a confident, outwardly looking region and as part of this strategy the Bureau pursues high level political contacts within key Federal and State institutions across the US. At the beginning of this year the Bureau strengthened its profile in the US by establishing an office in New York. This has helped in raising Northern Ireland's profile and in providing a focus for the work of the Executive in the New York Consular District, which extends to Pennsylvania and parts of New England.

The Bureau played an important role in the very successful investment conference in May and the visit by President Bush to NI in June. Both these events help project a very positive image of Northern Ireland by raising our profile as an investment location. The Bureau will continue to work closely with NI Departments and key agencies, including InvestNI and Tourism Ireland in attracting investment, encouraging people to visit and in creating new business and cultural opportunities for Northern Ireland.

Over the next two months the Bureau will facilitate separate visits to the US by the Ministers for Social Development and Employment and Learning and for both Junior Ministers.

Executive and Departmental Business

Mr Kennedy asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list all Executive and departmental business that has been due for Executive decision since June 2008; and to detail delays caused by the failure of the Executive to meet. (AQO 14/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is not our practice to disclose details of Executive business. The content of Executive papers, including draft papers, is confidential.

Transfer of Policing and Justice Powers

Mr Burnside asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they have had with (i) the United Kingdom Government; and (ii) the Government of the Irish Republic, in the last 3 months, in relation to the transfer of policing and justice powers to the Assembly. (AQO 58/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is for the Assembly to request the devolution of policing and justice powers and the achievement of

agreement on this issue is essentially a matter for the Northern Ireland political parties, rather than the United Kingdom and Irish Governments.

On 6 June 2008, we attended talks in Downing Street, hosted by the Prime Minister, on a range of matters including the devolution of policing and justice powers. The deputy First Minister also had a meeting with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs on this occasion.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr Cree asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the publication of the Regional Development Strategy, as agreed by the Executive. (AQO 29/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Regional Development Strategy was published by the Department of Regional Development in September 2001.

A fundamental review of the Regional Development Strategy is ongoing, and publication of a revised Regional Development Strategy will follow when this review is completed.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to extend the deadline for the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme. (AQW 36/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The decision to extend the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS) scheme is not within my gift. It is an issue of EU State Aid approval and the relevant EC legislation is restrictive because of the link to compliance with the Nitrates Directive.

I have been in discussions with the EU Commissioner about the FNMS deadline since March 2008. I have explained how inadequate construction capacity and wet weather have hampered progress with the scheme.

However, the Commission have insisted that the deadline for the FNMS cannot be changed. There is no legal scope under the relevant European Community legislation to extend the 60% FNMS grant beyond 31 December 2008. The Commission have stated that

it is impossible to change the EC legislation or the approval for the FNMS.

I have worked with the Construction Employers Federation and farming organisations to encourage more construction companies to build slurry tanks. I have written to farmers in the Scheme and have continually highlighted the need to complete works by the December 2008 deadline.

Farming Community in Ards

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will ensure that the farming community in the Ards area will not be discriminated against by relocating DARD Direct offices over the 16 mile radius to Newry and Downpatrick. (AQW 88/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is currently being carried out on the proposed roll-out of the DARD Direct one-stop shop model across the North of Ireland. The purpose of the EQIA is to examine the impacts of the roll-out and how the new approach to delivery of services can promote equality of opportunity for identified Section 75 groups within DARD's customers and staff.

Following agreement with the Assembly Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, the public consultation period commenced on Monday, 7th July for a 9 week period and ended on Friday, 5th September 2008.

A majority of the responses have been supportive of the concept of DARD Direct and quality of service has been identified as being generally more important to customers than the location of offices.

Concern has been expressed, however, about the need to consider a location that will provide equitable access to services for Ards, North Down and Lagan Valley.

Members may be assured that no decision on the roll-out, including the number and location of DARD Direct offices, will be taken until feedback from the recently completed public consultation has been fully considered

Commercial Fishing Boats

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what regulations are in place to prevent commercial fishing boats draining all the shell fish from Belfast Lough. (AQW 103/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Belfast Lough hosts a number of

licenced aquaculture sites for farming mussels. Operators of these sites are licenced through a fish culture licence issued under Section 11 of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966. Seed mussels from outside the Lough are laid on these sites and harvested after one to two years once they have reached marketable size. Laying and harvesting is by mussel dredgers and harvesting and vessel movements are strictly monitored and controlled by the Department through the licence conditions, inspections and satellite monitoring technology.

This year an amendment was made to the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) Regulations (NI) 1993 to prohibit the use of any mobile fishing gear including shellfish dredges westward of an imaginary straight line drawn from Carrickfergus Castle to Grey Point. Exemptions are allowed for those acting under the authority of a licence or permit issued under sections 11 or 14 respectively of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966.

Fishermen fishing for crabs and lobsters must have a Restrictive Shellfish Licence. The number of licences is capped and no new licences have been issued since 2004. Licence holders must submit monthly returns of their catches of crabs and lobsters so that the Department can evaluate stock trends and ensure that fishing effort is sustainable.

Wind Energy for Rural Business Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications there have been for wind turbines under the Wind Energy for Rural Business scheme, broken down by Parliamentary constituency. (AQW 110/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: 64 applications were made to the Wind Energy for Rural Businesses (WERB) Scheme for funding towards the erection of wind turbines. The applications can be broken down into parliamentary constituency as follows:

Belfast East	Nil
Belfast North	Nil
Belfast South	Nil
Belfast West	Nil
East Antrim	1
East Londonderry	1
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	13
Foyle	Nil
Lagan Valley	3

Mid Ulster	11
Newry & Armagh	6
North Antrim	Nil
North Down	7
South Antrim	2
South Down	2
Strangford	1
Upper Bann	1
West Tyrone	16

Glenarm Salmon Farm

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail what support and funding was made available to Glenarm Salmon Farm when they lost £1m worth of stock in November last year due to the attack by mauve jellyfish. (AQW 174/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Northern Salmon Company Limited did not receive any financial assistance from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as a result of the fish kill at Glenarm Bay in November last year. The Company's request for financial assistance was fully considered, in conjunction with other relevant Departments, but it was concluded that the request did not offer value for money in economic terms to justify support from the Executive.

Future Land Erosion and Damage to Fencing in Co. Tyrone

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to prevent future land erosion and damage to fencing at Fallagh Middle and Fallagh Lower, Gortin, Co. Tyrone. (AQW 255/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The townlands of Fallagh Middle and Fallagh Lower bound the Owenreagh Gortin watercourse which is designated under the terms of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973 from its confluence with the Owenkillew River to the upstream limits at Cashel Bridge. As such this watercourse is subject to inspection and maintenance by Rivers Agency as necessary to provide a free flow of water. Maintenance works were carried out along this stretch of watercourse during the 2006/07 and 2007/08 years. These works included shoal removal to low water level and tree and bush cutting.

Rivers Agency has received several complaints about erosion along the Owenreagh Gortin catchment and staff have visited several riparian landowners offering advice. Works to repair erosion can only be considered where it creates an impediment to flow or where there is a danger to roads, flood defences or property. Repairs to fencing remain the responsibility of the adjacent landowners.

Slurry Tanks

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what the proposed timetable is for the payment of grant aid in relation to slurry tanks that have been constructed, inspected and passed for payment. (AQW 269/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department's target for full payment of claims under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS) has been 12 weeks after receipt of a valid claim. However the Department recognised that as the number of claims will accelerate as the scheme nears closure at the end of December 2008, this target cannot be maintained. Consequently, and recognising that farmers want and need to reduce any borrowing, a part payment option has been introduced. Subject to the work being completed and satisfactory supporting invoices and receipts being provided, the Department will pay 50% of the grant on approved costs or acceptable receipts if less. The average processing time is two weeks and thus an applicant can expect to receive the part payment within 4 weeks of the date the Department receives his claim. The balance of grant will be paid once an on-farm inspection has confirmed that the work has been completed to the required specification.

Flooding

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an estimate of the total cost to the farming industry of the recent flooding. (AQW 271/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: It has proven difficult to estimate the scale of the total flooding damage. Accordingly, I have asked my officials to carry out assessments of damage to the crops sector only. Damage to outbuildings, yards, fences walls and gates is outside of the scope of this exercise.

A provisional estimate of the total costs to the crops sector due to the flooding of 16 August has been calculated at just over £450,000. This calculation is based on the inputs used to establish and maintain the crop up until the 16 August, excluding any conacre rents paid.

Flooding

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what extra resources she will provide to restore walking routes and bridges on Forest Service property that have been damaged by the recent flooding. (AQW 328/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The recent flooding caused most damage in the South/East of the Province where 3 recreational bridges were damaged (2 in Tollymore Forest Park and 1 in Rostrevor Forest). Within these same areas, short sections of walking trails were also damaged. Forest Service has the capability to repair most of this damage. The cost, including additional materials, is estimated at £12,000.

A minor walking route was also damaged in one of the Clogher Valley forests at an estimated repair cost of £4,200. A decision has yet to be taken on the public benefits of this repair.

Forest Service considers that, as these costs are relatively minor, they can be met by reprioritising existing work programmes. This position will, of course, be monitored carefully.

Forest Service Land

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will authorise a review of the number of staff employed to maintain Forest Service land, with a view to increasing the number. (AQW 329/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The deployment of staff to maintain forests is an operational matter to be managed by the Chief Executive and Management Board of the Forest Service, within budgetary constraints. The Board regularly reviews the number of staff required to deliver the Agency's business objectives, which include managing forests to the rigorous standards set out in the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

Flooding

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the additional costs incurred by (i) the Rivers Agency; and (ii) Forest Service, following the recent flooding. (AQW 330/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: To date Rivers Agency has incurred an estimated total of £140,000 of additional costs as a result of the flooding of 16 and 17 August 2008. This cost is composed of £20,000 on materials and

£120,000 on staff time for attendance at flooding incidents and investigations.

Forest Service estimates that it will incur an additional cost of approximately £52,200. This figure includes the cost of road stone, bridge repair materials and contract plant to carry out the necessary repairs, and the cost of Forest Service staff time and machinery, redeployed to deal with the flooding incident.

Rivers Agency

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will review the effectiveness of the Rivers Agency, given that its remit does not permit it to clean and maintain rivers beyond clearing blockages. (AQW 332/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Firstly I would clarify that Rivers Agency has a wide remit under the Drainage (NI) Order 1973 which enables it to carry out such river maintenance works as are necessary to ensure free flow in the channel. The Agency has a comprehensive programme that extends beyond clearing blockages.

Recently a Review of Flood Management Policy and the role of Rivers Agency has been completed and, a Government Response based on this review has been prepared for publication shortly, endorsed by the First and Deputy First Minister. That Review examined the Rivers Agency's river maintenance function in the interests of flood management, and environmental sustainability.

The Agency currently maintains some 6,800 kilometres of designated watercourses in a rolling programme based on watercourse type and risk. However, acting as the drainage authority, DARD Rivers Agency has no role in the amenity, environmental health or water quality aspects of rivers (including fallen animals, litter, visual appearance of river banks or overhanging tree branches) which do not impede the flow of water.

While I have no plans at this stage to review the Rivers Agency, obviously I will seriously consider a review of maintenance as part of future land use planning under EU obligations, and the views of ARD Committee Members would be welcomed at that time.

Rivers Agency

Mrs O'Neill asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the Rivers Agency's policy on clearing rivers to allow the maximum flow and alleviate flooding. (AQO 110/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Firstly I would pay tribute to the staff who worked tirelessly on 16/17 August to provide emergency assistance to those affected by flooding.

I can assure you that proactive flood risk management is a central aim of my Department's Rivers Agency. Essential to this is an effective watercourse maintenance policy and programme. Rivers Agency currently maintains over 6,800 kms of designated watercourses. A rolling programme of inspection and maintenance is in place for these watercourses. In addition targeted inspections, particularly at times of high flows, are carried out in conjunction with early pre-emptive clearance of debris from inlet grilles at high risk locations. These measures have reduced the risk of flood and damage.

The Agency is required to employ environmentally sensitive maintenance techniques to satisfy European Directive obligations on environmental protection and is committed to undertaking watercourse maintenance in a sustainable manner. I believe we can carry out maintenance to deliver appropriate flood risk management while meeting European and National obligations in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Record Keeping Facilities

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department's record keeping facilities at departmental offices, particularly Orchard House, are fit for purpose. (AQO 112/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I can advise my colleague that record keeping facilities are standard across all offices in my Department, including Orchard House, and are fit for purpose. Through the use of information technology, the Department seeks to enhance its facilities, to help speed up the ability to access and review records, and to respond to enquiries from customers.

Man Hours Worked on Farms

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will review the criteria used by her department to calculate the number of man hours worked on farms, which is accepted by the Planning Service to justify planning approvals under agricultural need. (AQO 6/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The criteria that you refer to is the use of the farm viability test when assessing applications for new dwellings on farms under Planning Policy Statement 14 – Sustainable development in the Countryside. PPS 14 is the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment.

DARD currently undertakes farm viability assessments as part of the planning process for dwellings on farms. This information is provided to DOE Planning Service for their use as part of the overall assessment of the application.

The assessment of farm viability is one of a number of issues considered by the Executive Sub Committee reviewing PPS 14, of which I am a member. I have consistently made the case that the farm viability test is not appropriate for assessing applications for new dwellings on farms. The test does not account for the changing nature of farming and the fact that an increasing proportion of farms are operated on a part time basis.

I have therefore no intention of reviewing the farm viability test as a means of assessing agricultural need, but instead will continue to press for its replacement.

National Trails Day

Mr Brolly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to link up with National Trails Day in the Republic of Ireland, and to operate it on an all-Ireland basis. (AQO 109/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: This is the first National Trails Day to be organised in the south, taking place on 28 September. I have asked my officials in Forest Service to consider organising a similar event in the north and I am pleased to be able to report that a Forest Parks Open Day will be held on the same date. Entrance charges to Forest Parks will be waived and guided tours of forest trails will be available in a number of forests.

I believe that our forests are a very important asset and I want to see all sections of our community enjoying the many recreational, social and health benefits that they provide.

A National Trails Day is an excellent way to promote rural recreation and I would like to see this being expanded in future years to include not only our forests, but also the many other trails that are available, for example the Ulster Way. My officials will liaise with their counterparts in the south to ensure that we can make the best opportunity of this very worthwhile initiative.

Climate Change Adaption Strategy

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consultation she has had with the Minister of the Environment in relation to the creation of a Climate Change Adaption strategy. (AQO 80/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: While I take the issues around climate change very seriously, I have not specifically been in consultation with the Minister for the Environment on the issue of adaptation to climate change.

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, given the recent weather conditions, what action she is taking to convince the European Union Commission to relax its deadline to allow farmers to complete their work under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme. (AQO 107/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I have been in discussions with the EU Commission about the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS) deadline since March 2008. During these negotiations I explained how one of the wettest summers on record in 2007 meant progress in the busiest building tank building period was severely hampered.

However, the Commission have insisted that the deadline for the FNMS cannot be changed. There is no legal scope under the relevant European Community legislation to extend the 60% FNMS grant beyond 31 December 2008. The Commission have stated that it is impossible to change the EC legislation or the approval for the FNMS.

I will be informing the Commissioner of the difficulties that the recent wet weather creates for FNMS works. The exceptional weather conditions are valid and practical reasons for slippage as the 31 December 2008 deadline approaches.

Flood Mapping Strategy

Mr McFarland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Flood Mapping Strategy. (AQO 83/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Flood Mapping Strategy published by DARD Rivers Agency indicated timescales for the delivery of various mapping products and outlined their means of delivery. The first in a series of flood risk maps, the Strategic Flood Map for Northern Ireland is nearing completion and I propose to publish the mapping product on the internet later this year. In light of developments in relation to implementation of the EU Floods Directive the Strategy will be reviewed and updated.

Rural Development Programmes

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if efforts are underway to join-up the Rural Development Programmes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, particularly in border areas, to increase their benefits to farmers and the wider rural community.

(AQO 108/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Under Axis 3 of the Rural Development programme there are opportunities to develop transnational co-operation projects. These can be north south and or with partners from elsewhere in the European Union. Funding equivalent to five percent of the programme have been ring fenced for these co-operation projects. My officials have had discussions with their colleagues in the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltract Affairs (DCRGA) and will shortly meet to examine cross border co-operation project procedures. My Department is also close to awarding a contract to implement the Rural Development Programme network. One of the networks responsibilities through networking events is to encourage co-operation projects and ensure that opportunities are created on the ground for interested local action groups to meet and link up at a north south and European level.

Renewable Energy Sector

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department will use the development of the renewable energy sector to create job opportunities. (AQO 89/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Whilst I recognise there is potential to create jobs from renewable energy this sector is in its early stages of development at farm level. Specifically, my Department is promoting the opportunities of renewable energy within the agri-food and forestry sector and wider rural economy through technology transfer and demonstration programmes at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise and the Agriculture, Food and Bioscience Institute.

In addition to this, employment creation is central to a measure within the Northern Ireland Rural Development Plan. Under the Business Creation and Development Measure there is potential to include renewable energy activities.

My Department is currently working with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Bioenergy Inter Departmental Working Group to assess the potential market opportunities for energy from biomass, which includes addressing cross cutting issues, such as job creation, some of which will be relevant to the agricultural sector.

Flooding

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to ensure that farmers help to reduce the risk of flooding by managing water run from their land. (AQO 77/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Farmers have an important role to play, with other landowners in managing land and watercourses to reduce flooding risk.

As the statutory drainage authority Rivers Agency administers advisory and enforcement procedures to protect the drainage function of all watercourses. Where a watercourse is not designated for maintenance by the Rivers Agency, responsibility falls to riparian landowners. In these cases, the Agency provides advice and where necessary, may require a landowner to carry out watercourse maintenance to ensure the free flow of water and thus reduce the risk of flooding. This is enforced under Schedule 5 of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973.

Where field drains discharge to watercourses, Rivers Agency also has a consenting role in relation to additional discharges. This applies to both designated and undesignated watercourses.

In cases of non-compliance, and the drainage disability is threatening to increase the flood risk, or causing detriment to drainage of surrounding land the Rivers Agency may take enforcement action, which could include court proceedings.

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

National Stadium

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to utilise the £70 million set aside for a national stadium. (AQW 16/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The issue of the multi-sports stadium together with the overall regeneration of the Maze site has still to be considered by the Executive. Accordingly nothing has been ruled out at this point. It is however my intention to announce progress in the Autumn.

In regard to alternatives, should the proposal for the Maze site project not proceed, I am conscious that under such circumstances there would clearly remain a critical need to invest in stadia in Northern Ireland. All possible options would need to be considered, ranging from refurbishment of existing stadia through to permutations on new build stadia.

I have held a series of preliminary meetings with the Governing Bodies for football, rugby and Gaelic games to determine their current positions on these matters.

In terms of funding, an indicative allocation of £70 million has been made in the current budget period of 2008/09 to 2010/11 for the proposed Multi-Sports Stadium. The allocation in the current financial year has already been surrendered to the Department of Finance and Personnel. In the event of any decision not to proceed with the Maze stadium proposal my Department will bid to DFP to reallocate all or part of this funding to alternative stadium options.

National Stadium

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what viable options are under consideration to fund a national stadium elsewhere than the Maze site. (AQW 17/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The issue of the multi-sports stadium together with the overall regeneration of the Maze site has still to be considered by the Executive. Accordingly nothing has been ruled out at this point. It is however my intention to announce progress in the Autumn.

In regard to alternatives, should the proposal for the Maze site project not proceed, I am conscious that under such circumstances there would clearly remain a critical need to invest in stadia in Northern Ireland. All possible options would need to be considered, ranging from refurbishment of existing stadia through to permutations on new build stadia. I have held a series of preliminary meetings with the Governing Bodies for football, rugby and Gaelic games to determine their current positions on these matters.

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National Stadium

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has decided against a national stadium at the Maze site. (AQW 18/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The issue of the multi-sports stadium together with the

overall regeneration of the Maze site has still to be considered by the Executive. Accordingly nothing has been ruled out at this point. It is however my intention to announce progress in the Autumn.

In regard to alternatives, should the proposal for the Maze site project not proceed, I am conscious that under such circumstances there would clearly remain a critical need to invest in stadia in Northern Ireland. All possible options would need to be considered, ranging from refurbishment of existing stadia through to permutations on new build stadia. I have held a series of preliminary meetings with the Governing Bodies for football, rugby and Gaelic games to determine their current positions on these matters.

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Public Libraries

Mr Burnside asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to integrate local library facilities with educational provision. (AQW 45/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Public libraries provide services across the entire age spectrum in Northern Ireland which extends beyond those in formal education. Each proposal for a new library facility is considered on a case by case basis and deliberations include issues such as local need, potential partners, location, accessibility and a safe and neutral environment.

While there are no current plans to site new library facilities alongside educational provision, Finaghy and Cookstown are examples of new libraries with close links to educational establishments. Equally, successful libraries may be sited with health and leisure facilities, such as the Grove Wellbeing Centre.

Expenditure on Irish Language Translation

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expenditure on Irish language translation broken down by each Department in each of the last three years. (AQW 61/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The expenditure on Irish Language Translation is broken down by Department in each of the last three years in the table below:

BREAKDOWN OF DEPARTMENTAL IRISH TRANSLATIONS COSTS

2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08			
Department	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
NIO	£480.76	£1,963.00	£1,342.00
DE	£19,349.27	£19,371.88	£50,983.49
DARD	£3,192.16	£2,087.49	£4,303.75
DEL	£0.00	£2,375.06	£494.10
DETI	£390.89	£223.75	£114.00
DFP	£899.73	£9,971.29	£1,183.72
DHSSPS	£8,974.00	£14,046.45	£3,678.88
DOE	£7,290.06	£20,145.87	£1,313.32
DRD	£436.04	£410.67	£892.78
DSD	£0.00	£1,932.88	£30.00
OFMDFM	£2,740.77	£3,891.97	£2,122.07
DCAL	£20,801.17	£40,667.70	£22,869.13
Total	£64,554.85	£117,088.01	£89,327.24

Action Against Wildlife Crime Group

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he is aware of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Group and can he outline the involvement of his staff in the work of this body given its relevance to his Department's duties with regards to fisheries protection. (AQW 63/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am indeed aware of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime group in Northern Ireland.

Salmon and inland fisheries protection functions are discharged by the Fisheries Conservancy Board (FCB) and by the Loughs Agency in NI. However, given that DCAL will assume the functions of the FCB through the Public Authorities Reform Bill, a DCAL Fisheries Officer attended an initial meeting of the group in 2007.

A Senior Fisheries Officer has now been seconded to FCB to assist them manage operational fisheries protection. This officer will attend the next meeting of PAWNI on Thursday 18th September 2008. The PAWNI secretariate has indicated that fishing related crime, whether pollution of rivers or illegal poaching, is an issue that is commonly mentioned at meetings. DCAL are invited to update the group on how the Department tackles issues like this, and to discuss how the group may be able to help.

Full Rates Relief to Sporting Clubs

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to give full rates relief to sporting clubs, in line with the rest of the United Kingdom. (AQW 115/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As rating matters are the responsibility of my colleague Nigel Dodds, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, I have sought advice from him on this issue. The Minister has no immediate plans to review the way in which sporting and recreation clubs receive rate relief. There are distinct differences in the way in which such relief is provided here and in the rest of the UK.

First of all, I should clarify that professional clubs, either here or in the rest of the UK, usually pay full rates. I assume, therefore, that your enquiry relates to amateur sport.

In Northern Ireland the rating legislation provides for 80% reduction in rates liability for rateable properties used for prescribed active recreations. This level of relief aligns with the mandatory relief available in GB.

The alternative is for premises to be registered as a charity, but in Northern Ireland few have chosen to apply given the restrictions such registration places on clubs.

In GB eligibility is more complex and there are three ways to qualify for rate relief. Either the club needs to be registered as a charity or a community amateur sports club, or be considered to be of particular benefit to the local community. For all three there are conditions attached to receiving relief. For example, membership fees cannot be set at levels which would exclude the local community and there must be open access. Such designations place obligations on the running of the clubs.

No such stipulations exist in Northern Ireland, and as a result “better off” clubs (for example private members golf clubs) qualify for 80% relief, regardless of their membership policies and fees. Many comparable clubs do not get any relief in the rest of the UK and those that do, usually do so at the discretion of individual local authorities, who administer rate relief there.

There is also a power available to GB local authorities to provide top up discretionary relief (thereby increasing relief to 100%) to particularly worthy clubs, in circumstances where such a measure would align with a particular local authority’s policies and programmes. It is not applied universally and therefore it is not correct to say that amateur sport in the rest of the UK gets full exemption from rates.

This 20% discretionary relief is not available in Northern Ireland. Officials are however currently

considering the feasibility of providing Councils, post RPA, with the power to waive district rates for particular ratepayers (which could include clubs) in certain circumstances, providing safeguards are in place to ensure this discretion would be applied appropriately and fairly, protecting the interests of other ratepayers and without affecting the regional rate.

Aside from this and given the complications outlined above, the Finance Minister has no immediate plans to fundamentally change the way in which sport and recreation relief is awarded in Northern Ireland, particularly as it may not be in the interests of many of our clubs to move to the same system that exists in GB. However, I am aware that clubs here are reviewing their position on this.

Sport and Physical Recreation Strategy

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when the Sport and Physical Recreation Strategy will be launched. (AQW 142/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The new Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation is currently being considered by the Northern Ireland Executive. The Strategy will be launched when this consideration is completed.

Sports Events for People with Disabilities

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to attract more sports events for people with disabilities. (AQW 143/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Over the past two years, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), has been developing a new strategy entitled “Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2008-2018”. The Strategy proposes to establish Northern Ireland as a world class venue for sporting events including events for people with disabilities, for example, the World Blind Golf Championships which were held at Belvoir Park Golf Club in August 2008.

Young at Art Event at Stormont

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what progress has been made on an event to be staged at Stormont by ‘Young at Art’. (AQW 144/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee agreed, at its meeting of 26 June, to invite Young at Art to stage an

event at Stormont after the summer recess. As my Department has not received any correspondence relating to the staging of an event at Stormont by 'Young at Art' I am unable to provide an update on progress.

Sporting Facilities

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what improvements will be completed on sporting facilities by the 2012 Olympic games. (AQW 145/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Elite Facilities Capital Programme is a competition being managed by Sport Northern Ireland on behalf of my Department.

The Elite Facilities Capital Programme Stage Two competition was launched on 25th June 2008. Fourteen projects were shortlisted and applicant organisations have until 28th November 2008 to submit their Outline Business Cases. The range of facilities under consideration includes Cycling, Fencing, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Basketball, Sailing, Athletics, Rowing, Tennis and Equestrian.

North Down Borough Council has been selected as the preferred developer for the 50m swimming pool and work is progressing with this project.

Whilst many projects aim to be completed by 2012, confirmation cannot be given until the applicant organisations' Outline Business Cases have been submitted on the 28th November 2008 containing their anticipated delivery date.

Angling

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action his Department is taking to promote angling. (AQW 180/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure promotes angling through the development of a DCAL angling website which provides a background to angling in N. Ireland and a guide to the Public Angling Estate. It is aimed at the tourist angler and provides the facility for on line permit sales and booking facilities. Ongoing development of the Public Angling Estate provides improved facilities and access for disabled anglers. The Department attends annually a number of angling fairs across Europe and the rest of the U.K. to attract tourist anglers to the province.

The Department is also aware of the need to conserve wild fish stocks such as salmon, which are reducing at an alarming rate and is looking at possible solutions.

Design of Classrooms

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consultation he has had with the Minister of Education to ensure that the design of classrooms helps pupils to concentrate, reduces disruption and improves academic performance, as detailed in the document 'Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland'. (AQW 198/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: While I have not had any direct consultation with the Minister of Education, I am aware that the Department of Education takes account of the policy on 'Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland' and provides guidance on classroom design for school authorities, and also receives advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate on design matters.

Single Game Rod Licences

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many single game rod licences were issued by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for the 2008 season; and how this compares with the 2005, 2006 and 2007 seasons. (AQW 277/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As the 2008 season is still open the Department is unable at this time to confirm how many single game rod licences were issued by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for the 2008 season. The figures are normally available by late November.

I can provide the numbers for the seasons 2005, 2006 and 2007.

2005	18,570
2006	18,236
2007	19,850

Financial Aid for Sporting Clubs and Associations

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consideration is given to the geographical location of the league in which sporting teams compete, when assessing applications for financial aid from sporting clubs and associations. (AQO 66/09)

The 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. When assessing applications for financial aid from sporting clubs and associations, SNI gives no consideration to the geographical location of the league in which the sporting teams compete.

Fire and Rescue Games 2013

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if the Fire and Rescue games in 2013 will be able to go ahead if he rejects the development of a multi-sports stadium at the Maze site. (AQO 93/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am delighted that Belfast has been successful in securing the bid for these games which will bring participants from 100 Countries to take part in 60 sports at approximately 45 venues throughout Northern Ireland in 2013.

When the World Police and Fire Games were awarded to Northern Ireland by the Federation it was not a condition of the contract that the opening or closing ceremonies would have to be held at the proposed Multi-Sports Stadium or indeed any other specific location.

It will be a matter for those with responsibility for the delivery of the Games to finalise the arrangements for the opening and closing ceremonies.

Physical Inactivity

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to target groups experiencing unhealthy lifestyles through physical inactivity and obesity; and how success will be monitored by council area. (AQO 23/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Over the past two years, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), has been developing a new strategy entitled "Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2008-2018". The strategy proposes a number of targets and actions to increase participation in sports by people in groups experiencing unhealthy lifestyles through physical inactivity. Progress against these targets will be monitored by a Monitoring Group, which I intend to Chair, and which will bring together senior representatives of departments, relevant agencies and stakeholders with responsibility for areas including sport, health, education and the environment. Subject to the approval of the executive, the Strategy will be launched later this year.

Quality of Architectural Design

Rev Dr Robert Coulter asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to provide examples of the impact of his Department's suggestions for the improvement of the quality of architectural design. (AQO 36/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

In 2004 an inter-departmental group chaired by DCAL was established to draft Government policy on architecture and the built environment. DCAL published the formal policy in 2006 and last September appointed a Ministerial Advisory Group to advise the Minister responsible for DCAL on the development and implementation of that policy.

The Group has prioritised the following key issues for consideration: preservation of the built heritage; public sector construction procurement; planning policies and sustainable development.

National Stadium

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the proposed national stadium at the Maze. (AQO 11/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Outline Business Case on the proposed multi-sports stadium, which is publicly available through my Department's website, sets out the financial, economic and other factors associated with the stadium and it is this which will form the basis of the decision-making process around the project.

As part of this decision-making process the Outline Business Case, together with the corresponding Business Case for the Maze project - for which OFMDFM are responsible - have been closely examined by the respective Accounting Officers. The Department of Finance and Personnel has had the opportunity to examine both Business Cases and the First Minister, in his former role of Finance Minister, has provided advice to Ministerial colleagues on his assessment of both the Stadium and the overall Maze project.

In addition, I have met with the football, rugby and Gaelic games governing bodies and have taken their views on the issues and options on the way forward.

It is anticipated that all the documentation relating to the Maze project, including the Outline Business Case on the stadium, will be discussed by the Executive in the near future. Following this I intend to make an announcement, which will be in the best interests of all sports, on how we progress stadium provision in Northern Ireland.

Multi-Sports Stadium

Mr O'Loan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what (i) social; (ii) financial; and (iii) economic, decision making criteria will be used to make a determination on the proposed multi-sports stadium. (AQO 65/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Outline Business Case on the proposed multi-sports stadium, which is publicly available through my Department's website, sets out the financial, economic and other factors associated with the stadium and it is this which will form the basis of the decision-making process around the project.

As part of this decision-making process the Outline Business Case, together with the corresponding Business Case for the Maze project - for which OFMDFM are responsible - have been closely examined by the respective Accounting Officers. The Department of Finance and Personnel has had the opportunity to examine both Business Cases and the First Minister, in his former role of Finance Minister, has provided advice to Ministerial colleagues on his assessment of both the Stadium and the overall Maze project.

In addition, I have met with the football, rugby and Gaelic games governing bodies and have taken their views on the issues and options on the way forward.

It is anticipated that all the documentation relating to the Maze project, including the Outline Business Case on the stadium, will be discussed by the Executive in the near future. Following this I intend to make an announcement, which will be in the best interests of all sports, on how we progress stadium provision in Northern Ireland.

Community and Cultural Funding

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action he is taking to increase community and cultural funding in the (i) Banbridge; (ii) central Craigavon; (iii) Lurgan; and (iv) Portadown areas. (AQO 57/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department, through Sport NI, currently invests in the Banbridge, Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown areas under the 'Sport In Our Community' investment programme, a £4m lottery funded programme that began in 2006 and will conclude in 2010 and the Building Sport Programme which began in 2004.

As a result of the additional £9.75m arts and culture revenue funding secured during the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Arts Council has been allocated an additional £7.55m over the 3 year period of the Budget. My Department, through its Arms Length Bodies will endeavour to provide advice and support to those involved in accessing funding.

Northern Ireland Events Company

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the investigation into the Northern Ireland Events Company. (AQO 4/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Investigations carried out on behalf of the Department into the financial deficit at the Northern Ireland Events Company have raised serious questions in relation to how the affairs of the Company were conducted. The reports into these investigations contain matters of a sensitive legal and financial nature which will be subject to further investigation.

These matters have been referred to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which is considering if further action is warranted under companies' legislation.

I am unable to comment further as such publicity may be prejudicial to further investigations.

The Department is also reviewing its role in the oversight of the NIEC with a view to identifying what lessons can be learnt from the experience and what appropriate action may be required in light of this.

I also understand that the Public Accounts Committee intends to examine these matters in some detail once the investigatory process is complete

An independent verification process has been undertaken into all creditors and debtors in respect of the NIEC. I am not prepared to comment publicly on specific transactions. However, 144 creditors out of a total of 158 have been verified as bona fide and paid a total of £673,511. The remainder have still to be verified and a number of contingent liabilities have also been identified.

Arts Council

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why the Arts Council has not appointed a full-time traditional arts officer. (AQO 63/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The appointment of Arts Officers is a matter for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The Arts Council is currently reviewing its staffing structure and intends to make an announcement regarding support for the traditional arts sector in due course. The needs of the traditional arts sector will be considered as part of this review.

Dundrod & District Racing Club

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if his Department has had any contact with the Dundrod & District Racing Club in relation to the financial losses incurred as a result of races cancelled due to the recent bad weather. (AQO 31/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As a result of the severe weather conditions experienced across Northern Ireland during the week beginning

11th August racing at the Ulster Grand Prix at Dundrod was seriously disrupted, resulting in the cancellation of racing on the main race day that has impacted financially on the event.

I was in attendance on race day and spoke with organisers who, it should be noted are all unpaid volunteers, about the financial implications of the cancellation of the event. On Monday 18th August officials from my Department's Events Unit contacted the organisers, and requested a report detailing the disruption during race week and the cancellation of racing on the main race day. When this report has been received I will want to give the matter further consideration given the significance of the Ulster Grand Prix locally and internationally.

The event secured £40,000 revenue funding under the DCAL Major Events Fund towards production and marketing costs for the 2008/9 event and this is unaffected by the cancellation. Requests for support for the Ulster Grand Prix in 2009 should be advanced by application to the relevant funding body.

As a result of the Review of Public Administration DCAL's events function is anticipated to transfer from my Department to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in 2009.

Dog Racing

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his Department's assessment of the economic benefits of dog racing; and what plans he has to include dog racing on the list of activities officially recognised as sports. (AQO 67/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As dog racing is not a recognised sport my Department has not assessed the economic benefits of dog racing. I have no plans to include dog racing on the list of activities officially recognised as sports. It would be for the British Greyhound Racing Board to apply for recognition.

Sports Facilities

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to increase the investment in community sports facilities, given the link between sporting investment and Olympic medal success rates. (AQO 38/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The new 10-year strategy for sport which my Department has been developing, in association with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), has identified the need for new, improved and shared sports facilities to a standard comparable with other similar regions of the UK. SNI is currently developing a number of

new programmes which will help address this need, including new investment in places for sport in communities and training of coaches and leaders in communities and clubs across Northern Ireland.

Development of Cultural Facilities

Mr Poots asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will consider the establishment of a capital programme to support the development of cultural facilities. (AQO 124/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As the Member will be aware the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has an agreed ten year capital programme under the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) of over £650 million.

Within the ISNI there is an approved three year capital programme over the CSR period 2008 - 2011 of £232m. The DCAL programme supports the development of a wide range of cultural, arts and leisure facilities.

Ulster Grand Prix

Mr Burnside asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, following the cancellation of this year's Ulster Grand Prix, what plans his Department has to support the event in 2009. (AQO 81/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As a result of the severe weather conditions experienced across Northern Ireland during the week beginning 11th August racing at the Ulster Grand Prix at Dundrod was seriously disrupted, resulting in the cancellation of racing on the main race day that has impacted financially on the event.

I was in attendance on race day and spoke with organisers who, it should be noted are all unpaid volunteers, about the financial implications of the cancellation of the event. On Monday 18th August officials from my Department's Events Unit contacted the organisers, and requested a report detailing the disruption during race week and the cancellation of racing on the main race day. When this report has been received I will want to give the matter further consideration given the significance of the Ulster Grand Prix locally and internationally.

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As a result of the Review of Public Administration DCAL's events function is anticipated to transfer from my Department to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in 2009.

EDUCATION

Donaghadee High School

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education when she intends to announce the future of Donaghadee High School. (AQW 56/09)

The Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): D'fhoilsigh Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheisceirt togra forbartha i mí Aibreán 2008, gur chóir go ndruidfí Donaghadee High School le héifeacht ó 31 Lúnasa 2009. D'fhógair mé mo chinneadh chun an togra forbartha a fhaomhadh ar 17 Meán Fómhair 2008.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board published a development proposal in April 2008, that Donaghadee High School should close with effect from 31 August 2009. I announced my decision to approve the development proposal on 17 September 2008.

Teaching of Irish in Primary Schools

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how many primary schools in the (i) maintained; and (ii) controlled sectors, teach any level of Irish. (AQW 156/09)

The Minister of Education: Cé go dtugann cuid mhór bunscoileanna in Aontroim Thuaidh agus ar fud an tuaiscirt deis dá ndaltaí Gaeilge a fhoghlaim chomh maith le roinnt teangacha eile, is iad na scoileanna féin a dhéanann an cinneadh leis seo a dhéanamh agus ní choinníonn mo Roinn an t-eolas sin.

While many primary schools in North Antrim and across the north offer their pupils an opportunity to learn Irish and indeed many other languages, the decision to do this is one for individual schools and information is not held by my Department. We do, however, collect details of those schools that are participating in my primary languages programme, which provides peripatetic support for primary schools that wish to deliver certain languages, including Irish. The schools that have signed up to teach and learn Irish through this programme to date are listed below.

Christ the King Primary School, Ballynahinch	Catholic maintained
St Colman's Primary School, Lisburn	Catholic maintained
St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff	Catholic maintained
Ballyhackett Primary School, Castlerock	Catholic maintained
Broadbridge Primary School, Eglinton	Catholic maintained
Faughanvale Primary School, Greysteel	Catholic maintained

Rosemount Primary School, Derry	Catholic maintained
St Brigid's Primary School, Knockloughrim	Catholic maintained
St Columba's Primary School, Garvagh	Catholic maintained
St Finlough's Primary School, Sistrakeel	Catholic maintained
St John's Primary School, Maghera	Catholic maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown	Catholic maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Claudy	Catholic maintained
St Patrick's & St Joseph's Primary School, Garvagh	Catholic maintained
St Patrick's Primary School (Glen)	Catholic maintained
St Peter's & St Paul's Primary School, Dungiven	Catholic maintained
Ballyholland Primary School	Catholic maintained
St Brigid's Primary School, Crossmaglen	Catholic maintained
St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor	Catholic maintained
St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Keady	Catholic maintained
St Malachy's Primary School, Camlough	Catholic maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Mullaghbawn	Catholic maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Rathfriland	Catholic maintained
St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge	Catholic maintained
St Patrick's Primary School, Hilltown	Catholic maintained
Belvoir Park Primary School, Belfast	Controlled
Mercy Primary School, Belfast	Catholic maintained
Sacred Heart Primary School, Belfast	Catholic maintained
St John the Baptist Boys' Primary School, Belfast	Catholic maintained
St Kevin's Primary School, Belfast	Catholic maintained
St Macnisius' Primary School, Tannaghmore	Catholic maintained
St Malachy's Primary School, Belfast	Catholic maintained
Holy Family Primary School, Downpatrick	Catholic maintained
Millennium Integrated Primary School, Saintfield	GMI
Sacred Heart Primary School, Newcastle	Catholic maintained
St Caolan's Primary School, Ballynahinch	Catholic maintained
St Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan	Catholic maintained

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education when the South Eastern Education and Library Board will be re-instated. (AQW 165/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá athbhunú bhord SEELB, a bhí ar fionraí, faoi bhreithniú go fóill agus déanfaidh mé mo chinneadh a fhógairt in am is i dtráth.

The reinstatement of the suspended board of SEELB remains under consideration and I shall announce my decision in due course.

Ballywalter Primary School

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education when the capital funding, which was granted in 2006, will be released to enable work to be done to Ballywalter Primary School. (AQW 166/09)

The Minister of Education: Níor deonaíodh aon chistiú caipitil sa bhliain 2006 le haghaidh oibreacha móra tógála ag Ballywalter Primary School.

No capital funding was granted in 2006 for major building works at Ballywalter Primary School.

Teachers' Pay

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education why teachers are not receiving a pay rise in September 2008 in line with their colleagues in the rest of the United Kingdom. (AQW 188/09)

The Minister of Education: Teachers in England and Wales have their salaries determined by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, following recommendations made by the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). The STRB's remit extends only to England and Wales: teachers in Scotland have their pay awards agreed by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

The pay of teachers in grant-aided schools here is negotiated by the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee (Schools). While the local bargaining process has historically concluded by broadly mirroring the settlement reached for teachers in England and Wales, a pay remit approval process must nevertheless be completed in accordance with guidance on the application of public sector pay policy endorsed by the Executive.

Faoi réir chomhaontú an choiste idirbheartaíochta, déanfaidh mo Roinn cinneadh ar phá a eisiúint, a bheas in éifeacht ó 1 Meán Fómhair 2008, nuair a bheas an próiseas faofa shainchúram pá críochnaithe.

Subject to agreement by the negotiating committee, my Department will issue a pay determination, effective from 1 September 2008, on completion of the pay remit approval process.

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Subject to agreement by the negotiating committee, my Department will issue a pay determination, effective from 1 September 2008, on completion of the pay remit approval process.

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education on what date she intends to re-constitute the South Eastern Education and Library Board. (AQW 195/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá athbhunú bhord SEELB, a bhí ar fionraí, faoi bhreithniú go fóill agus déanfaidh mé mo chinneadh a fhógairt in am is i dtráth.

The reinstatement of the suspended board of SEELB remains under consideration and I shall announce my decision in due course.

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education why she has not re-constituted the South Eastern Education and Library Board. (AQW 196/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá athbhunú bhord SEELB, a bhí ar fionraí, faoi bhreithniú go fóill agus déanfaidh mé mo chinneadh a fhógairt in am is i dtráth.

The reinstatement of the suspended board of SEELB remains under consideration and I shall announce my decision in due course.

Kindle Primary Integrated School

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education whether the well-being of children attending Kindle Primary Integrated School was the prime consideration prior to her decision to close the school. (AQW 201/09)

The Minister of Education: The well-being of the children concerned is of primary concern in the consideration of every proposal for the closure of a school. In 2007/08 only 31 children were enrolled in Kindle Integrated Primary School (IPS), of whom 4 were Year 1 children. I therefore agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposal that the school was no longer sustainable. I had also visited the school at the beginning of this year.

The majority of children attending Kindle IPS were from families located at the nearby Ballykinler army base. Before reaching a decision on this proposal, the department received confirmation from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), that all primary age children from the Ballykinler base had been able to obtain places at other local schools which would meet their children's needs.

A full statutory consultation exercise was undertaken by the South Eastern Education and Library Board which provided the opportunity for all views and concerns to be raised before a decision was taken, including any issues in regard to equality.

Níor sáraíodh cearta na bpáistí mar atá leagtha amach i gCoinbhinsiún na hEorpa um Chearta an Duine mar gheall ar an chinneadh chun Kindle IPS a dhruidim.

The rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights have not been infringed by the decision to close Kindle IPS.

Kindle Primary Integrated School

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education whether the special circumstances affecting a majority of children attending Kindle Primary Integrated School was given due consideration prior to her decision to close the school. (AQW 202/09)

The Minister of Education: The well-being of the children concerned is of primary concern in the consideration of every proposal for the closure of a school. In 2007/08 only 31 children were enrolled in Kindle Integrated Primary School (IPS), of whom 4 were Year 1 children. I therefore agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposal that the school was no longer sustainable. I had also visited the school at the beginning of this year.

The majority of children attending Kindle IPS were from families located at the nearby Ballykinler army base. Before reaching a decision on this proposal, the department received confirmation from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), that all primary age children from the Ballykinler base had been able to obtain places at other local schools which would meet their children's needs.

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The rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights have not been infringed by the decision to close Kindle IPS.

Kindle Primary Integrated School

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education whether the proposal to close Kindle Primary Integrated School was equality proofed. (AQW 203/09)

The Minister of Education: The well-being of the children concerned is of primary concern in the consideration of every proposal for the closure of a school. In 2007/08 only 31 children were enrolled in Kindle Integrated Primary School (IPS), of whom 4 were Year 1 children. I therefore agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposal that the school was no longer sustainable. I had also visited the school at the beginning of this year.

The majority of children attending Kindle IPS were from families located at the nearby Ballykinler army base. Before reaching a decision on this proposal, the

department received confirmation from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), that all primary age children from the Ballykinler base had been able to obtain places at other local schools which would meet their children's needs.

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The rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights have not been infringed by the decision to close Kindle IPS.

Kindle Primary Integrated School

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education whether her decision to close Kindle Primary Integrated School infringed upon the rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. (AQW 204/09)

The Minister of Education: The well-being of the children concerned is of primary concern in the consideration of every proposal for the closure of a school. In 2007/08 only 31 children were enrolled in Kindle Integrated Primary School (IPS), of whom 4 were Year 1 children. I therefore agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposal that the school was no longer sustainable. I had also visited the school at the beginning of this year.

The majority of children attending Kindle IPS were from families located at the nearby Ballykinler army base. Before reaching a decision on this proposal, the department received confirmation from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), that all primary age children from the Ballykinler base had been able to obtain places at other local schools which would meet their children's needs.

A full statutory consultation exercise was undertaken by the South Eastern Education and Library Board which provided the opportunity for all views and concerns to be raised before a decision was taken, including any issues in regard to equality.

Níor sáraíodh cearta na bpáistí mar atá leagtha amach i gCoinbhinsiún na hEorpa um Chearta an Duine mar gheall ar an chinneadh chun Kindle IPS a dhruidim.

The rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights have not been infringed by the decision to close Kindle IPS.

Kindle Primary Integrated School

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education if the alternative schools being offered to children transferring from Kindle Primary Integrated School will provide a similar setting to that experienced by the children at their previous school. (AQW 210/09)

The Minister of Education: The well-being of the children concerned is of primary concern in the consideration of every proposal for the closure of a school. In 2007/08 only 31 children were enrolled in Kindle Integrated Primary School (IPS), of whom 4 were Year 1 children. I therefore agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposal that the school was no longer sustainable. I had also visited the school at the beginning of this year.

The majority of children attending Kindle IPS were from families located at the nearby Ballykinler army base. Before reaching a decision on this proposal, the department received confirmation from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), that all primary age children from the Ballykinler base had been able to obtain places at other local schools which would meet their children's needs.

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Níor sáraíodh cearta na bpáistí mar atá leagtha amach i gCoinbhinsiún na hEorpa um Chearta an Duine mar gheall ar an chinneadh chun Kindle IPS a dhruidim.

The rights of children as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights have not been infringed by the decision to close Kindle IPS.

Education and Library Boards

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Education how many out-of-court settlements there have been involving each Education and Library Board since devolution; and the costs incurred in relation to legal fees and compensation for each case. (AQW 219/09)

The Minister of Education: Thug gach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an t-eolas atá mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos:

The information detailed in the table below has been provided by each Education and Library Board:

SUMMARY**CLAIMS SETTLED OUT OF COURT SINCE DEVOLUTION**

	Damages	Plaintiffs Costs	Board Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Claims	Reference
BELB	£228,941.15	£85,770.07	£94,935.01	£409,646.23	30	Annex A
NEELB	£212,876.00	£103,853.66	£65,493.13	£382,222.79	16	Annex B
SEELB	£255,693.07	£117,218.09	£69,746.36	£442,657.52	27	Annex C
SELB	£276,128.38	£151,866.20	£89,603.61	£517,598.19	28	Annex D
WELB	£58,130.91	£30,030.36	£27,282.46	£115,443.73	17	Annex E

EMPLOYMENT, JUDICIAL REVIEWS, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY TRIBUNALS SINCE DEVOLUTION*

	Total Amount of Compensation	Plaintiffs Costs	Board Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Cases
BELB	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4
NEELB	£68,000.00	Nil	£34,583.00	£102,583.00	8
SEELB	£16,500.00	£375.00	£6,700.00	£23,575.00	6
SELB	£52,000.00	Nil	£14,250.00	£66,250.00	4
WELB	£43,000.00	Nil	£10,230.00	£53,230.00	4

* These cases are not provided on an individual basis as this may compromise the confidentiality clause agreed as part of such settlements.

ANNEX A**BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD****CLAIMS SETTLED OUT-OF-COURT SINCE DEVOLUTION**

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	No of claims
£8,800.00	£1,104.05	£5,225.00	£15,129.05	1
£2,500.00	£1,058.40	£2,495.00	£6,053.40	1
£3,500.00	£3,737.30	£1,629.20	£8,866.50	1
£500.00	£1,696.87	£1,694.00	£3,890.87	1
£1,000.00	£1,974.42	£652.20	£3,626.62	1
£41,982.10	£12,476.00	£7,612.25	£62,070.35	1
£6,500.00	£3,068.00	£1,747.20	£11,315.20	1
£7,500.00	£2,801.50	£1,553.10	£11,854.60	1
£2,500.00	£1,897.55	£354.00	£4,751.55	1
£2,000.00	£2,991.89	£1,786.10	£6,777.99	1
£3,000.00	£2,666.00	£1,164.00	£6,830.00	1
£16,174.49	£4,834.70	£3,575.00	£24,584.19	1
£3,000.00	£2,310.00	£519.00	£5,829.00	1
£4,000.00	£2,876.00	£1,321.15	£8,197.15	1
£1,000.00	£1,012.20	£323.05	£2,335.25	1
£1,250.00	£2,236.00	£1,472.32	£4,958.32	1
£12,500.00	£3,925.00	£1,579.50	£18,004.50	1
£308.96			£308.96	1

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	No of claims
£180.00			£180.00	1
£345.00		£60.50	£405.50	1
£10,000.00	£9,130.15	£16,163.28	£35,293.43	1
£2,500.00	£4,735.81	£8,952.47	£16,188.28	1
£5,000.00	£1,949.00	£2,488.88	£9,437.88	1
£3,000.00	£1,086.00	£1,993.00	£6,079.00	1
£7,500.00	£1,437.20	£3,097.90	£12,035.10	1
£6,250.00	£3,195.34	£1,207.20	£10,652.54	1
£65,464.85	£3,358.33	£19,404.00	£88,227.18	1
£3,685.75	£4,832.67	£1,818.53	£10,336.95	1
£6,500.00	£1,408.40	£3,094.63	£11,003.03	1
£500.00	£1,971.29	£1,952.55	£4,423.84	1
£228,941.15	£85,770.07	£94,935.01	£409,646.23	30

**ANNEX B
NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**

CLAIMS SETTLED OUT-OF-COURT SINCE DEVOLUTION

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Claims
£30,000	£9,416.36	£5,250.00	£44,666	1
£12,500	£7,752.47	£4,799.29	£25,052	1
£40,000	£11,737.25	£7,808.96	£59,546	1
£7,500	£12,413.82	£7,412.17	£27,326	1
£17,500	£17,555.30	£10,052.18	£45,107	1
£5,000	£4,500	£6,406.25	£15,906	1
-	-	£2,002.20	£2,002	1
£8,901	£3,761.15	£2,546.99	£15,209	1
£2,000	£2,113.51	£1,753.62	£5,867	1
£25,000	£5,130.94	£2,304.61	£32,436	1
£7,000	£3,305.70	-	£10,306	1
	-	£2,298.26	£2,298	1
£475	-	-	£475	1
£4,500	£1,327.95	-	£5,828	1
£17,500	£11,733.67	£6,022.17	£35,256	1
£35,000	£13,105.54	£6,836.43	£54,942	1
£212,876.00	£103,853.66	£65,493.13	£382,222.79	15

**ANNEX C
SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**

CLAIMS SETTLED OUT-OF-COURT DURING SINCE DEVOLUTION

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Claims
3,500.00	2,676.86	1,632.15	7,809.01	1
35,000.00	13,275.93	6,926.36	55,202.29	1
2,000.00	2,096.93	1,262.40	5,359.33	1
50,000.00	9,807.20	10,420.90	70,228.10	1
3,250.00	1,393.20		4,643.20	1
45,000.00	19,255.80	22,095.66	86,351.46	1
750.00	1,434.59	737.07	2,921.66	1
4,500.00	2,248.00	1,043.70	7,791.70	1
7,500.00	2,773.50	2,220.62	12,494.12	1
20,000.00	7,529.00	4,944.90	32,473.90	1
2,500.00	6,638.71	938.10	10,076.81	1
2,500.00	1,682.50	442.00	4,624.50	1
4,500.00	2,216.50	1,118.25	7,834.75	1
80.00			80.00	1
295.00			295.00	1
91.24			91.24	1
178.83			178.83	1
40.00			40.00	1
180.00			180.00	1
17,500.00	10,405.95	5,079.25	32,985.20	1
5,505.00	3,743.08	2,135.50	11,383.58	1
6,000.00	3,567.30	800.00	10,367.30	1
7,500.00	1,509.00		9,009.00	1
2,000.00	1,856.00	690.00	4,546.00	1
5,000.00	11,427.11	1,397.50	17,824.61	1
323.00			323.00	1
30,000.00	11,680.93	5,862.00	47,542.93	1
£255,693.07	£117,218.09	£69,746.36	£442,657.52	27

**ANNEX D
SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**

CLAIMS SETTLED OUT OF COURT SINCE DEVOLUTION

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Claims
5,000.00	7,650.30	9,083.83	£21,734.13	1
62,500.00	29,285.68	15,861.61	£107,647.29	1
4,000.00	4,167.40	1,724.14	£9,891.54	1
8,750.00	3,801.73	2,285.28	£14,837.01	1
25,000.00	20,201.61	9,698.90	£54,900.51	1
10,000.00	14,175.78	7,472.50	£31,648.28	1
7,500.00	8,743.94	5,124.25	£21,368.19	1
4,728.84	2,958.93	1,544.00	£9,231.77	1
10,000.00	9,734.95	5,774.59	£25,509.54	1
4,000.00	2,920.63	1,494.20	£8,414.83	1
17,833.05	8,063.21	4,864.30	£30,760.56	1
10,000.00	8,087.33	4,788.00	£22,875.33	1
1,000.00	0	347.9	£1,347.90	1
6,000.00	4,457.32	6,711.85	£17,169.17	1
46,582.08	14,548.38	5,078.66	£66,209.12	1
2,785.96	0	0	£2,785.96	1
16,000.00	6,073.50	3,241.00	£25,314.50	1
0	0	1,159.80	£1,159.80	1
210	0	0	£210.00	1
27000	4,873.13	2,340.00	£34,213.13	1
223.84	0	0	£223.84	1
130	0	0	£130.00	1
89.95			£89.95	1
4,502.50	2,122.38	1,008.80	£7,633.68	1
164.68			£164.68	1
60			£60.00	1
2,002.85			£2,002.85	1
64.63			£64.63	1
£276,128.38	£151,866.20	£89,603.61	£517,598.19	28

**ANNEX E
WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**

CLAIMS SETTLED OUT-OF-COURT SINCE DEVOLUTION

Damages	Plaintiff's Costs	Board's Costs	Total Outlay	Number of Claims
£7,500.00	£3,921.28	£779.03	£12,200.31	1
£3,000.00	£2,594.39	£1,906.96	£7,501.35	1
£500.00	£3,589.42	£3,594.00	£7,683.42	1
£140.00	£0.00	£0.00	£140.00	1
£240.87	£0.00	£0.00	£240.87	1
£88.13	£0.00	£0.00	£88.13	1
£175.00	£0.00	£0.00	£175.00	1
£193.71	£0.00	£0.00	£193.71	1
£6,059.49	£2,448.27	£5,894.38	£14,402.14	1
£1,000.00	£2,074.72	£1,094.74	£4,169.46	1
£7,500.00	£4,226.91	£4,252.90	£15,979.81	1
£21,540.72	£6,337.52	£7,239.88	£35,118.12	1
£120.00	£0.00	£0.00	£120.00	1
£114.20	£0.00	£0.00	£114.20	1
£266.00	£0.00	£0.00	£266.00	1
£7,192.79	£3,156.08	£1,299.75	£11,648.62	1
£2,500.00	£1,681.77	£1,220.82	£5,402.59	1
£58,130.91	£30,030.36	£27,282.46	£115,443.73	17

Grammar Schools in North Antrim

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of 11-plus grades accepted by grammar schools in the North Antrim constituency, in each of the last 3 academic years. (AQW 251/09)

The Minister of Education: The numbers requested are as follows:

School Name	Breakdown of 11 plus grades accepted by grammar schools in the North Antrim Constituency, in the 2007/08 school year						
	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D	Others
Cambridge House Grammar	29	16	24	37	32	21	4
St Louis Grammar	73	18	13	15	10	4	0
Ballymena Academy	139	18	19	1	0	0	0
Dalriada Grammar	104	19	1	0	0	0	2

School Name	Breakdown of 11 plus grades accepted by grammar schools in the North Antrim Constituency, in the 2006/07 school year						
	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D	Others
Cambridge House Grammar	24	14	42	30	38	20	2
St Louis Grammar	90	20	26	3	0	2	1
Ballymena Academy	138	29	6	0	0	0	3
Dalriada Grammar	85	16	8	11	2	0	4

School Name	Breakdown of 11 plus grades accepted by grammar schools in the North Antrim Constituency, in the 2005/06 school year						
	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D	Others
Cambridge House Grammar	32	35	38	41	12	8	4
St Louis Grammar	80	17	23	16	3	2	1
Ballymena Academy	156	17	2	0	0	0	2
Dalriada Grammar	93	28	2	0	0	0	4

Fuarthas na figiúirí atá léirithe sa tábla ó eolas a thug Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt don Roinn i mí Dheireadh Fómhair do gach bliain. Tagraíonn na figiúirí faoin cheannteideal “Others” do dháltaí a glacadh isteach, nach raibh gráid sa scrúdu aistrithe acu.

The numbers shown in each table are taken from returns made to the Department by the North Eastern and Education and Library Board in October each year. The numbers shown under the heading of “Others” refer to pupils admitted without transfer test grades.

Teachers' Pay

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking (i) to ensure the resolution of teachers pay negotiations to bring equality of pay with teachers in the rest of the United Kingdom; and (ii) to reduce the risk of industrial action by teachers. (AQW 262/09)

The Minister of Education: The pay of teachers in grant-aided schools here is negotiated by the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee (Schools). The local bargaining process has traditionally concluded by broadly mirroring the settlement reached for teachers in England and Wales, with some contextualisation to reflect local circumstances. Equality of pay with teachers in England and Wales already holds good for the pay spines and rates of pay of teachers here, and historically teachers here have received the same pay awards as their counterparts in England and Wales. Where arrangements differ from those obtaining in England and Wales, this is the result of local

negotiation and agreement by the Teacher Negotiating Committee.

Tá oifigigh i mo Roinn ina gcomhaltaí de Choiste Idirbheartaíochta na Múinteoirí agus buaileann siad go rialta le hionadaithe d'fhostóirí na múinteoirí agus leis an chúig cheardchumann aitheanta múinteoirí. Taobh amuigh den chóras foirmiúil idirbheartaíochta, bíonn mé féin agus oifigigh i mo Roinn i dteagmháil le múinteoirí agus lena n-ionadaithe go rialta i dtaca le réimse leathan ceisteanna oideachais.

Officials of my Department are members of the Teacher Negotiating Committee and meet regularly with representatives of teachers' employers and the five recognised teacher unions. Outside the formal negotiating machinery, both I and my officials engage regularly with teachers and their representatives on a wide range of education issues.

Ards and Down Area Plan

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many new post-primary schools are likely to be built in anticipation of the new Ards and Down Area Plan, and over what initial period. (AQW 272/09)

The Minister of Education: There are no plans for the provision of new post-primary schools in the Ards and Down Districts linked to the outcome of the Ards and North Down Area Plan 2015. Several previously announced major capital projects are currently at various stages of the planning process which will provide replacement provision either through new-build or extension and refurbishment. The details of these projects are listed below.

School	Details Of Project
Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch	Extension and Refurbishment.
The High School, Ballynahinch	Replacement school on existing site.
Glastry College, Ballyhalbert	Replacement school on extended site.
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	Replacement school on existing site.

The SEELB is also planning to take forward a major capital project for a replacement school for Down High School, Downpatrick.

Táthar ag súil go mbeidh obair an ghrúpa pleanála ar bhonn ceantar áitiúil mar bhonn eolais ag forbairt sholáthar iarbhunscoileanna sa cheantar amach anseo.

The work of the local area-based planning group is also expected to inform the future development of post-primary provision in the area.

Pupils in the Strangford Constituency

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many children living in the Strangford constituency are currently enrolled in post-primary schools outside the constituency. (AQW 274/09)

The Minister of Education: Sa scoilbhliain 2007/08 bhí 4,084 dalta ina gcónaí i dtoghcheantar Loch Cuan a bhí rollaithe in iarbhunscoileanna taobh amuigh den toghcheantar.

In the 2007/08 year there were 4,084 pupils living in the Strangford constituency enrolled in post primary schools outside of the constituency.

Pupils in the Strangford Constituency

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many P7 children, living in the Strangford constituency, transferred to post-primary schools outside the constituency last year; and what percentage of the total number of post-primary transfers this represents. (AQW 275/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní choinníonn an Roinn an t-eolas seo, ach is féidir a rá go raibh 1,249 dalta i mbliain 8 ina gcónaí i dtoghcheantar Loch Cuan sa scoilbhliain 2007/08, agus bhí 613 (49.08%) acu rollaithe in iarbhunscoileanna taobh amuigh den toghcheantar.

The Department does not hold this information, however, it can be agreed that in the 2007/08 year there were 1,249 year 8 pupils resident in the Strangford constituency, of which, 613 (49.08%) were enrolled in post primary schools outside of the constituency.

After-School Clubs

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Education to confirm if a child must be registered and in attendance at a specific primary or post-primary school to be eligible for registration at that school's after-schools' clubs; and to outline the legislation that govern this criterion. (AQW 282/09)

The Minister of Education: Is féidir le scoileanna soláthar iarscoile a chur ar fáil do dhaltaí atá rollaithe i scoileanna eile agus tá neart samplaí ann de seo i ngach ceantar. Níl reachtaíocht ar leith ann a rialaíonn cásanna mar seo, ach bheifí ag dúil leis go gcomhlíonfadh scoileanna aon socrúithe dlíthiúla, árachais nó cosanta leanaí.

Schools may make after-school provision available to pupils enrolled in other schools and there are many examples of this across all areas. There is no specific legislation governing this situation, though schools would be expected to comply with any legal, insurance or child protection arrangements.

Schools should take advice from their ELB and/or managing authority regarding these issues.

Council for Education in World Citizenship's Model UN Programme

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education if she has any plans to continue funding the Council for Education in World Citizenship's Model UN programme. (AQW 338/09)

The Minister of Education: Is é an t-aon fhoinsé maoinithe sa Roinn atá oiriúnach do sheachadadh na hoibre a dhéanann an Chomhairle um Oideachas i Saoránacht Dhomhanda ná trí Scéim Bunmhaoinithe Chaidreamh Pobail na Roinne Oideachais (CRCFS) atá go hiomlán leithdháilte go dtí 31 Márta 2009.

The only funding source in the Department appropriate to the delivery of the work carried out by the Council for Education in World Citizenship is through the Department of Education's Community Relations Core Funding Scheme (CRCFS) which is fully committed until 31 March 2009. The Department is currently reviewing its Community Relations policy including funding mechanisms. Therefore, the Department is not considering any further requests for community relations funding until the policy is in place, which will be in 2009.

Children Living in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children living in the North Down constituency

are currently enrolled in post-primary schools outside the constituency. (AQW 347/09)

The Minister of Education: Sa scoilbhliain 2007/08 bhí 6,222 dalta ag iarbhunscoileanna deontaschúnta ina gcónaí i dtoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh, agus as sin, bhí 1,690 acu rollaithe in iarbhunscoileanna taobh amuigh den toghcheantar.

In the 2007/08 year there were 6,222 pupils at grant-aided post-primary schools resident in the North Down constituency, of which, 1,690 were enrolled in post-primary schools outside of the constituency.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

New Deal Programme in Derry/Londonderry

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to make a statement on the impact of his Department's decision to award the tender to operate the New Deal programme in Derry/Londonderry to England-based company A4E. (AQW 126/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate, has selected ten 'Preferred Bidders' one of which is A4E to deliver the Steps to Work provision, which has replaced the New Deal Programme, in the Londonderry area.

No final decision has been made on the award of contract for the Foyle area.

New Deal programme in Derry/Londonderry

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the tendering criteria which informed the decision to award the tender to operate the New Deal programme in Derry/Londonderry to A4E. (AQW 127/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate, has selected ten 'Preferred Bidders' one of which is A4E to deliver the Steps to Work provision, which has replaced the New Deal Programme, in the Londonderry area. However, as stated in Part 1, "Instructions to Tenderers", point 15 of the tender document, before the Department can proceed to award contracts we require confirmation from the named sub-contractors that they have a formal agreement with the Preferred Bidder to provide Services as identified in their tender.

All tenderers for the Steps to Work Programme were assessed against the following criteria broken down into sub-criteria which were included in the original tender documentation available to those who wished to tender for the Programme:

- Methodology
- Relevant Experience
- Capacity to Deliver

Homeworking

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to give his assessment of the extent of 'home working'; and to set out the employment protections that are offered to those engaged in such activities.

(AQW 172/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: A home worker is anyone who mainly works from home. Home workers are employed in a range of activities including manufacturing, distribution and teleworking, the latter of which largely involves office type work.

Latest figures, from the April to June 2008 Labour Force Survey, estimate that 80,000 persons or 10.3% of all those in employment in Northern Ireland work at home or use their home as a base for work. The equivalent figure for employees only (i.e. excluding the self-employed) is lower at 18,000 (2.7% of all employees).

An individual's employment rights depend on their employment status i.e. whether under the law they are self-employed, an employee, or a worker. Home based employees have access to the same employment rights as other employees, whereas workers only have access to the core rights, in areas such as working time, national minimum wage and health and safety. In addition, in relation to home based employees, an employer must carry out a health and safety risk assessment and address any identified risks.

With regards to teleworking, it is worth noting there is a European wide agreement between employer and employee organisations. Guidance based on this agreement has been produced and is available from my Department's website.

Employment protections generally do not apply to those who are self-employed.

Further information on home working is also available from www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk, and www.direct.gov.uk.

Employees for Technology Companies

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he is taking to address the shrinking pool of employees for technology companies. (AQW 246/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

This issue is being addressed in two key ways:

- through implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for IT in Northern Ireland, published by e-skills UK (the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms) in February 2007. This SSA covers all aspects and levels of IT skills, from user skills to IT professional.
- through implementation of the ICT Future Skills Action Plan, published by my Department in association with Invest Northern Ireland, e-skills UK and Momentum (the ICT Trade Federation in NI) in June 2008. This plan focuses on the particular needs of the software industry, which make up the majority of ICT companies in Northern Ireland.

Initiatives taking place under the SSA for IT include:

- Computer Clubs for Girls (CC4G) aimed at schools who have not had a strong background in ICT related subjects.
- An upskilling programme for the ICT sector designed to meet the needs of the existing workforce. This is called "Pathways," and is being developed by e-skills UK. This is the first structured approach to skills provision that focuses on actual workplace upskilling.

Actions contained within the ICT Future Skills Action Plan include:

- Software Professional Course which converts non-IT graduates into software professionals over a 35 week period. Significant improvements have been made to the basis on which the course is offered – an increased training allowance, removing the requirement to be unemployed to participate in the course, and a high profile advertising campaign to promote the course.
- A major career attractiveness campaign for the ICT sector. This has commenced with a series of outreach events aimed at young people currently considering subject choices for university applications and will be complemented in early 2009 with a media advertising campaign.
- A workshop taking place in October 2008 involving representatives of the ICT industry and higher education providers to identify additional actions which can be taken to improve course enrolments and retention, and to ensure the curricula on offer best meet the needs of local companies.

My Department has also offered local companies the opportunity to source talent from outside Northern Ireland on an individual basis through the European Employment Service (EURES) and collectively through a skills mission for this sector.

In addition, a number of technology companies are participating in the Department's C'mon Over campaign (to encourage those currently studying at a number of mainland universities to consider employment opportunities in Northern Ireland).

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list all areas that are the responsibility of his Department. (AQW 257/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

The three pillars of the work of the Department for Employment and Learning are innovation, skills and employment. The Department is responsible for policy, legislation, finance, corporate governance, and service delivery across a wide range of areas within this remit, including:

- Higher Education, including research and innovation
- Further Education, including qualifications and curriculum, and quality improvement
- Careers Information and Guidance
- Training Programmes through Training for Success and Apprenticeships NI, including Adult Apprenticeships
- Adult upskilling
- The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland including skills forecasting and development, the Essential Skills strategy and Sector Skills Councils
- Employment Services and Programmes, including Welfare to Work
- Employment Rights and Relations, including the Office of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunals, the Labour Relations Agency, the Industrial Court, and the Redundancy Payments Service
- Responsibility as Managing Authority for the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2007-2013
- Student Finance
- The Construction Industry Training Board

I have placed a copy of the Department's Corporate Plan in the Library, which gives more detail on the Department's responsibilities.

Number of Colleges in Northern Ireland

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a list of all colleges under the control of his Department. (AQW 258/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

Under the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland are incorporated bodies. Thus, whilst the Department core funds Colleges, each of them enjoys a high degree of autonomy. The six Further Education Colleges are as follows:

Southern Regional College

Belfast Metropolitan College

Northern Regional College

South West College

South Eastern Regional College

North West Regional College

There are also two University Colleges; Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College. Both are Colleges of Queen's University, Belfast and are responsible primarily for the delivery of teacher education. In common with other Higher Education Institutions, they are autonomous bodies responsible for their own policies and practices.

Department's Budget

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail his Department's budget for the next 3 years. (AQW 260/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

The Department for Employment and Learning's total current and capital expenditure budgets for the next three years, as detailed in the Budget 2008 – 2011 document, are set out below:

2008/09	£788.6m
2009/10	£825.7m
2010/11	£879.7m

Community Groups

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the community groups that his Department funds in the North Down constituency. (AQW 261/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

The Department for Employment and Learning currently funds Conservation Volunteers NI. This organisation was offered funding for their Training

for Employment Project over a three year period, April 2008-March 2010, under the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2007-2013. A total of £216,628 was offered, comprising £133,310 EU funding and £83,318 DEL funding.

Conservation Volunteers NI is also currently contracted, under ApprenticeshipsNI, for the provision of Level 2 and Level 3 Apprenticeship training in Environmental Conservation and Amenity Horticulture, as well as for the provision of training under Training for Success. Contracts were on the basis of a competitive tendering process undertaken with Central Procurement Directorate, DFP.

Training for Success

Mr O'Loan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how many Training for Success contracts were awarded in 2007; (ii) how many training organisations and providers, awarded level 2 and level 3 Training for Success contracts, have sub-contracted all or part of the contracts; (iii) to detail the contracts sub-contracted out by each organisation; and (iv) if more level 2 contracts have been sub-contracted out compared to level 3 contracts. (AQW 266/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

- (i) In May 2007, contracts for the Training for Success provision were awarded to 53 Training Organisations (providers).
- (ii) None of the Training Organisations have sub-contracted fully the provision but 16 Training Organisations have subcontracted components of the provision.
- (iii) The following components of the provision have been sub-contracted;

Training Organisation	Level	Elements Of Provision Sub-Contracted		
		Essential Skills	Underpinning Knowledge	Technical Certificate
A4E	2 & 3	Workers Education Association	-	-
Conservation Volunteers	2 & 3	North Down Training	-	-
Plumbing & Mechanical Services Training (NI) Ltd	2 & 3	All 6 regional FE colleges	All 6 regional FE colleges	All 6 regional FE colleges
Bombardier	2 & 3	Belfast Metropolitan College	Belfast Metropolitan College	Belfast Metropolitan College
Rutledge Joblink, Londonderry	2	-	HairAffair	HairAffair
Food & Drink Training Council	2 & 3	A4e	Southern Regional College (some aspects)	Southern Regional College (some aspects)
Seven Towers Training	2 & 3	-	Wrightbus Ballymena, Flamingo Beauty	Wrightbus Ballymena, Flamingo Beauty
Electrical Training Trust	3	All 6 regional FE colleges	All 6 regional FE colleges	All 6 regional FE colleges
Transport Training Services	2	-	Skill net Bristol (DAF Trucks) and Valleyforge Newhaven (AVOCO Trucks)	Skill net Bristol (DAF Trucks) and Valleyforge Newhaven (AVOCO Trucks)
People 1st	2 & 3	-	The Link Works, Newco	The Link Works, Newco
CAFRE	2 & 3	Northern Regional College	-	-
Rutledge Joblink, Limavady	2	-	HairAffair	HairAffair
Coalisland Training Services	2 & 3	-	Rutledge Joblink Cookstown	Rutledge Joblink Cookstown
Engineering Training Council	2	Amicus		
Wade Training	2	-	-	Craft Recruitment
North City Training	2		Paragon Training Services, Jennymount Training Services	Paragon Training Services, Jennymount Training Services

- (iv) 16 components of Level 2 and 10 components of Level 3 provision have been sub- contracted since the award of contracts.

Students with Disabilities

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a breakdown of each Further and Higher Education College's 'discretionary fund' to provide adjustments for students with disabilities; and to detail the criteria by which students with disabilities are eligible to apply for these funds. (AQW 304/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Discretionary Support Funds are intended to provide financial help to students including those with a disability, who are inhibited by financial considerations from accessing and participating in further education. My Department issues

guidance annually to Further Education Colleges on the application of the fund; individual colleges can determine specific eligibility criteria and administrative procedures, provided these are applied on a consistent basis. Funding in 2008/09 totals £2.5m. The allocations to each college are:

Southern Regional College	£454,888
North West Regional College	£412,486
South West Regional College	£151,852
Northern Regional College	£337,670
Belfast Metropolitan College	£749,489
South Eastern Regional College	£393,615

Additional Support Funds provide support for disabled students undertaking both mainstream and discrete provision; support may be in the form

of additional technical and/or personal support. Funding for 2008/09 has increased by £0.5m in respect of discrete provision to ensure priority continues to be applied to students who require this specialist provision. Funding in 2008/09 totals £1.5m for mainstream provision and a further £2.0m for discrete provision. The allocations to each college for the mainstream element are as detailed below. The allocations for discrete provision are made in year and are based on actual student numbers.

Southern Regional College	£308,020
North West Regional College	£177,444
South West College	£335,589
Northern Regional College	£214,035
Belfast Metropolitan College	£206,516
South Eastern Regional College	£258,396

The eligibility criteria for both Discretionary Support Funds and Additional Support Funds are extensive, and are set out in Departmental policy circulars FE 05/08 and FE 06/08 which are both

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list the courses at Belfast Metropolitan College that are undersubscribed for the 2008-09 academic year; and what plans he has to address this. (AQW 310/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Enrolment for courses at Belfast Metropolitan College for the new academic year is still in process. It is not yet possible, therefore, to provide details of courses which might be under-subscribed in 2008/09.

The College has informed me that it will strive to maximise its enrolments in line with the targets, and the associated budgets, it has agreed with the Department for the 2008/09 academic year.

Efficiency Savings

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his strategy to make efficiency savings for his Department. (AQW 324/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has produced a detailed account of how it intends to make efficiency savings through its Efficiency Delivery Plan 2008 – 2011. The DEL Efficiency Delivery Plan is available on the DEL Website

Pathways Scheme

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) what training is given to personal advisors under the Pathways scheme (Employment and Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit), who interview and advise people suffering from depression and other mental health illnesses; (ii) what qualifications have been obtained by these advisors to give advice on forms of counselling and treatment suitable to each individual; (iii) what assessment is carried out to determine the effect of interviews on the health of interviewees suffering from depression and other mental illnesses; and (iv) under what circumstances is a decision made to stop calling people to these interviews. (AQW 361/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

(i) Pathways Personal Advisers receive an intensive [8/9 week] training programme to prepare them to conduct work-focused interviews with benefit claimants with health conditions and/or disabilities, including depression and mental health illnesses.

(ii) Pathways Personal Advisers are not trained in counselling, do not give medical advice and do not study for formal qualifications as part of their training: their role is to explore with clients their prospects of returning to work. If in the course of an interview either the client or Personal Adviser thinks that more specialist or professional medical intervention is necessary, the Personal Adviser can sign-post the client to appropriate support.

(iii) We have recently conducted an interim evaluation of Pathways to Work. This indicates that the Pathways approach has been well received by clients with many, including those with depression and mental health illnesses, reporting progress into or closer to work.

(iv) Personal Advisers can defer participation in interviews at any time if they feel the client is not able to benefit from the service.

Programme for Government

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress his Department is making in delivering its Programme for Government and Public Service Agreement commitments. (AQW 434/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department for Employment and Learning is responsible for delivering PSA 2: Skills for Prosperity and PSA 3: Increasing Employment. Delivery Agreements for each, which relate to the three year period for the Programme for Government, are

published on the Departmental website. Since April the Department has made good initial progress, including:

- increasing the number of PhD research students at local universities;
- developing a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance strategy; and
- enabling over 9,000 adult learners to achieve a recognised qualification in Essential Skills.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what courses are not being delivered in this academic year at Belfast Metropolitan College due to a lack of interest from prospective students.

(AQW 523/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Enrolment for courses at Belfast Metropolitan College for the new academic year is still in process. It is not yet possible, therefore, to provide details of courses which might not be delivered in this academic year due to lack of interest from prospective students.

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Pump Storage Electricity Generation Project

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to give details of the investigation into the possibility of a pump storage electricity generation project at Camlough.

(AQW 130/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): I understand that an energy company recently made some enquiries about the extent to which the land and equipment at Camlough remained in Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) ownership. The company was interested in the Camlough project as a concept which they see as complementary to wind and suitable for the Single Energy Market. However, the high capital costs and land issues involved mean that the company is not actively progressing the project at present.

Invest NI

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what land holdings are held by Invest NI, broken down by district council area.

(AQW 222/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI holds 2,779 acres of land across Northern Ireland. 2,015 acres of its estate is occupied by its client companies leaving 764 acres currently available for industrial use.

A table has been attached showing the breakdown of the land holding by Council area. Figures are correct as at 30th June 2008.

Invest NI land is held exclusively for its client companies with an approved business case and an immediate demonstrable business need.

**TABLE 1
BREAKDOWN OF INVEST NI'S LAND HOLDING BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA.**

District Council	Landholding (Acres)	Land Availability (Acres)
Antrim	110.44	26.50
Ards	31.50	4.10
Armagh	33.15	0
Ballymena	81.17	31.60
Ballymoney	12.75	1.70
Banbridge	27.43	0
Belfast	137.14	20.90
Carrickfergus	108.06	19.30
Castlereagh	13.25	0
Coleraine	74.36	49.90
Cookstown	38.31	5.80
Craigavon	360.25	181.10
Londonderry	419.21	107.10
Down	114.11	50.90
Dungannon	90.10	43.40
Fermanagh	126.50	37.70
Larne	35.70	4.70
Limavady	51.34	16.50
Lisburn	313.31	22.65
Magherafelt	72.17	16.10
Moyle	6.03	2
Newry & Mourne	100.28	0
Newtownabbey	283.20	99.90
North Down	62.81	20.10
Omagh	46.79	0
Strabane	29.17	2.10
Total	2778.53	764.05

Figures are correct as at 30th June 2008.

Gas Storage

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what progress has been made in pursuing the potential for gas storage in the salt deposit strata which lie under parts of East Antrim to ensure that Northern Ireland has a strategic gas storage capacity similar to other parts of the United Kingdom. (AQW 395/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department has granted Mineral Prospecting Licences to three companies to investigate the salt beds in different parts of the Larne and Islandmagee area. These companies are Antrim Resource Limited (“Antrim Resources”), Portland Gas NI Limited (“Portland Gas”) and Bord Gais Eireann (Bord Gais). “Portland Gas” has also obtained a licence from the Crown Estate to explore an area beneath part of Larne Lough.

The exploration programmes of these three companies are at different stages, in accordance with when the licences were issued. The furthest advanced is that of “Portland Gas” who have run a seismic survey over part of Larne Lough and Islandmagee. “Portland Gas” is now planning to drill a borehole to confirm their interpretation of the seismic data. In parallel, they are carrying out detailed technical, economic and environmental assessments, of the proposed gas storage facility.

The Department has also commissioned the British Geological Survey to collect new seismic data and integrate this with existing geological and geophysical data from sedimentary basins beneath Northern Ireland and adjoining offshore areas. This study will provide the Department with an assessment of all areas containing salt beds that might be used to provide strategic gas storage for Northern Ireland.

NACCO Materials Company

Mr O’Dowd asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what support her Department is offering the NACCO materials company in Portadown following the announcement of a possible loss of 90 jobs. (AQW 401/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: NACCO management contacted Invest NI on Friday, 12 September 2008, to confirm that no decisions have been taken with regard to future job levels and that they will be undertaking a thorough review of forward production for the first and second quarters of their new financial year; January - June 2009.

In December 2008, on completion of this detailed assessment, staff at NACCO will be fully informed of

the outcome and resulting decisions to be taken. This will be in advance of any public announcement.

Invest NI has offered the company significant financial assistance and remains in regular contact with the company. It will continue to work closely with the company to ensure its long term profitable future in Craigavon.

Utility Regulator

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she would initiate an immediate review of the decision of the Utility Regulator to approve the recent price increases of electricity and gas. (AQW 436/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The recent gas and electricity price increases were the subject of detailed scrutiny by the Utility Regulator, who concluded that the increases were justified as a result of significant increases in wholesale fuel costs.

In light of the concerns about the scale of the electricity price rise in particular, I sought proposals from the Regulator about how best to ensure full public confidence in the tariff setting process. I am pleased that he has responded by confirming that he has commissioned an independent review by the former Regulator, Douglas McIlDoon.

Credit Unions

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when she will make a decision on whether she will remove the barriers that prevent Credit Unions offering the same financial services as their counterparts in England and the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 437/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Assembly’s Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment is engaged in an ongoing inquiry into “the Role and Potential of Credit Unions, and Opportunities and Barriers in Northern Ireland”. Briefing papers on the regulation of Credit Unions in Northern Ireland have been provided to the Committee by my Department. The Financial Services Authority has likewise provided a paper, including briefing on the legal and regulatory frameworks in GB and Northern Ireland. I look forward to the outcome of this inquiry and will give full and careful consideration to the Committee’s views.

Utility Regulator

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with the Utility Regulator to ensure that the proposed rises in energy costs by privately owned utility companies are justified. (AQW 438/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I met with the Utility Regulator to discuss the proposed price rises by NIE Energy and Phoenix Supply Ltd and received assurances on the level of detailed scrutiny which his office conducted. Moreover, my Department was consulted as part of the Regulator's tariff setting process and accepted that while disappointing, the price increases were justified on the basis of significant increases in wholesale fuel costs.

ENVIRONMENT

Emergency Funding for Flooding

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many people in the North Down constituency have applied for emergency funding because of the recent heavy rainfall. (AQW 4/09)

The Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): Nine applications have been received from North Down constituents under the current "Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to District Councils" which was established by the Department of the Environment to deal with the recent widespread flooding across Northern Ireland.

Nuisance High Hedges

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment what the current schedule is for the introduction of legislation in relation to nuisance high hedges; and what progress has been made since April 2008, when the previous Minister indicated her intention to bring forward legislation. (AQW 12/09)

The Minister of the Environment: In April 2008 my predecessor indicated that she intended to bring forward legislation to address nuisance high hedges, starting with a policy consultation on the detailed operation of the legislation. The Minister added that the timing will be subject to consideration of the other competing priorities facing the Department. I am currently considering this matter and intend to make a final decision on the way forward in the next few weeks.

Breach of a Tree Preservation Order

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the action being taken by his Department to enforce the Tree Preservation Order at Myrtle Lodge, Newcastle. (AQW 34/09)

The Minister of the Environment: It would be inappropriate to make detailed comment on the case as until such times as the matter has either been before the court or the Department has determined that no case can be taken. I can advise, however, that the matter continues to be investigated.

A breach of a Tree Preservation Order is a summary offence and the penalty, which may include the necessity to replace any trees felled, is a matter for the courts.

I will, however, let you know the outcome.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of Areas of Special Scientific Interest which have been declared since 1st January 2007. (AQW 67/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Twenty-nine Areas of Special Scientific Interest have been declared since 1 January 2007.

Test Centres

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment how many vehicles were tested at Test Centres under his Department's control during the year 2007, including repeat tests. (AQW 70/09)

The Minister of the Environment: In 2007, 649,213 full tests and 146,673 retests were carried out by DVA.

Single Dwellings in the Countryside

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications for single dwellings in the countryside have been received and subsequently approved since 16 March 2006, that were (i) replacement dwellings; (ii) in-fill site; (iii) farm workers' dwellings; (iv) farm retirement dwellings; (v) substitution of previous planning permission; (vi) alternative proposals for a previously approved site; and (vii) other. (AQW 93/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department can provide data for single dwellings in the countryside during the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2008. However, the current system of electronic data retrieval

does not record applications in sufficient detail to provide the full level of information you have requested. The number of new and replacement dwellings approved and planning renewals issued for single dwellings (outline and full applications) from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2008 is shown in the table below.

Category of Development	1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007	1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008
New Single Dwellings	86	259
Replacement Dwellings	308	370
Planning Renewals	3	1

Emissions

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the legislation that regulates the monitoring of airborne emissions from chimneys at Ulster Farm By-Products in Glenavy; (ii) the levels of emissions of all potentially hazardous or offensive gases permitted under this legislation; (iii) how often levels of such emissions are required to be evaluated under this legislation; and (iv) the number of emission tests that have taken place at Ulster Farm By-Products in each of the last 5 years, summarising the results of these tests and highlighting any violations of the criteria that have occurred. (AQW 122/09)

The Minister of the Environment:

- (i) Emissions from Ulster Farm By-Products are regulated by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency through a permit issued under the Pollution Prevention and Control (NI) Regulations 2003.
- (ii) Emissions from the boiler plant chimneys and the stacks from the two thermal oxidisers that treat the odorous air arising from the process are covered by the permit. The following limits are set in the permit for the discharge points from the thermal oxidisers (the main odour sources on the site):

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs - a surrogate for odour)	20 mg/m3
Hydrogen Sulphide (only when treating chicken feathers)	1 ppm
Temperature of thermal oxidisers	850°C

- (iii) The permit specifies that these pollutants should be measured twice a year, but due to the history of odour complaints NIEA has decided that periodic direct odour measurements (using olfactometry techniques) would provide more valuable information. The temperature of the

thermal oxidisers is continually monitored to ensure optimum odour destruction efficiency and this is reviewed at site visits.

- (iv) The test results held by NIEA are set out below. This does not include any earlier records that may be held by Lisburn City Council who regulated the site until November 2005.

Substance	Date	Result – exit thermal oxidiser chimneys
Volatile Organic Compounds	March 2006 4 tests undertaken	13 mg/m3
		19 mg/m3
		2 mg/m3
		9 mg/m3
Odour	October 2005 2 tests undertaken	8,239 ou/m3
		6,850 ou/m3
	March 06 1 test undertaken	10,706 ou/m3
	June 2006 2 tests undertaken	13,052 ou/m3 11,728 ou/m3
March 2008 1 test undertaken	5,000 ou/m3	

Further VOC and olfactometry testing is planned for October 2008.

Chicken Waste Incinerator in Glenavy

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment if the proposed application for a chicken waste incinerator in Glenavy meets the requirements for an article 31 public inquiry into the proposal; and if he will support such an inquiry. (AQW 149/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The planning application for a biomass fuelled power plant at Glenavy was submitted to Planning Service on 4 June 2008. A decision on whether Article 31 of the Planning Order 1991 will be applied to this application will be taken on or before 24 September 2008.

Careful consideration of the planning application, and all representations made in relation to it, is necessary before I would be in a position to decide whether to proceed by way of public inquiry as the most appropriate course of action. It would not be appropriate therefore at this stage to indicate whether I would be supportive of a public inquiry.

Divisional Planning Office

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many current vacancies there are at each divisional planning office. (AQW 151/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Planning Service currently has the following vacancies in each of the Divisional Planning Offices.

Divisional Office	Number of vacancies.		Number of vacancies following Casual appointments.	
	Professional & Technical Staff	Admin Staff	Professional & Technical Staff	Admin Staff
Downpatrick	4	0	2	0
Belfast	1	1	1	1
Craigavon	5	2	3	0
Omagh	7	2	4	0
Londonderry	4	0	2	0
Ballymena	4	0	1	0

Every effort is being made to recruit staff as quickly as possible with a new competition to appoint Professional and Technical Officers (PTO) due to take place over the next few months. Planning Service also has appointed casual PTOs and Casual AAs to fill vacancies as an interim measure until permanent staff become available.

Enforcement Cases

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 5696/08, to detail the number of enforcement cases by (i) divisional planning office; and (ii) district council area.
(AQW 152/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The number of enforcement cases by (i) divisional planning office and (ii) Council area is highlighted in table 1 overleaf. The numbers refer to cases outstanding on the Department's live enforcement case list.

TABLE 1

Divisional Office	Council Area	Number of outstanding Enforcement Cases	Headquarters Strategic Projects Division (Minerals and Waste)	Overall Total
Omagh		524	112	636
	Cookstown	90	22	112
	Dungannon	117	20	137
	Fermanagh	123	20	143
	Omagh	119	28	147
	Strabane	75	22	97

Divisional Office	Council Area	Number of outstanding Enforcement Cases	Headquarters Strategic Projects Division (Minerals and Waste)	Overall Total
Northern		587	51	638
	Coleraine	151	11	162
	Ballymoney	51	3	54
	Derry	237	20	257
	Moyle	71	8	79
	Limavady	77	9	86
Craigavon		1458	113	1571
	Armagh	299	25	324
	Banbridge	228	8	236
	Newry and Mourne	634	61	695
	Craigavon	297	19	316
Ballymena		466	53	519
	Antrim	139	18	157
	Ballymena	102	9	111
	Magherafelt	131	12	143
	Larne	57	11	68
	Carrickfergus	37	3	40
Belfast		686	23	709
	Newtownabbey	122	12	134
	Castlereagh	119	6	125
	Belfast	445	5	450
Downpatrick		1622	75	1697
	Lisburn	474	37	511
	North Down	236	1	237
	Ards	388	13	401
	Down	524	24	548
Overall Total		5343	427	5770

Strategic Planning Unit

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications have been considered by the Strategic Planning Unit since its formation; and the average time taken to process an application.
(AQW 153/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Programme for Government refers to a six month target being applied for the processing of large scale development proposals. These are proposals which are considered to have significant economic or social implications for the whole or a substantial part of Northern Ireland. In response to this the Planning Service formally created 2 teams at headquarters in October 2007 to specifically handle these types of applications. This also includes facilitating pre-application discussions (PADs). The six month target is now being applied provided there have been PADs with an agreed outcome.

At the time the teams were formally established they were required to complete the processing of a number of applications already in the system. Some were longstanding and therefore had lengthy processing times. However, since the creation of the teams two new applications have recently been processed to a decision, PRONI HQ and Grahams (Dromore) within 6 months and 7 months respectively.

PADs were formally introduced in December 2007 and at present there are 18 proposals in the pre-application discussion stage. One has completed the PAD process which took approximately 3 months and an application was submitted in June 2008. The Strategic Projects Division is confident that it will be processed within 6 months, in accordance with the Programme for Government target.

Construction Employers' Federation

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to list all the inputs made by the Construction Employers' Federation and its agents within the Department's remit, excluding inputs from public consultations, since 2000. (AQW 154/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Construction Employers' Federation (CEF) and its agents have provided the following inputs to my Department's Environment Agency (NIEA) and Planning and Environmental Policy Group (PEPG) since 2000:

- John Armstrong, Chief Executive of CEF wrote to Minister Cairns in August 2006, in respect of the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) responses to planning applications and the development of a protocol on construction and demolition waste;
- CEF contacted the Chief Executive of EHS in March 2007 on the re-use of soil generated from construction; and
- CEF have a Board Member on the NIEA Better Regulation Group which convenes bi-annually.
- The CEF's position paper on developer contributions was enclosed with a letter from John Armstrong on 26 June 2008 in which he sought a meeting to discuss

social and affordable housing. However the position paper was withdrawn in a letter dated 16 July 2008.

- CEF is a significant stakeholder in the work carried out by the Planning Service. Due to the frequency and diverse nature of input received, information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Archaeological Digs

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment the archaeological digs on which the Environment Agency is currently working. (AQW 160/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) undertakes excavations using a contracted unit, the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), Queen's University Belfast. The CAF is currently undertaking one excavation on behalf of the NIEA at Dunseverick Cave, County Antrim.

The purpose of this excavation is to inform the work being undertaken as part of An Archaeological Survey of the Maritime Cultural Landscape of the North Antrim Coast. This survey project is being undertaken by another contracted unit, the Centre for Maritime Archaeology at the University of Ulster. In due course, it will be published as a NIEA monograph.

Chain Memorial Tower

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of Chain Memorial Tower, Larne, in terms of its heritage value. (AQW 161/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Chain Memorial Tower is an unusual example of a 'lighthouse', designed as a round tower in a Celtic or Irish Romanesque Revival style, which forms a very picturesquely sited landmark on the Lough shore near Larne. It was built in 1887 by public subscription to commemorate James Chainé who was responsible for developing the modern harbour at Larne. It was the second lighthouse in the island of Ireland to be powered by electricity. It is therefore important for its architectural design, as a landmark, and for the history associated with its erection. It is listed at grade B1.

Quality of Beaches

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to improve the quality of beaches. (AQW 162/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UK has an

obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment, including the shoreline. My Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has accepted the non-statutory responsibility for dealing with coastal pollution incidents.

The Agency will coordinate and manage the shoreline response, including clean up, in the event of a marine pollution incident impacting, or threatening to impact the Northern Ireland coastal waters or its shoreline.

NIEA currently monitors the twenty four identified bathing waters in Northern Ireland in accordance with the requirements of the EU Bathing Water Directive. The Agency also works with Northern Ireland Water to ensure that adequate sewerage infrastructure and sewage treatment are in place around our coastline in order to meet the UK's obligations under other European legislation – for example, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive.

NIEA does not have responsibility for maintaining the general tidiness of the coastline. Under the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, District Councils have responsibility for litter control, including enforcement in the event of an offence being committed under the Order.

Olderfleet Castle

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the Olderfleet Castle, Larne, in terms of its heritage value. (AQW 163/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Although Olderfleet Castle has no distinctly datable features, it was almost certainly constructed sometime between AD 1550-1600. It was probably erected as a watch tower and possibly also used as a place to store merchandise. It belongs to a category of buildings known as tower houses, which were built in Ireland and Scotland from the 15th to the 17th centuries. Although only partially extant, this is one of the best surviving examples of this type of building in County Antrim and is an important survival of the 16th and 17th century in this area. It was taken into State Care during the 1930s.

Dobbins Inn, Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment what support is available to the owners of Dobbins Inn, High Street, Carrickfergus, to enable them to complete repairs and renovations to this listed building. (AQW 164/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Grant aid is available from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) of my Department at 35% for repairs

to the historic fabric of the listed part of this building. Assistance is also available at 75% for any associated professional fees. This grant aid is available subject to the conditions of the Historic Buildings Grant Scheme which can be downloaded from the NIEA website at www.ni-environment.gov.uk.

Professional and scientific staff within the NIEA can also provide advice and guidance. This service is free of charge.

Planning Application Waiting Times

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what the average waiting time is between a planning application decision being issued and a decision notice being sent to the applicant/appointed agent, broken down by district council area. (AQW 178/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department has provided the following statistics detailing the average waiting time between a planning application decision being generated and a decision notice being sent to the applicant/agent, broken down by district council area. These statistics show the average time in working days between the date a decision notice is printed and the date a decision notice is issued.

AVERAGE TIME IN WORKING DAYS BETWEEN DATE DECISION NOTICE IS PRINTED AND DATE DECISION NOTICE IS ISSUED

District	Volume of Decisions	Average number of days
Londonderry	1238	1
Limavady	499	2
Coleraine	953	0
Ballymoney	559	0
Moyle	298	0
Larne	377	2
Ballymena	1056	2
Magherafelt	900	2
Cookstown	898	3
Strabane	651	2
Omagh	1259	2
Fermanagh	2027	2
Dungannon	1480	3
Craigavon	1049	2
Armagh	1474	2
Newry and Mourne	2210	1

District	Volume of Decisions	Average number of days
Banbridge	1067	2
Down	1000	2
Lisburn	1116	1
Antrim	884	1
Newtownabbey	591	2
Carrickfergus	326	2
North Down	756	2
Ards	1004	2
Castlereagh	543	2
Belfast	2572	3

Note: Based on applications issued during 07/08 These figures have been extracted from a live database which is continuously updated and validated. They should therefore be regarded as indicative only at this point in time and should not be compared with any previous figures published by the Agency.

Any time lapse between the decision notice being printed and the notice being issued to the applicant/agent is due to the checking of the decision notice by the authorised officer who signs and will be dependant on the volume of decisions being issued at any one time.

Climate Change

Mr Ford asked the Minister of the Environment for his Department's assessment of the link between human activity and climate change. (AQW 181/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I have made clear my own view that the scientific consensus claimed by the International Panel for Climate Change on the degree to which climate change is caused by anthropologic activity does not exist and the views of the many scientists who had doubt on the role of man were deliberately removed from the final report on more than one occasion. I believe we would all benefit from a public debate on the issue not least because of the significant economic implications for the citizens of the UK of the costs of mitigation.

Climate Change

Mr Ford asked the Minister of the Environment how he intends to carry out his official duties under the forthcoming Climate Change legislation. (AQW 182/09)

The Minister of the Environment: As Minister of the Environment, I will carry out any statutory duties required of me.

Glenfarm Holdings/Ulster Farm

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the recent enforcement action that was taken against Glenfarm Holdings/Ulster Farm By-Products; (ii) against what offences the action was taken; and (iii) the sanctions these companies will be facing in relation to violations of their permit and/or pollution laws. (AQW 186/09)

The Minister of the Environment:

- (i) My Department has taken 7 prosecutions against Ulster Farm By-Products, for offences involving water pollution, the most recent on 7 April 2008 when the Company was fined £5,000 + costs. Additionally, on 3 September 2008 NIEA issued an enforcement notice requiring the company to cease its discharge to the river by 15 October 2008 unless the effluent quality is in compliance with its permit.
- (ii) This enforcement action was in respect of the company's continued failure to comply with its permit's limits for its discharge of effluent into the Glenavy River.
- (iii) Sanctions for prosecutions taken against the company are for the Courts to decide. Failure to comply with an enforcement order is an offence for which the company can be prosecuted. There is also the option of instigating proceedings in the High Court for the purpose of securing compliance with the Notice.

Flooding in the Antrim Borough Council Area

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment how many claims for assistance (i) were made; and (ii) were successful, during the recent flooding in the Antrim Borough Council area. (AQW 187/09)

The Minister of the Environment: 199 applications have been received and £170,000 paid to ratepayers in the Antrim Borough Council area under the current "Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to District Councils" which was established by the Department of the Environment to deal with the recent widespread flooding across Northern Ireland.

Nuisance High Trees and Hedges

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to introduce legislation on nuisance high trees and hedges. (AQW 197/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I am currently considering this matter and intend to make a final decision on the way forward in the next few weeks.

Planning Service

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that Planning Service is more facilitative of small scale anaerobic digestion. (AQW 208/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Planning Service welcomes and indeed encourages the development of appropriate anaerobic digestion facilities, including those that would be small in scale. Planning Service has established specialist teams within its Headquarters Division to handle waste and renewable energy planning applications. Planning staff have the necessary expertise and are able to process the applications in a timely and efficient manner.

Planning Service has also recently produced draft Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy (PPS 18). The PPS aims to facilitate and encourage the greater use of small scale renewable energy technologies including anaerobic digestion.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment when the original programme of designating Areas of Special Scientific Interest was due to be complete; and when his Department will complete the programme. (AQW 214/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The original programme of designating Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) was intended to be completed by 2001. Sufficient resources to meet this target were not achieved and NIEA intends to complete, substantially, the declaration of ASSIs by 2016.

High Hedges

Mr Savage asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to deal with problems associated with high hedges. (AQW 220/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I am currently considering this matter and intend to make a final decision on the way forward in the next few weeks.

Motorists

Mr Savage asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to comply

with the EU legislative requirement that motorists carry a high visibility vest in motor vehicles.

(AQW 221/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment has no plans to introduce a requirement that motorists carry a high visibility vest in motor vehicles and there is no EU directive requiring such legislation.

Rose Energy Incinerator, Glenavy

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment if the proposed site for the Rose Energy incinerator, Glenavy, is in (i) the Lough Neagh Area of Special Scientific Interest; or (ii) the Ramsar area; and if not, . (AQW 225/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The proposed site for the Rose Energy incinerator at Glenavy is not in either the Lough Neagh Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) or the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site.

The proposed site is approx 870m from both the Lough Neagh ASSI and the Ramsar Site at their nearest points.

Emergency Relief Payments

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment how many households in Grangers Mill, Antrim, applied for emergency relief payments as a result of the recent floods; and how many of these applications were successful. (AQW 228/09)

The Minister of the Environment: 24 applications have been received, 22 of which were successful, from residents in Grangers Mill, Antrim under the current "Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to District Councils".

Road Safety

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment how many meetings his officials have had with their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland to discuss cross border co-operation on road safety issues, since devolution. (AQW 230/09)

The Minister of the Environment: There have been 42 meetings between my officials and counterparts in the Republic of Ireland to discuss road safety issues.

Golden Eagle Chicks

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with his Scottish counterpart in relation to the impact of the re-introduction of Golden Eagle chicks on small song birds and game birds. (AQW 240/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I have had no discussions with my Scottish counterpart in relation to Golden Eagles. There have been no records of Golden Eagles breeding in Northern Ireland since 1959. However, there are occasional sightings of immature birds along the North Antrim coast and a bird released in Donegal by the Republic's National Park and Wildlife Service spent some time in the Sperrin Mountains.

Golden Eagles are generally thought to have little effect on small song birds and there is debate on their level of impact on various game species. Scotland has a significant population of Eagles and continues to have many fine grouse moors.

European Union (1992) Habitats Directive

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the penalties that may be imposed for failure to comply with the European Union (1992) Habitats Directive. (AQW 247/09)

The Minister of the Environment: If a Member State is found to have failed to comply with the terms of the Habitats Directive, the European Court of Justice can impose fines. Fines can take the form of penalty payments either on a daily basis or lump sum, either separately or together. There is no standard level of fine. The fine is decided by the European Court of Justice taking into account the merits of each case, i.e. the seriousness and duration of the breach of European law.

River Faughan

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if the River Faughan will be designated as a Special Area of Conservation by September 2008; and if not, would infraction proceedings resume due to a failure to comply with the European Union Habitats Directive. (AQW 248/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The River Faughan and Tributaries candidate Special Area of Conservation was submitted, in a combined UK response, to the European Commission on 29 August 2008.

Departmental Advisory Bodies

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all equality and race legislation applicable in the appointment of members to departmental advisory bodies, and assessments completed in relation to this; and how the legislation is applied in the current application process. (AQW 323/09)

The Minister of the Environment: All public appointments to my Department's statutory advisory bodies, including those to the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, are made in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland's Code of Practice. One of the seven principles underpinning the Code of Practice is equal opportunities. My Department complies with the statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity during any appointment process.

Pollution

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to (i) detect the source of pollution; and (ii) prevent further pollution incidents, at Ballybay River, Corcrain. (AQW 346/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Reports of water pollution are thoroughly investigated by inspectors from Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

In relation to the specific pollution incident in the Ballybay River on 10 September 2008 both NIEA and Fisheries Conservancy Board (FCB) Officers have confirmed that a plug of pollution travelled down the river causing the fish kill, however the pollution has not impacted the main Bann River. Unfortunately, following extensive investigation by NIEA and FCB, no source has been identified for this incident.

NIEA also undertakes Pollution Prevention Risk Assessments at any site that has the potential to cause pollution e.g. government premises, construction sites, various industrial and commercial sites. This includes an investigation of the catchments and water bodies which are at risk, or potentially at risk, from pollution or have a history of poor water quality. A Risk Assessment was carried out at a business premises in the local area in April 2008 and NIEA officials have since been liaising with the company to ensure that the risk of water pollution is minimised.

The ultimate aim of the Pollution Prevention Risk Assessment is to identify sites which have the potential to adversely affect water quality in our catchments, so we can, through education or enforcement, reduce the risk of these sites causing pollution or downgrading the water quality in the catchment.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Collection of Rates

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total cost charged by the Land and Property Services to each local government authority for the collection of rates; and what benchmarking has taken place to compare costs with those in other parts of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 11/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): Land and Property Services is required by statute to recover the cost of levying rates on behalf of all 26 district councils. The cost is apportioned by legislative formula on the basis of the percentage share of the total rateable values for Northern Ireland and notified annually to district councils.

Details of the total costs charged by Land and Property Services to each local government authority for the collection of rates in the 2007-2008 financial year are set out in Table 1.

Unit cost targets, which were published annually by the former Rate Collection Agency, were discontinued with effect from 2005-2006 due to the programme of rating reforms.

Land and Property Services plans to re-introduce unit costs for revenues and benefits from 1 April 2009 and will benchmark these costs with similar appropriate revenue and benefits bodies in the United Kingdom.

TABLE 1 - COLLECTION COSTS APPLIED TO DISTRICT COUNCILS FOR LEVYING RATES IN THE 2007-2008 FINANCIAL YEAR

Council	Collection Costs £
Antrim	186,396.90
Ards	189,196.06
Armagh	154,135.76
Ballymena	203,618.95
Ballymoney	68,638.26
Banbridge	127,754.52
Belfast	1,307,789.92
Carrickfergus	115,243.17
Castlereagh	173,606.57
Coleraine	204,828.83
Cookstown	83,825.92
Craigavon	297,317.28

Council	Collection Costs £
Downpatrick	178,153.74
Dungannon	124,964.24
Fermanagh	140,030.87
Larne	105,148.75
Limavady	91,624.42
Lisburn	327,337.77
Derry	374,387.28
Magherafelt	89,426.16
Moyle	49,385.64
Newry	247,026.59
Newtownabbey	281,449.18
North Down	237,326.33
Omagh	149,902.80
Strabane	91,214.34

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the budget for the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation in each of the last 5 years; and (ii) budgets set for the future.

(AQW 26/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Budget for NIAUR for the years 2003-04 to 2007-08 was as follows:-

				£000's
2003 - 04	2004 - 05	2005 - 06	2006 - 07	2007 - 08
485	836	1610	2810	1637

The table above shows the final plan budget position for each year after all in-year movements have been taken into account.

The NIAUR Budget for 2008-09 to 2010-11 is as follows:

		£000's
2008 - 09	2009 - 10	2010 - 11
501	501	501

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people were employed by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation in each of the last 5 years; and to detail any future employment projections. (AQW 27/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The average number of staff (expressed as full time equivalents) working in the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation in each of the last five years was as follows.

2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
23	24	27	36	59.2

The growth in staff numbers (a mix of on loan civil servants and direct recruits) over the period reflects the fact that NIAUR assumed additional responsibilities across the energy sectors and in particular assuming responsibility for regulation of the water industry.

Future projections are for 65 staff in 2008/09.

Asbestosis and Plural Plaque Sufferers

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if his Department has any proposals to offer compensation to asbestosis and plural plaque sufferers. (AQW 92/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: In October 2007 the House of Lords ruled that claims for compensation regarding asymptomatic pleural plaques could no longer be made under the law of negligence. We are currently preparing a consultation paper which will explore the implications of that judgment and invite views on how people in Northern Ireland with pleural plaques can be supported and assisted. The House of Lords ruling does not relate to claims for compensation regarding asbestosis and, as the law stands, people with asbestosis may still submit a claim on the basis of negligent exposure to asbestos.

Peace III Programme

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made in implementing the Peace III Programme. (AQW 105/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Implementation of the PEACE III Programme began immediately following European Commission approval of the Operational Programme in November 2007. All Themes of PEACE III have now opened to applications.

It is expected that the first Letters of Offer will issue to successful applicants in the early autumn.

Eradication of Child Poverty

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to confirm that his Department has made the eradication of child poverty a priority, and that measures to address child poverty are already in place. (AQW 109/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: DFP is not responsible for taking forward actions to address child poverty directly. However, the Executive has identified the goal of “eliminating child poverty by 2020 and reducing child poverty by 50% by 2010” in the Programme for Government (PfG). The allocations to departments in the Budget process are conditional on the achievement of the outcomes and objectives set out in the PfG.

The Department, in conjunction with OFMDFM, has also taken forward a comparative analysis of expenditure on children and young people. This study focused primarily on comparing public expenditure on children in Northern Ireland with the rest of the UK and the report was circulated widely to NI departments to inform policy and spending proposals.

The new 2007-2013 PEACE III Programme (worth almost €333 million in Northern Ireland and the Border Region) will maintain and strengthen the PEACE II Programme’s focus on reconciliation activities. Children and young people are again named as one of the programme’s target beneficiary groups. Impact on poverty is one of the programme’s cross-cutting themes, and the programme will align with the principles of the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy. This will ensure that resources are targeted towards people, groups and areas objectively shown to be the most socially disadvantaged.

Religious Questions

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for its assessment of the implications for the current approach to religious questions in the Northern Ireland Census, arising out of the judgement of the European Court on Human Rights in the *Alexandridis v. Greece* case (2008), regarding the right not to disclose a religious identity. (AQW 117/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Proposals for the 2011 Census are currently being finalised. These proposals will be subject to subsequent legislative scrutiny by way of a Census Order and Census Regulations, both of which are planned for the 2009-2010 session. The collection of

Census information on a range of socio-economic variables provides public bodies, businesses, academia, the voluntary sector and the wider public with important information for the determination, monitoring and evaluation of policy. Whilst completion of a Census form is compulsory, it is specifically provided in the Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 that no penalty may be imposed on anyone who refuses to reply to a direct question which asks for a statement of religious profession.

The Alexandridis case dealt with a specific issue within the Greek legal system and the decision of the European Court of Human Rights was highly dependent on the individual facts of the case. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), like most Convention Articles, does not confer absolute rights. If there is any interference with such rights, the Court will look for a clear legal basis and procedures for the interference, including whether the interference seeks to achieve a legitimate aim such as a pressing social need and whether the interference is a proportionate response to achieving the legitimate aim. The European Court of Human Rights accepts that there are areas in which national authorities are in a better position to decide what is best for their people. It is for each state to balance the rights and to act proportionally and for good reason in interfering with such rights. I believe that the balance that has been struck in respect of religious questions in the Northern Ireland census of population is compatible with article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights as it has been interpreted in the Alexandridis case.

Lone Pensioners Allowance Scheme

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many applications to the Lone Pensioners Allowance Scheme have been (i) received; and (ii) successful, in each month since the scheme commenced. (AQW 200/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of Lone Pensioner Allowance applications received each month and the number assessed as successful are shown in the table below.

Month	Number of applications at 18/9/08	Number successful at 18/9/08
April	7,796	5,124
May	5,590	3,614
June	1,539	934
July	924	227
August	454	Not yet assessed

Month	Number of applications at 18/9/08	Number successful at 18/9/08
September	220	Not yet assessed
Total to date	16,523	9,904

Of the 16,523 applications received, 10,152 have been assessed and 98% (9,904) have been successful. The remaining applications will be assessed when full IT functionality for applications involving Housing Benefit, transitional relief and Disabled Persons Allowance is in place.

St Mary's Gaelic Athletic Club

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to explain the delay in granting St Mary's Gaelic Athletic Club, Rasharkin, a refund of rates from January 2006; and when this refund will be paid. (AQW 212/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The delay in granting St Mary's Gaelic Athletic Club a refund in rates was caused by a number of factors including priorities at the time of application being redirected to the domestic revaluation exercise, technical problems, and an error in entering the effective start date of the exemption.

Land and Property Services apologises for the delay. The refund, including payment of interest, was issued to St Mary's Gaelic Athletic Club on 12 September 2008.

Review Panel

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the work of the Review Panel on the Location of Public Sector Jobs and whether he will accept the recommendations of the panel in full; and for a timescale for the implementation of panel's recommendations. (AQW 253/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Professor Bain is due to publish his report on the Review of Policy on the Location of Public Sector Jobs on 30 September 2008. Copies of the report will be distributed to Executive Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly on 30 September. This is an independent review and, when I formally receive it, I will be considering the recommendations very carefully.

Decentralisation of Public Sector Jobs

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he can provide assurances that he will pro-actively work to ensure the decentralisation of public sector jobs to areas like the Strabane district. (AQW 254/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Executive approved an independent Review of Policy on the Location of Public Sector Jobs in November 2007 and Professor Sir George Bain was subsequently invited to carry out the Review. He is due to publish his report soon. Until then it would be speculative to pre-empt the outcome of his work. It would also be inappropriate to give assurances or commitments to any particular areas of Northern Ireland until such times as there has been the opportunity to carefully consider the findings and recommendations of the Review.

North-South Confederation of Councillors

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to comment on the situation regarding funding of the North-South Confederation of Councillors. (AQW 317/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Confederation of European Councillors was awarded two grants, of £149,005.04 and £125,383.83, under Measure 5.2 (Improving Cross-Border Public Sector Co-operation) of the EU PEACE II Programme. This funding concluded on 31 July 2008.

The Confederation could seek further assistance under the new round of EU Programmes. Any application would be assessed on a competitive basis against the relevant programme selection criteria. No commitment to provision of funding under these Programmes can therefore be made.

Number of Births

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of births in 2008; and how this compares to the figures for the previous 2 years. (AQW 319/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Information for births registered in 2008 is only available up to the end of July 2008. The table below gives the number of births registered between 1 January and 31 July for the years 2006 to 2008 and the annual percentage change in the number of births.

Time Period	Number of Births Registered	Annual Percentage Change
1 January 2006 - 31 July 2006	13,568	..
1 January 2007 - 31 July 2007 ^p	14,279	+ 5.2%
1 January 2008 - 31 July 2008 ^p	15,095	+ 5.7%

^p Provisional data

Fuel Poverty

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans he has to redirect any departmental underspend or surplus to alleviate the growing problems associated with fuel poverty. (AQW 398/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Policy responsibility for Fuel Poverty resides with the Department for Social Development. However, to the extent that the Social Development Minister feels she has insufficient funding to deliver the associated services, there is scope to request additional resources as part of the In Year Monitoring process.

The Executive is scheduled to consider the September Monitoring position at its meeting on 2 October 2008.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Minor Ailments Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in resolving the impasse in relation to the minor ailments scheme. (AQW 9/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The enhanced minor ailments service has not been withdrawn. On the contrary, the scheme remains open and pharmacy contractors are free to join at any time. The enhanced service is being delivered by a small number of pharmacy contractors and I welcome this. I hope that those who are currently not providing the service will reconsider and decide to join.

At the end of June 2008 I invited the Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee (PCC) to meet with me to discuss their concerns over the enhanced Minor Ailments Scheme. This offer was declined.

I wrote again to PCC in mid-August 2008 confirming that the Department's negotiating team remained available to meet with them to discuss their concerns over the scheme.

I am happy to say that PCC have since agreed to a meeting and I look forward to meeting with them in the near future.

Epilepsy

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the strategy for

Epilepsy and how this is being developed across all the Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 20/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has not issued a strategy specific to epilepsy. People suffering from this very debilitating condition have access to care and treatment from an appropriate part of the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector depending on their individual needs, ranging from primary and community care to specialist regional neurology services.

In January 2008, the Department issued a circular to the HSC endorsing a National Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline on the diagnosis, investigation and management of epilepsy in children and adults. NICE clinical guidelines are endorsed as developmental standards and the Department expects HSC organisations to review local practice against the guideline and take its recommendations into account in their future planning and delivery of services to patients presenting with a suspected seizure and those diagnosed with epilepsy.

Autism Spectrum Disorders Training Report

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the research report 'The Development of a Strategic Response to Autism Spectrum Disorders Training in Northern Ireland', funded by his Department, will be published. (AQW 32/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has taken a series of documents, including "The Development of a Strategic Response to Autism Spectrum Disorders Training in Northern Ireland" into account as part of the development of the ASD Action Plan which is soon to be published for consultation. The Action Plan recognises the importance of education and training for HSC staff and those affected by ASD, their families and carers.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will re-commence the minor ailments service provided by pharmacists. (AQW 37/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The enhanced minor ailments service has not been withdrawn. On the contrary, the scheme remains open and pharmacy contractors are free to join at any time. The enhanced service is being delivered by a small number of pharmacy contractors and I

welcome this. I hope that those who are currently not providing the service will reconsider and decide to join.

Prescribing the Drug Lucentis

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the delay in prescribing the drug Lucentis for people with eye-sight problems. (AQW 41/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 27 August 2008 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued guidance on the drugs Lucentis and Macugen for the treatment of wet age related macular degeneration (wet AMD). This recommends the use of Lucentis as a treatment option for wet AMD where a patient meets specified clinical criteria and where the manufacturer of the product meets the cost of treatment beyond 14 injections in the treated eye. The guidance does not recommend the use of Macugen.

My Department has established a link with NICE whereby all guidance published by the Institute from 1 July 2006 is reviewed locally for its applicability to Northern Ireland and, where appropriate, is endorsed by the Department for implementation in Northern Ireland. NICE's guidance on Lucentis and Macugen is currently being considered under these arrangements and guidance on its implementation will be issued to the Health and Social Care sector in due course.

I understand Boards are currently funding treatment with wet AMD drugs for patients with the greatest clinical priority.

Providing these new drugs will require a significant expansion of the existing service, including recruitment of additional staff to deliver this new service safely and effectively.

Fire Service

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many fires the Fire Service was called out to attend, for each year the Department holds information; and to detail the number of deaths that occurred as a result of these fires. (AQW 42/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department does not routinely collect such information. Incidence of fires and associated deaths is published in Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Annual Reports and those of its predecessor, the Fire Authority Northern Ireland.

Ulster Hospital Staff

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Agenda for Change process, when arrears owed to staff at the Ulster Hospital will be paid. (AQW 43/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern HSC Trust wrote to all staff in the Ulster Hospital on 29 August 2008 giving a commitment to have the majority of arrears paid during the next three months. Currently 70 per cent of staff have been paid arrears and the Trust has engaged temporary staff to assist with the completion of this exercise.

Operating Practitioners

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Agenda for Change process, why there is not parity of treatment between operating department practitioners and senior operating practitioners in Northern Ireland in comparison to other regions of the United Kingdom. (AQW 44/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A job title is not the basis on which jobs in the health service are graded; it is the content and the responsibility of the job that determines the rate of pay. It is therefore not always appropriate to compare similar job titles across other parts of the health service and expect to see exactly the same grading for those jobs. Health and Social Care non-medical staff, including operating department practitioners and senior operating practitioners, in Northern Ireland have had the Agenda for Change arrangements implemented in partnership process between HSC organisations and staff representative groups. I am satisfied that this process has been applied appropriately for Health and Social Care staff. I am not in a position to comment on how the process has been applied in other regions of the United Kingdom.

Prescribed Medication

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the specific ailment for which medication is prescribed is not indicated on its containers label. (AQW 46/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Reflecting the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship, prescriptions properly do not indicate the ailment for which a medication has been prescribed.

Under statutory labelling rules there is no requirement for the label on a medication to indicate the ailment for which it is being prescribed.

Prescription Charges in Relation to Students

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update in the cost benefit review of prescription charges in relation to students. (AQW 64/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I established a cost and benefit review of prescription charges as promised in the Assembly debate on this issue in May 2007. The review group have completed their analysis of the current system of prescription charging and have sent their report to me. In recognition of the fact that I am still considering the options, I decided to freeze prescription charges at the 2007/2008 level for 2008/2009 in Northern Ireland. The review is extensive and examines the exemptions relating to age, income and medical conditions which also include those students who currently pay for medication. I hope to make an announcement in the near future when I have concluded my deliberations.

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that the Southern Trust area will receive priority consideration in the process to determine capital priorities for health and social care from the second Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. (AQW 74/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Trust's priorities, along with those of the other Trusts across Northern Ireland, will be given due consideration in the context of funding constraints.

I made a bid for £5.7bn as part of the Investment Strategy 2008, £1.1bn of which was within the CSR. I only received a total of £3.3bn over the 10 years with just over £700m in the CSR. A major element of this investment is already contractually committed reducing further the availability of capital resources needed to modernise our healthcare infrastructure after too many years of investment neglect.

This is still not enough in order to meet all the demands within the Health and Social Care estate and for that reason I commissioned a review of capital investment priorities over the next ten years, specifically looking at the years beyond the CSR. This review will report to me at the end of September.

Prescribed Medication

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why certain prescribed medications indicate the days on which the medication is to be taken in a format other than Monday, Tuesday etc. (AQW 75/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Some medications are dispensed in blister packs known as calendar packs which will indicate on the back of the blister the time or day the medication is to be taken. For medications where the dosage regime is irregular eg every other day or every third day, it may be more appropriate for the calendar pack to use a format other than the naming of sequential days.

Prescribed Medication

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what delays are caused as a result of patients not having their prescribed medication with them when attending hospitals. (AQW 76/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is unlikely that any delay in treatment would be caused by patients not having their medicines with them on admission to hospital. Having the patient's medicines available on admission allows a faster preparation of their medication history but where patients do not bring their medicines with them, their medication history can usually be obtained from the patient, carer or their GP. Potentially if a patient is unable to give an account of their medication history and the GP or other record is not accessible, there may be some delay, but this would be an exceptional case.

Hospital Cleaning Services

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of the £2 million allocated in this financial year towards hospital acquired infections has been spent on front line cleaning services, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 91/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It will not be possible to reply to your Priority Written Assembly Question AQW 91/08, by the 16 September 2008. I will reply as soon as possible.

Training Facilities for Young Carers

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional training facilities are available to young carers. (AQW 101/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Children who are carers should be treated as children first and carers second. Children under 16 should have their needs assessed, and services provided, under the provisions of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. 16 or 17 year olds may be assessed either under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 or the Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002. My Department has allocated funding to put in place support services for young carers which includes services to improve young carers' access to and support in education, and also awareness raising for young carers about the specific conditions of the 'cared for' person in their family.

Carers Review

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Carers Review initiated in May 2008. (AQW 102/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Preliminary work has been ongoing with the Department for Social Development over the summer months. The review will examine the Northern Ireland position in relation to health and social care support for carers against the recommendations contained in the new carer's strategy published by the Department of Health in June 2008. It will also examine issues around Carer's Allowance. It is anticipated that the review will be completed by early next year.

Strabane Health Centre

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that Strabane Health Centre will continue to offer a full range of health care provision for the people of Strabane and the surrounding district. (AQW 106/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Strabane Health Centre provides a wide range of health care services on both a weekly and a sessional basis. All services are kept under continuous review to ensure that they remain effective and are provided efficiently. There are no plans to change the profile of existing services.

Strabane Health Centre is one of five bases used by Western Urgent Care to provide GP Out of Hours (OOH) Services to patients in the Western area.

Currently all OOH services in Northern Ireland are subject to a review looking at their effectiveness and efficiency. No decision has yet been made regarding the future of Out of Hours services, although no commitment can be given at this time that there will

be no change to how the OOH service is provided in the Strabane area in the future.

Should proposals be made to change the situation in relation to the provision of general services or the Out of Hours service in Strabane Health Centre, there will be full engagement with all relevant stakeholders.

Needs of Carers

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what improvements are needed by (i) GPs; and (ii) hospitals, to achieve a greater understanding of the needs of carers.

(AQW 113/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The carers' strategy, *Caring for Carers*, and associated guidance stressed the need for all Health and Social Care professionals, including GPs, to identify carers at the earliest possible time to ensure they have access to the right information and support at the right time. Furthermore, where a carer is identified, health and social care professionals must offer a carer's assessment in order to take a holistic view of the health, well-being and associated needs of the carer. The strategy also identified the need for Trusts to have a clear policy for hospital discharge to ensure that carers are fully involved in the discharge planning process of the person they care for. My Department has recently developed new guidance about how carers should be involved in this process and we will be sending this to Board and Trust Chief Executives for formal consultation in the coming weeks.

My officials monitor and review these policies to ensure effective implementation.

Arthritis Related Anti-TNF Therapies

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many patients are on the waiting list for arthritis related anti-TNF therapies; (ii) what the average waiting time is for these therapies; (iii) how these figures compare with (a) England; (b) Scotland; and (c) Wales; and (iv) what action he is taking to reduce these waiting lists.

(AQW 121/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At 30 June 2008 there were 561 people waiting to start treatment with anti-TNF therapies for severe inflammatory arthritis. It is not possible to calculate the average waiting time for these patients. The Department does not hold information on waiting lists or waiting times for these therapies in England, Scotland and Wales.

The health service in Northern Ireland now spends around £9 million on anti TNF drugs each year. At 30 June there were 888 patients receiving treatment. I am fully committed to further improving access to anti-TNF drugs for severe arthritis. In the budget, I secured additional funding amounting to £39 million for specialist drugs and the infrastructure for their delivery. A significant part of that allocation will ensure that the waiting time for biological treatments for arthritis is reduced to 21 weeks by March 2011.

Treating a significantly increased number of patients will require a sizeable step-up in infrastructure to deliver the treatment safely. Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts have therefore agreed a stepped reduction in waiting times over the next three years, with interim targets of an 18 month waiting time by March 2009 and a maximum 9 month wait by March 2010.

Car Parking Charges

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will follow the example of his Scottish counterpart and abolish car parking charges at all Health Service hospitals.

(AQW 129/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following a review of hospital car parking, I announced on 21 May 2008 that it would be up to the individual Trusts to decide whether to charge for car parking for patients and visitors to reflect local circumstances. However those patients who have to make lengthy or frequent visits to hospital such as those requiring chemotherapy or radiotherapy and those receiving renal dialysis will not pay parking fees. Similarly, the next of kin or partner of a critically ill or high dependency patient will also receive free car parking. I have no plans to change this policy position however I will be keeping the matter under review.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people currently work for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 132/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As at 30th June 2008, there were 19,523 (16,778 Whole-Time Equivalent) staff employed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Information on the number of staff working for the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust was obtained from the Human Resource Management System which is maintained by the individual Health & Social Care Trusts.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is on course to meet its efficiency targets for this year. (AQW 133/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have been set challenging efficiency targets for the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11. For 2008/09, trusts are expected to deliver total efficiencies of £67.0m through the Reform of Public Administration, improved productivity, re-design of services and regional procurement efficiencies. As this funding has already been removed from individual trusts' baselines, every trust must achieve the required level of savings if it is to fulfil its statutory duty to break even within the financial year. The Department will monitor the achievement of these targets closely.

For the South Eastern Trust this translates into a target, excluding procurement and pharmaceutical efficiencies which are to be delivered through regional action, of £10.0m. The trust is currently forecasting that this target will be met.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is on course to meet its efficiency targets for this year. (AQW 134/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have been set challenging efficiency targets for the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11. For 2008/09, trusts are expected to deliver total efficiencies of £67.0m through the Reform of Public Administration, improved productivity, re-design of services and regional procurement efficiencies. As this funding has already been removed from individual trusts' baselines, every trust must achieve the required level of savings if it is to fulfil its statutory duty to break even within the financial year. The Department will monitor the achievement of these targets closely.

For the Belfast Trust this translates into a target, excluding procurement and pharmaceutical efficiencies which are to be delivered through regional action, of £21.8m. The trust is currently forecasting that this target will be met.

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Western Health and

Social Care Trust is on course to meet its efficiency targets for this year. (AQW 135/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have set challenging efficiency targets for trusts for the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11. For 2008/09, trusts are expected to deliver total efficiencies of £67.0m through the Reform of Public Administration, improved productivity, re-design of services and regional procurement efficiencies. As this funding has already been removed from individual trusts' baselines, every trust must achieve the required level of savings if it is to fulfil its statutory duty to break even within the financial year. The Department will monitor the achievement of these targets closely.

For the Western Trust this translates into a target, excluding procurement and pharmaceutical efficiencies which are to be delivered through regional action, of £8.9m. The trust is working with the Department to ensure that the target is delivered in full, to be submitted for approval shortly.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Northern Health and Social Care Trust is on course to meet its efficiency targets for this year. (AQW 136/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have been set challenging efficiency targets for the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11. For 2008/09, trusts are expected to deliver total efficiencies of £67.0m through the Reform of Public Administration, improved productivity, re-design of services and regional procurement efficiencies. As this funding has already been removed from individual trusts' baselines, every trust must achieve the required level of savings if it is to fulfil its statutory duty to break even within the financial year. The Department will monitor the achievement of these targets closely.

For the Northern Trust this translates into a target, excluding procurement and pharmaceutical efficiencies which are to be delivered through regional action, of £10.2m. The trust is currently forecasting that this target will be met.

Prescribed Medication

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken by the Department to address the possible duplication of effort and resources where a GP issues a prescription which is then rescinded and replaced by the pharmacist selling the prescribed drug as an over the counter medicine. (AQW 167/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I do not regard the situation described as duplication of effort which requires to be addressed. When a GP, after a consultation with a patient, issues a prescription, he will not always be aware of the precise cost of the medication, nor of whether the patient is entitled to free prescriptions. It is only when the prescription is presented for dispensing, and the pharmacist asks the patient whether they pay for their prescriptions, that it would become clear whether or not it would be cheaper for the patient to buy the medication as an over-the-counter medicine rather than paying the £6.85 prescription charge. If they do pay, a cheaper over-the-counter medicine will result in a saving to the patient and a saving to the Health Service Drug Budget because the medication has not been dispensed against the prescription.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the changes in the Minor Ailments Service delivered through pharmacies. (AQW 168/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The enhanced Minor Ailments Service began on the 1 August 2008 and remains open for pharmacists to join. It replaced the previous limited Minor Ailments Scheme, in operation since 2005. The new service offers considerable increased benefits to patients, pharmacists and GPs. The main changes that are being introduced include:

- significant additional investment, increasing the funding to some £1.5m, almost three times the previous level of funding;
- improved access for patients to professional advice and treatment in respect of an expanded range of conditions, greatly reducing the need for patients to visit their GP for the treatment of a minor ailment;
- further opportunities for pharmacists to extend their clinical skills;
- a reduction in the pressures experienced by general practitioners as a result of patients' improved access to treatment from pharmacists.
- a much improved remuneration package for pharmacists;

The enhanced Minor Ailments Service will be reviewed after 6 months to evaluate the benefits to patients, the scheme's performance and the remuneration structure.

Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to provide a new woman and children's hospital on the Royal Victoria Hospital site. (AQW 169/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My officials have worked closely with the Belfast Trust to finalise proposals for the new Women's and Children's Hospitals. The Trust is currently finalising the business case which will be submitted to the Department for assessment. Only when the business case has been submitted and scrutinised can a decision on funding and timing of the project be taken. Those decisions will of course need to be taken alongside decisions on other competing priorities emerging from the ongoing review of capital priorities which will report to me at the end of September.

Loch Cuan House in Newtownards

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will urge the Trust to expedite its business plan for Loch Cuan House in Newtownards; and what has been the response so far from the Trust concerning this matter. (AQW 170/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has established a Reform and Modernisation Project Board to review all statutory residential care for older people in the Trust area, and proposals for the future of Loch Cuan House are being considered as part of this review. The Trust has indicated that a business case plan for Loch Cuan House will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and full public consultation with all key stakeholders before a final decision is made. The Trust will hold a meeting to update residents, relatives and staff of Loch Cuan House on these proposals.

Older People in Loughiel

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are provided by his Department for older people in Loughiel. (AQW 175/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern HSC Trust provides residents of Loughiel with a full range of health and social care services including access to community nursing, GP services, social services, allied health professional services, day care services and domiciliary care. Social services are delivered to Loughiel by

the Ballymoney Integrated Team for Older People and allocation of all services is based on assessment of need. Working in partnership with the Loughgiel Community Association, the Trust has appointed a Community Development Worker for the Ballymoney and Moyle area to partner with local community organisations to maximise the independence and enhance the health and social well being of older people. In addition, Supporting People visitation officers work at the Millennium Centre in Loughgiel which offers a weekly luncheon club and activities.

Ambulances

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide the age of ambulances in North Antrim. (AQW 177/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is contained in the table below:

Ambulance Station	A&E ambulances Age (years)
Ballycastle	5
	5
Ballymena	4
	4
	5
	9
Ballymoney	5
	5
	9

Ambulance Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the average (i) age; and (ii) mileage, is of ambulances based in the Derry/Londonderry City Council area; and for his assessment of the ambulance service provided in this area. (AQW 283/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The average age of the ambulances based at Altnagelvin Ambulance Station, which covers the Derry City Council area, is 4 years and 8 months. Their average mileage is 83,762.

The ambulance fleet based at Altnagelvin is well maintained and fully complies with Department of Environment MOT requirements.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) 2008/09 Priorities for Action target is that from

April 2008, it should respond to an average of 70% of Category A (life-threatening) calls within eight minutes, with performance in individual Health and Social Services Board areas being improved to at least 62.5% by March 2009. Figures for the year to date show that performance in the Western Board area has exceeded this target.

Ambulance Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what efficiency savings have been set for the Ambulance Service for the current financial year. (AQW 284/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have set challenging efficiency targets for all trusts for the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11 in order to deliver the Executive Committee's savings targets.

For the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service this translates into a target of £1.2m for 2008/09.

Access NI

Mrs O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline what steps he has taken to address the delays in processing disclosures/checks being carried out by Access NI, for those people who are wishing to work in a regulated position and/or care positions within the meaning of the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Order 2003, or the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order 2007. (AQW 367/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In order to deal with AccessNI delays, my department has relaxed the rules governing employment in health and social care. In some employment circumstances, this required an amendment to existing legislation. This was done by way of The Establishments and Agencies (Fitness of Workers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008, which were made on 12 August and came into operation on 13 August 2008. Where legislative amendment was required, it was restricted to those areas of health and social care where there was evidence to indicate that the impacts of AccessNI delays were greatest. As a result, the majority of employers in health and social care settings will be able to employ, pending receipt of an enhanced disclosure certificate from AccessNI, subject to a number of conditions being satisfied.

In addition, I have sought assurances from Minister Paul Goggins that AccessNI will return to full service at the earliest opportunity.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bowtown to Loughries Road

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development how much it will cost to resurface the Bowtown to Loughries Road. (AQW 84/09)

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that a resurfacing scheme was carried out earlier this year on the Bowtown to Loughries road at a cost of £345,000. At this time, Roads Service also took the opportunity to carry out a minor works scheme, to remove a bad bend at a particularly narrow section of the road, at a cost of £85,000. A short section of this road near Loughries Primary School has yet to be completed following works by Northern Ireland Electricity. The estimated cost of the remaining works is £10,000, and should be completed within the next 2-3 months.

As regards AQW 85/09, Roads Service has advised me that their intention to carry out a resurfacing scheme on the Bowtown Road to Loughries Road, was notified to all the utilities, including Northern Ireland Water, by way of the Northern Ireland Street Works Register and Notification System (NISRANS) on 28 January 2008. No response was received from Northern Ireland Water (NIW). Consequently Roads Service proceeded to carry out the resurfacing scheme which is now complete, with the exception of the short section mentioned above.

I can confirm that NIW contacted Roads Service in early June of this year to arrange a meeting, to discuss a programme of proposed works in and around Newtownards. At the meeting on 10 June 2008, NIW, their consultant and contractor, presented a plan showing the various locations of the proposed works, which included the Bowtown Road. (NIW had posted a notice on NISRANS about the proposed works on 23 May 2008).

It was pointed out by Roads Service at this meeting that their resurfacing scheme, which was substantially complete at this stage, had been logged on NISRANS on 28 January 2008; and that this was the first time Roads Service had been aware of any proposed works by NIW. It was made clear by Roads Service that it would exercise its powers under the Streetworks (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, to restrict NIW from working on the resurfaced road for the maximum period of twelve months.

Bowtown to Loughries Road

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development why Northern Ireland Water and his

Department did not co-ordinate the resurfacing and water pipe laying on the Bowtown to Loughries Road. (AQW 85/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a resurfacing scheme was carried out earlier this year on the Bowtown to Loughries road at a cost of £345,000. At this time, Roads Service also took the opportunity to carry out a minor works scheme, to remove a bad bend at a particularly narrow section of the road, at a cost of £85,000. A short section of this road near Loughries Primary School has yet to be completed following works by Northern Ireland Electricity. The estimated cost of the remaining works is £10,000, and should be completed within the next 2-3 months.

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Upgrading the Tullykevin Road

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will consider upgrading the Tullykevin Road, Greyabbey, to take into account the increase in traffic volume using the road. (AQW 86/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are no plans to upgrade the Tullykevin Road at present.

However, Roads Service will continue to carry out regular inspections on the Tullykevin Road to ensure that it is maintained in accordance with approved maintenance standards. Any defects identified during these inspections, will be prioritised and repaired accordingly.

Widening of the A2 Carrickfergus to Belfast Bottleneck at Greenisland

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will announce the result of the public inquiry into the widening of the A2 Carrickfergus to Belfast bottleneck at Greenisland.
(AQW 94/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is presently considering the Inspectors Report on the public enquiry into the widening of the A2 at Shore Road, Greenisland.

I expect to be able to publish the result of the public inquiry in October 2008.

Road Schemes Planned for East Derry/Londonderry

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what road schemes are planned for the East Derry/Londonderry constituency in the period September 2008 to December 2010.
(AQW 95/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The tables below detail the proposed schemes that my Department's Road Service has planned for the East Derry/Londonderry constituency during the period September 2008 to December 2010, based on the current level of funding.

Major Works Scheme
A2 Dualling – Maydown Roundabout to City of Derry Airport

Resurfacing Schemes	
Agivey Road at Droghed	Edenmore Road at Enagh
Quilly Road at Masteragwee	Terrydoo Road at Terrydoo
Dunhill Road at Balteagh	Dremont Road at Terrydremont
Edenbane Road at Bovedy	Carnamuff Road at Carnamuff
Castleroe Road at Riverside	Greystone Road (Irish Green Street to Scroggy Road)
Agivey Road at Mullan	Gortnaghy Housing Estate
Belraugh Road Part 2 at Boleran	Sheskin Road at Minnegallagher
Cam Road at Croghan	Killunaght Road at Ballyharigan

Resurfacing Schemes	
Ballyquin Road at Ballyquin	Scroggy Road at Rathbready More
Linhall Street	

Traffic Section Schemes (Programmed schemes form September 2008 to March 2009)*	
Type of Scheme	Location
Bus measures at:	Cromore Road Mussenden Road Curragh Road Agivey Road Carrowreagh Road
Footway and Islands at:	Garvagh Road, Kilrea
Pedestrian Refuge at:	Coleraine Street, Kilrea Bridge Street, Garvagh
Footway and extend layby at:	Moneygran Road, Kilrea
Provision of Footway at:	Ballymacrea Road, Portrush
Collision Remedial Schemes at:	Ballybogey Road Aghanloo Road Priestland Road
Zebra Crossing at:	Diamond, Kilrea
Shared Use Path at:	Dunderg Road, Coleraine

* The Programme for March 2009 to Dec 2010 has not been identified at present.

Network Development Schemes
B64 Garvagh Road, Kilrea – Provision of footway
U391 Dunderg Road, Macosquin – Provision of footway
A29 Atlantic Road/U300 at Islandtasserty - Carriageway realignment
C93 Ballylagan Road – Provision of footway
A2 Quilly Road – Provision of footway
U332 Ardina Road – Provision of footway
A54 Agivey Road (Mullan) - Horizontal and vertical realignment of the carriageway
B69 Drumacarne Bridge - Bridge realignment
B68 Ballyquin Road/U271 Ballyavelin Road - Junction improvement
B69 Ballyquin Road at Scriggan - Carriageway realignment
A37 Broad Road/B66 Ringsend Road - Junction improvement
C529 Drumsurn Road, Drumsurn – Provision of footway

Roads Service

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what type of weedkiller is used by Roads Service to treat footpaths. (AQW 112/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Roads Service carries out weed spraying in Castlereagh and Belfast North sections only. All other weed spraying on footpaths throughout the North is carried out by external contractors.

The weed killer used by Roads Service this year on the first spray, which was carried out during May and June, was a product called Xanadu. Roads Service later switched to a product called CDA Vanquish.

A survey of products used by the external contractors showed several different types of weedkiller products in use.

Cleaning Bonfire Sites and Repairing Road Surfaces

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money was spent by Roads Service cleaning bonfire sites and repairing road surfaces from 1 July to 31 August 2008. (AQW 120/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised me that it does not monitor expenditure specifically related to bonfires. However, during the period 1 July to 31 August 2008 it is estimated that around £60,000 was spent on attending / repairing bonfire related sites.

Roads Service

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail specific Roads Service projects in which (i) the entire funding; and (ii) part of the funding, has come from revenue generated through parking fines. (AQW 138/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 138/09, I can advise you that income from parking fines is not used to fund specific projects. My Department's Roads Service budget to fund its services takes into account all income, including income from parking fines.

In relation to AQW 140/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that the testing process, referred to in my previous answer, has now been completed by NCP Services Ltd and a satisfactory adhesive ticket has been identified. It is intended that these tickets will be installed, for use in all Roads Service pay and display machines over the coming weeks.

Roads Service

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 5430/08, for an update on the provision of pay and display tickets that have efficient adhesive surfaces to enable them to be securely attached to car windscreens. (AQW 140/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 138/09, I can advise you that income from parking fines is not used to fund specific projects. My Department's Roads Service budget to fund its services takes into account all income, including income from parking fines.

In relation to AQW 140/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that the testing process, referred to in my previous answer, has now been completed by NCP Services Ltd and a satisfactory adhesive ticket has been identified. It is intended that these tickets will be installed, for use in all Roads Service pay and display machines over the coming weeks.

Road Scheme

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost of each individual road scheme over £1 million, in each of the last 4 years; and for each of these schemes, how much the Department spent on consultants. (AQW 158/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: In relation to AQW 158/09, the table provided by my Department's Roads Service below, lists those road schemes completed at a cost of over £1 million since 1 January 2004. The total cost and the amount paid to consultants in delivering each scheme, is also provided.

The significant variation in fees paid to consultants, across the schemes listed, is due largely to the fact that on some schemes, design and supervision has been undertaken in house, whereas on others scheme development has been contracted out under the management of Roads Service Engineers.

Major Works Schemes 2004-2008			
Scheme	Total Scheme Cost (£k)	Opened to Traffic	Consultancy Fees (£k)
A8 Belfast to Larne Road - Roundabouts	1,707	Jan-04	2
A1 Flyover at Rathfriland Road junction, Banbridge	4,900	Feb-04	125 1
A6 Toome Bypass	18,741	Mar-04	804

Major Works Schemes 2004-2008			
Scheme	Total Scheme Cost (£k)	Opened to Traffic	Consultancy Fees (£k)
M1 Blacks Road to Stockmans Lane	5,787	Aug-04	162 4
A8 Belfast to Larne Road, Doagh Road to Hillhead Road Dualling + Ballynure Link	9,105	Mar-05	1,046
A1 underpass at Hillsborough Road junction, Dromore	3,300	Jun-05	90 1
Foyle Bridge, Londonderry - Strengthening	12,895	Aug-05	1,158
A7 Saintfield to Crossgar, Doran's Rock (towards Downpatrick)	1,210 5	Dec-05	15
Bann River Bridge, Portadown - Strengthening	4,226	Feb-06	26
A26 Ballinaloob (towards Ballymena)	3,846	Mar-06	13
A5 Omagh Throughpass Stage 3	12,2192	Oct-06	1,539
A1 Loughbrickland to Beech Hill	25,800	Nov-06	645 1
M2 Crosskeen - slip roads at Antrim Hospital	2,500 3	Jul-07	100
A1 Newry to Dundalk Link Road (NI section)	33,800	Aug-07	2,940
A514 Crescent Link	1,700 2	Dec-07	32
Skeoge Link, Londonderry	4,400 2	Mar-08	42

Notes:

- 1 Designed in-house. Consultants fee is an estimated cost of producing Environmental Statement
- 2 Final construction cost not yet agreed with Contractor.
- 3 As this scheme is an element of Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) Package 1, only estimated costs are available.
- 4 Cost of taking through statutory procedures subsumed in BDFO Package 1.
- 5 Excludes land costs.

With regards to AQW 159/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that the Consultancy Service (Partnering) contract is in its 4th and final year. On completion in April 2009, the value of the

contract with Amey Consulting is estimated at £10.53 million. The table below details the amount spent during each of the four years.

Year	Amount
05/06	£1.95m
06/07	£3.15m
07/08	£2.84m
08/09	£2.59m (est)
Total	£10.53m (est)

The services delivered under this contract are essential in enabling Roads Service to deliver its identified programme of maintenance and network improvements, on time.

Amey Consultancy Contract

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on the Department's partnering consultant Amey (formerly Owen Williams), during the current partnering contract. (AQW 159/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: In relation to AQW 158/09, the table provided by my Department's Roads Service below, lists those road schemes completed at a cost of over £1 million since 1 January 2004. The total cost and the amount paid to consultants in delivering each scheme, is also provided.

The significant variation in fees paid to consultants, across the schemes listed, is due largely to the fact that on some schemes, design and supervision has been undertaken in house, whereas on others scheme development has been contracted out under the management of Roads Service Engineers.

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The services delivered under this contract are essential in enabling Roads Service to deliver its identified programme of maintenance and network improvements, on time.

Drainage Works

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development to confirm what drainage works, including drain cleaning, has taken place at the Royal Ancient Order of the Buffalo Social Club, at 7 Castle Street, Carrickfergus. (AQW 173/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: In relation to gully / drain cleaning, my Department's Roads Service aims to inspect and clean, where necessary, all gullies in urban areas twice per annum. This policy ensures that a reasonable level of maintenance is carried out to drainage systems, taking account of the Department's finite funding and staff resources.

I have been advised that the gullies in the vicinity of the Royal Ancient Order of the Buffalo Social Club were cleaned on 7 November 2007 and 26 April 2008. The next scheduled clean is due later this month.

Roads Service has also advised that apart from the aforementioned scheduled road gully cleaning, it has not carried out any other drainage works at this location.

Roads Service

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 8468/08, to provide a list of those proposals which are already complete and those which remain outstanding. (AQW 179/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that since my last response to the Member's Assembly Question AQW 8468/08, the following proposals have been completed:

- all traffic management work involving the upgrade of signs and road markings;
- Gillistown Road junction improvement; and

- Casheltown Crossroads junction improvement.
- The following improvements were also identified as part of the B52 Largy Road route study. However, these can only be brought forward into a works programme on a priority basis, and within the level of funding available:
- Aughnahoy Road Junction Vertical realignment (to improve sight visibility and improve sight distance);
- Largy Lounge Vertical realignment (to improve sight distance);
- Duffin's Bend (improvements to the horizontal alignment to improve the sight distance, widening the existing verges and widening the existing road width);
- Chesney's Corner (provision of right turn lanes); and
- Kilknock Crossroads (provision of right turn lanes).

Sewage

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cause of raw sewage leaking into the back gardens of dwellings in the Whitehall area of Limavady on 5 and 6 September 2008.

(AQW 205/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the out-of-sewer flooding to the gardens of properties in the Whitehill area of Limavady on 5 and 6 September 2008 was caused by a blockage which resulted from a build up of rags in the sewer. The blockage was cleared on 6 September and the sewer is now operating normally.

Sewage

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development why there was a 20 hour delay in dealing with the incident involving the leaking of raw sewage into the back gardens of dwellings in the Whitehall area of Limavady on 5 and 6 September 2008.

(AQW 206/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it commits to unblock public sewers within 24 hours of being notified, as detailed in its Customer Charter. Northern Ireland Water does, however, endeavour to attend to most sewer blockages far more rapidly than this.

When out of sewer flooding was reported in the Whitehill area of Limavady on the evening of Friday 5 September 2008, Northern Ireland Water's sewer maintenance contractor was dispatched to the site. Based on previous experience it was suspected that a fault at Whitehill Wastewater Pumping Station

might be the cause of the problem. Upon investigation by a Northern Ireland Water engineer, the station was found to be operating normally. There was a delay in relaying this information back to the sewer maintenance contractor.

Northern Ireland Water's contractor attended to the blocked sewer but specialist sewer jetting equipment was required to clear the blockage. This further added to the delay. However, the contractor tankered effluent away from the sewer while the jetting equipment was being arranged. The blockage was finally cleared by 5pm on Saturday evening.

Sewage

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if there will be a full investigation into the events of 5 and 6 September 2008, in relation to the leaking of raw sewage into the back gardens of properties in the Whitehall area of Limavady; and if he will bring a report to the Committee for Regional Development with recommendations to be considered to avoid a repeat of the lengthy delay in responding to an urgent situation.

(AQW 207/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Naturally I am concerned about reports of sewage leaks affecting people's property. Information has been sought from NI Water on the matter and will be included in a response to the Member's associated correspondence on the issue. As this is an operational matter for NI Water I will not be making a report to the Regional Development Committee.

Hightown Bridge

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) any further work to be completed on or around the Hightown Bridge; and (ii) possible further closures of the bridge that may occur in the future.

(AQW 226/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 226/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that the minor works which remain outstanding in the vicinity of the Hightown Bridge, which opened to traffic on 3 September 2008, include:

- alterations to kerbs;
- alterations to tactile paving;
- alterations to white lining;
- the laying of anti-skid surfacing; and
- top soiling and landscaping.

There are presently no plans for a full closure of the Hightown Bridge. However, when antiskid surfacing is being laid, it will be necessary to temporarily close a

lane of the Hightown Road. Traffic will be controlled by means of traffic lights during these works.

In relation to AQW 227/09, I can confirm that Roads Service has not paid a bonus to the Design Build Finance Operate contractor for rebuilding the Hightown Bridge ahead of schedule.

Hightown Bridge

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development if Highway Management Construction was paid a bonus for rebuilding the Hightown Bridge ahead of schedule; and if so, how much this bonus payment was. (AQW 227/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 226/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that the minor works which remain outstanding in the vicinity of the Hightown Bridge, which opened to traffic on 3 September 2008, include:

- alterations to kerbs;
- alterations to tactile paving;
- alterations to white lining;
- the laying of anti-skid surfacing; and
- top soiling and landscaping.

There are presently no plans for a full closure of the Hightown Bridge. However, when antiskid surfacing is being laid, it will be necessary to temporarily close a lane of the Hightown Road. Traffic will be controlled by means of traffic lights during these works.

In relation to AQW 227/09, I can confirm that Roads Service has not paid a bonus to the Design Build Finance Operate contractor for rebuilding the Hightown Bridge ahead of schedule.

Bus and Rail Passengers

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development how many (i) bus; and (ii) train, passengers travelled between Derry/Londonderry and Belfast in the last 12 months. (AQW 232/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The total number of bus and rail passenger journeys between Derry and Belfast in the last 12 months was:

Passenger Journey Numbers*	23/07/07 – 27/07/08
Ulsterbus	375,048
NIR	30,084

* The figures only include journeys that begin in Derry and end in Belfast and vice versa.

Relaying of Track

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the timeline for (i) the completion of the passing loop at Ballykelly; (ii) the reconstruction and relaying of the rail-line between Coleraine and Derry/Londonderry; (iii) the establishment of an hourly service between Derry/Londonderry and Belfast; and (iv) the establishment of a direct service between Derry/Londonderry and Dublin. (AQW 233/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The relay of the track between Coleraine and Derry is still at the design stage and once completed an Economic Appraisal will be submitted to my Department for approval. However in relation to the questions raised I would make the following comments

- (i) The location of the passing loop has still to be decided. Options are being considered with Ballykelly one of them. It is hoped that sufficient information will be available by November of this year to allow a preferred option to be selected. It is expected that the passing loop will be constructed during the Derry – Coleraine track re-lay.
- (ii) Work on the reconstruction and relaying of the railway line between Coleraine and Derry is currently scheduled to commence in 2011 with completion in 2013.
- (iii) The establishment of an hourly service will follow soon after completion of the relay, achievement of the required line speed and full commissioning of the required signalling.
- (iv) There are no plans at present to establish a direct service between Derry and Dublin. The priorities for investment in the railways network at this time include increasing frequency and capacity on the Belfast to Derry line and improving frequency of the Enterprise services.

Ballykelly By-Pass

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development when he expects the Ballykelly by-pass to be completed and fully functioning. (AQW 236/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads service has advised that an assessment to develop a preferred route corridor for a bypass of Ballykelly is presently being undertaken, and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

I can advise that a bypass of Ballykelly is included in my Department's Investment Delivery Plan for Roads, which includes a programme of Strategic Road Improvements that are proposed over the next 10 years to 2017/18.

While I am unable to confirm a completion date for the Ballykelly Bypass, Roads Service would anticipate completion of this scheme towards the end of the Delivery Plan period.

Sewers

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in the adoption of sewers in the maritime area of Carrickfergus. (AQW 237/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the developer is aware that the sewerage system in the Maritime area of Carrickfergus must be brought up to an acceptable standard before it can be adopted by NIW.

NIW has been in contact with the developer's representative on several occasions over the summer months to discuss the work required to bring the system up to the adoptable standard. The most recent contact was on 9 September 2008. NIW and the developer have agreed the steps needed to bring the sewers to an adoption standard, however, a programme of remedial work has yet to be finalised. The formal adoption of the sewers cannot be implemented until these issues have been resolved. NIW and my department's Roads Service are continuing to work closely with the developer in order to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

Roads Service

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to (i) monitor and improve road signage; and (ii) ensure that roads are regularly cleared of obstructing bushes and branches. (AQW 241/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the monitoring of road signage and the condition of roadside bushes and branches, that could endanger or obstruct road users, are identified during routine maintenance inspections. Any defective signage and overgrown trees or hedges identified during these inspections are programmed for the appropriate remedial action to be initiated.

I can further advise that Roads Service is currently undertaking a review of the Traffic Signs Regulations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

Translink

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the decision by Translink to remove the bus service between Hilltown and Rostrevor. (AQW 270/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: This is an operational decision by Translink. I understand that Translink withdrew this loss making route as a result of extremely low patronage figures.

Road Ramps

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on road ramps in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 278/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not monitor expenditure specifically related to road humps. However, the table below provides details of Roads Service expenditure on traffic calming measures, which includes road humps, central islands, mini roundabouts, priority junctions, build-outs, chicanes and school travel and safety projects, in each of the last three financial years.

Year	Traffic Calming Expenditure
2005/06	£3,120,000
2006/07	£2,550,000
2007/08	£3,060,000

Hollywood Town Centre Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress his Department has made in transferring title in its car park in Hollywood to facilitate the town centre development. (AQW 309/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service have advised that discussions are ongoing with Department for Social Development officials regarding the details of the terms under which the transfer of Hibernia Street car park in Hollywood could take place. When these details have been agreed I will give this matter my earliest consideration.

Sewerage System in East Belfast

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade the sewerage system in East Belfast following the flooding on 12 June 2007 and 16 August 2008. (AQW 311/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is currently undertaking a Drainage Area Study of the East Belfast sewerage system which will seek to identify improvements required within the network. As well as sewer-related flooding, the study will also seek to address problems related to pollution from the many overflows within the network and also problems related to defective pipe work. It is expected that the study will be completed by April 2009 and that any upgrading work identified will be implemented thereafter subject to funding and priority within NIW's Capital Investment Programme.

Flooding

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the additional costs incurred by (i) Roads Service; and (ii) Northern Ireland Water, following the recent flooding. (AQW 331/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the total additional costs incurred, in responding to the flooding during the weekend of 16 & 17 August 2008, were approximately £470,000. The table below shows a breakdown of these costs.

Cost	Amount (£k)
Labour	165
Plant	26
Materials (sandbags)	9
External Contractors	65
Repairs to bridges	205
Total	470

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has advised that approximately £200,000 of additional costs was incurred as a result of the flooding during 16 & 17 August 2008.

This amount is an initial estimate, based on the number of staff engaged in the incident and the number of jobs attended to by the contractor. Detailed figures will become available when precise costs are returned from NIW's contractors. I have asked NIW's Director of Operations, Phil Barker, to write directly to you when the final cost is established.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

New Policies

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development what new policies she has introduced since taking office in May 2007. (AQW 22/09)

The Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): Since May 2007 I have introduced policies on housing and homelessness, welfare reform, pensions and benefit uptake, child maintenance, support of the voluntary and community sector including Partners for Change and charities legislation.

Standardised Rights for Tenants

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to explain why the rights for tenants vary, depending on each housing association's individual policies and why her Department has not ensured standardised rights for all tenants. (AQW 24/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Housing Associations, registered by my Department, must comply with policies laid down within the regulatory framework. These provide certain rights and safeguards for all social tenants including Tenants Guarantee, secure tenancies, probationary tenancies, the House Sales Scheme and Right to Repair.

Housing Associations need to have flexibility to reflect the differing needs of the variety of client groups they serve.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline what medical conditions automatically qualify for receipt of Disability Living Allowance. (AQW 57/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Entitlement to Disability Living Allowance depends on the effects that severe disability has on a person's life and not on a particular disability or diagnosis. This ensures that severely disabled people have equal access to the benefit irrespective of the cause of their disabilities. Entitlement is based on the extent of a disabled person's need for personal care and their ability to walk.

Regeneration of Estates in the Craigavon Central Area

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development what steps have been taken to promote

the regeneration of estates in the Craigavon Central area of Upper Bann. (AQW 78/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The regeneration of social housing estates in the Craigavon Central area of Upper Bann is being addressed primarily through the Brownlow Strategy Action Plan. Since October 2004, over £3.5M has been spent on regeneration initiatives in the area including the extensive refurbishment of existing properties and selective demolitions and sale of Housing Executive land to the private sector to stimulate future development of the area. My Department has also been involved directly in promoting and co-ordinating efforts to tackle deprivation in those estates which are included in the Brownlow Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

Provision of Play Areas in Craigavon

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development what analysis her Department has made of the level of provision of play areas in the Brownlow area of Craigavon. (AQW 82/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Responsibility for assessment of need and provision of playgrounds in the Brownlow area is primarily a matter for Craigavon Borough Council. My Department has been working with the Council to address “the perceived insufficient provision of social, play and sports facilities” in the part of the area within the Neighbourhood Renewal Boundary. It has provided funding for two multi use games areas which were constructed recently at Ardowen and Parkmore at cost of just under £257,000.

Housing Executive

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the areas of land in the North Down constituency that the Housing Executive is putting up for sale. (AQW 100/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has identified the following sites in North Down as surplus and as such they are required to offer them to the open market.

These are:

- Old Belfast Road, Bangor
- Churchill Park, Bangor
- Church Green, Holywood
- Green Road/Breezemount, Bangor
- Ballycrochan Road, Bangor
- Ashfield Drive, Donaghadee

Relocation of Housing Executive Office

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development why the Housing Executive district office in Carrickfergus is relocating to Ballymena. (AQW 104/09)

The Minister for Social Development: As these two questions are linked, I shall answer them together.

The Housing Executive is not relocating its office from Carrickfergus to Ballymena. The district office will continue to be located in Carrickfergus and will continue to provide a comprehensive range of housing services.

However, as part of the Housing Executive’s Modernising Services Programme, 6 posts are being relocated to Ballymena where their work will be dedicated solely to Housing Benefit and Rent Accounting functions. The remaining 23 staff in Carrickfergus will continue to deliver housing, homelessness, response maintenance and general estate management services from that office.

Relocation of Housing Executive Office

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm how many jobs will be re-located when the Housing Executive office in Carrickfergus re-locates to Ballymena. (AQW 114/09)

The Minister for Social Development: As these two questions are linked, I shall answer them together.

The Housing Executive is not relocating its office from Carrickfergus to Ballymena. The district office will continue to be located in Carrickfergus and will continue to provide a comprehensive range of housing services.

However, as part of the Housing Executive’s Modernising Services Programme, 6 posts are being relocated to Ballymena where their work will be dedicated solely to Housing Benefit and Rent Accounting functions. The remaining 23 staff in Carrickfergus will continue to deliver housing, homelessness, response maintenance and general estate management services from that office.

Cleaning and Repairing Bonfire Sites

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Social Development for the total amount spent by the Housing Executive cleaning and repairing bonfire sites from 1 July to 31 August 2008. (AQW 119/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The costs incurred by the Housing Executive through the removal and reinstatement works associated with bonfires this

year were around £126k. This represents a reduction of around £41k on the previous year's figure.

Community Heating Schemes

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department has considered the introduction of community heating schemes in new and existing social housing projects. (AQW 125/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive considers that community heating is, in terms of social housing, more practically and cost-effectively installed at newbuild stage.

As part of the New Housing Agenda, all new social housing built from 1 April this year will be required to conform to Level 3 in the Code for Sustainable Homes. In effect this will mean that these new properties will be up to 25% more energy efficient than before.

Sheltered Housing

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has to provide sheltered housing in Loughgiel; and what work has been carried out to provide it. (AQW 176/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Northern Area Supporting People Partnership which is responsible for highlighting demand for this type of accommodation has not identified any need for sheltered accommodation for this area. Consequently, there are no sheltered schemes currently within the Social Housing Development Programme for Loughgiel.

Removal of Derelict Bridge

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Social Development when her Department will remove the derelict bridge across the Six Mile Water River in Grangers Mill, Muckamore. (AQW 184/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My Department owns a piece of land adjacent to the bridge. The folio of this land extends to half way across the river and therefore half the bridge. The other half is in private ownership. While the bridge is no longer used as part of a railway, it is currently being used to carry essential utilities i.e. a sewage pipe. My Officials, together with NI Water and the other owner, are currently investigating the various options available that may allow for the bridge to be removed.

I have instructed my Officials to keep you informed of developments.

Carers Review

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Carers Review initiated in May 2008. (AQW 199/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Preliminary work has been ongoing with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety over the summer months. It is anticipated that the review will be completed later this year.

Social Housing

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the amount of social housing available in the Mallusk area; and what future social or affordable housing initiatives she will undertake in this area, given the widespread housing development currently taking place there. (AQW 224/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has a small estate at HydePark/Parkmount with 25 dwellings.

There are currently no schemes included in the Social Housing Development Programme for the Mallusk area. However, there were 10 first preference housing applicants in housing stress (with 30 points or more) for HydePark/Parkmount at 31st March 2008. In light of this the Programme is currently being reviewed and consideration will be given to including a small new build scheme for HydePark/Parkmount within the new programme.

Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwelling Scheme

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many homes the Housing Executive has purchased under the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwelling scheme in each of the last 3 years, broken down by district council area. (AQW 234/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive does not hold the information requested by district council area. However, the information is held by Housing Executive District Office area as indicated in the table below:

NIHE District	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Belfast West	1	0	1
Belfast East	2	2	0
Belfast North	8	0	2
Belfast Shankill	2	0	1

NIHE District	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Belfast South	0	0	0
Bangor	3	2	0
Newtownards	3	2	1
Castlereagh	4	1	3
Lisburn	7	1	1
Downpatrick	3	0	0
Banbridge	1	0	1
Newry	1	1	1
Armagh	1	0	0
Lurgan	2	0	1
Portadown	0	0	0
Dungannon	0	0	0
Fermanagh	3	0	1
Ballymena	4	2	4
Antrim	2	1	2
Newtownabbey 1	1	0	0
Newtownabbey 2	1	3	0
Carrickfergus	1	3	0
Larne	3	2	1
Ballycastle	0	0	1
Ballymoney	4	1	0
Coleraine	5	1	0
Waterloo Place	0	0	0
Waterside	3	0	0
Collon Terrace	0	0	0
Limavady	2	0	1
Magherafelt	0	0	0
Strabane	0	0	0
Omagh	1	0	0
Cookstown	1	0	0
Totals:	69	22	22

The Housing Executive will only consider the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation for families as a last resort, and then only for a maximum of 6 weeks.

Council area	2005/2006 £k	2006/2007 £k	2007/2008 £k
Antrim	1861	4797	1240
Ards	18898	6945	0
Armagh	14198	6573	7708
Ballymena	11143	12158	10380
Ballymoney	3100	15160	4820
Banbridge	5383	13948	9849
Belfast	145662	113017	32607
Carrickfergus	0	451	0
Castlereagh	1616	5833	835
Coleraine	43227	0	4650
Cookstown	6279	8427	6488
Craigavon	13615	37755	9117
Derry	1021	764	275
Down	164256	126040	54769
Dungannon	122691	115242	37341
Fermanagh	56424	34272	42
Larne	0	5770	4695
Limavady	0	0	974
Lisburn	12291	5077	1483
Magherafelt	15	0	11373
Moyle	330	0	8220
Newry & Mourne	76682	23205	917
Newtownabbey	3620	2050	85
North Down	1434	2277	0
Omagh	2975	0	0
Strabane	0	0	546
Total	706721	539761	208414

Housing Executive

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development for the cost incurred by the Housing Executive for bed and breakfast accommodation for housing applicants in each of the last 3 financial years, broken down by district council area. (AQW 235/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The table below details the Housing Executive's expenditure on this type of accommodation for the period requested.

Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the organisations and their geographical locations, that have been progressed to the economic appraisal stage for consideration for funding from the Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme. (AQW 242/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Following assessment, the organisations whose applications are

being taken forward to economic appraisal within the Modernisation Fund Capital programme and their geographical location are outlined in the table below:

Organisation	Geographical Location
Holywell Trust	Derry
Coleraine Rural & Urban Network	Coleraine
Mencap	Belfast
Confederation of Community Groups	Newry
Ards Development Bureau & Community Network	Newtownards
The Orana Children and Family Centre Ltd	Newry
Disability Action	Belfast
Belfast South Community Resources	Belfast
East Belfast Community Development Agency	Belfast
The Village Garden (Broughshane) Ltd	Broughshane
Culturlann McAdam O Fiaich	Belfast
St Columbs Park House Conference, Activity and Reconciliation Centre	Derry
Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership	Derry
Omagh Community House	Omagh
Greater Shankill Partnership	Belfast
St Peter's Youth Club	Lurgan
Youth Link: NI	Belfast
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	Belfast
Business in the Community	Derry
St Patrick's	Dungannon
Manor Street / Cliftonville Community Group	Belfast
Crumlin Together Limited	Crumlin
Boho Community Association	Enniskillen
Learmount Community Development Group Ltd	Derry
The Bytes Project	Belfast
Belfast Exposed Photography	Belfast
The Rural College Ltd	Draperstown
FHASS (First Housing Aid and Support Services)	Derry
ETB 217 Co-ordinating Committee	Dungannon
Pearse Og GFC	Armagh
Aware Defeat Depression	Belfast
New Life Counselling Service	Belfast
Inter Estate Partnership	Antrim
Crossfire Trust Ltd	Keady

Organisation	Geographical Location
Ballinran Community Association	Kilkeel
Shankill Stress and Trauma Group	Belfast
Coleraine Riding for the Disabled	Coleraine
Newington Credit Union Ltd	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Ballylaw Regeneration Group	Strabane
Opportunity Youth	Belfast
Kilcranny House	Coleraine
REACH Across	Derry
Hillcrest House Family Centre	Derry
Penninsula Healthy Living Partnership Ltd	Kircubbin
Playboard	Belfast
Carryduff Playcare/Playgroup	Belfast
Stepping Stones NI	Lisburn
Corpus Christi Services	Belfast
North City Training Ltd	Belfast
Orchardville Society	Belfast
Impact Training (NI) Ltd	Belfast
Newbuildings Community and Environmental Association	Newbuildings
Brackaghreilly & District Community Association Ltd	Maghera
RNIB	Belfast
Citizen's Advice Belfast	Belfast
Public Achievement	Belfast
Quaker Service	Belfast
NI Association for Mental Health	Belfast
Carleton St Community Development Association	Portadown
Shankill Lurgan Community Proiects	Lurgan
Laganview Enterprise centre Ltd	Lisburn
Burnfoot Community Development Association	Dungiven
Inner City South Belfast Sure Start	Belfast
Little Orchids	Derry
SOU	Belfast
Ederney Community Development Trust	Ederney
Best Cellars Music Collective	Dundonald
Dunsford Cross Community Centre	Downpatrick

Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail, which of the organisations that have progressed to the economic appraisal stage for consideration of funding from the Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme, have previously received funding from her Department. (AQW 243/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The organisations whose applications have progressed to economic appraisal within the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme and have previously received funding from the Department for Social Development are outlined in the table below:

Organisation
Holywell Trust
Coleraine Rural & Urban Network
Mencap
Confederation of Community Groups
Ards Development Bureau & Community Network
Disability Action
Belfast South Community Resources
East Belfast Community Development Agency
The Village Garden (Broughshane) Ltd
Culturlann McAdam O Fiaich
St Columbs Park House Conference, Activity and Reconciliation Centre
Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership
Omagh Community House
Greater Shankill Partnership
St Peter's Youth Club
Youth Link: NI
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group
Business in the Community
Manor Street / Cliftonville Community Group
Crumlin Together Limited
Boho Community Association
Learmount Community Development Group Ltd
The Bytes Project
Belfast Exposed Photography
FHASS (First Housing Aid and Support Services)
Aware Defeat Depression
New Life Counselling Service
Inter Estate Partnership
Crossfire Trust Ltd

Organisation
Ballinran Community Association
Shankill Stress and Trauma Group
Ionad Uibh Eachach
Ballylaw Regeneration Group
Kilcranny House
Hillcrest House Family Centre
Corpus Christi Services
North City Training Ltd
Impact Training (NI) Ltd
Newbuildings Community and Environmental Association
Carleton St Community Development Association
Shankill Lurgan Community Projects
Laganview Enterprise centre Ltd
Burnfoot Community Development Association
Inner City South Belfast Sure Start
Ederney Community Development Trust
Best Cellars Music Collective
Dunsford Cross Community Centre

HURT (Have Your Tomorrows)

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to provide a detailed rationale explaining why an application by HURT (Have Your Tomorrows) was not progressed to the economic appraisal stage.

(AQW 244/09)

The Minister for Social Development: In common with all the applications received under the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme, the HURT application was subject to independent and professional assessment against predetermined programme objectives. The criteria against which all applications were assessed were partnership and collaboration, income generation / cost reduction, improving access to services, enhanced capacity to deliver services, tackling obstacles to good relations and the delivery of services in support of disadvantaged young people.

Assessment scores were allocated against these criteria and prioritised lists compiled for each of the three schemes within the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme. These prioritised lists were then subject to scrutiny by an independent panel. This panel made recommendations as to the projects that should be taken forward to economic appraisal.

This was a highly competitive process and on this occasion the assessment score achieved by the

HURT application did not position it in the group of applications being taken forward to economic appraisal.

Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development what appeals process is in place for organisations that have been unsuccessful in bids for funding from the Modernisation Fund (Capital) Programme. (AQW 245/09)

The Minister for Social Development: In common with other grant programmes within the Department for Social Development there is no formal appeal process following the assessment decision on applications made to the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme.

All unsuccessful applicants are advised of the opportunity to discuss their application with the Intermediary Body appointed to manage the implementation of the programme and no such request has been or will be refused.

New Social Housing Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether the new social housing scheme for Rasharkin will commence on the agreed date; and if not, to detail the reasons. (AQW 250/09)

The Minister for Social Development: This scheme was originally planned to commence in 2007/2008. However, Planning Service advised that there was no sewage treatment capacity available and that an upgrade scheme by Water Service does not exist within their current capital programme. The Planning Service also had design concerns with both the scheme layout and house types and the Housing Executive's design team are currently preparing revised drawings. It is likely that the scheme will now fall into the 2009/2010 programme year.

Housing Market

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what initiatives she has in place to boost the housing market, particularly in relation to Co-Ownership; and what action she has taken so far. (AQW 268/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Earlier this year I set out my New Housing Agenda, which proposes a number of initiatives designed to assist people to become home owners and to remain on the housing ladder. Proposals include the introduction of developer contributions, extending the current house

sales scheme and the development of a mortgage rescue scheme.

I have also supported the development of shared equity schemes in Northern Ireland. These industry-led, privately financed schemes have the potential to make a contribution towards meeting housing need whilst also providing a much needed boost to the housing market.

Co-ownership is another scheme designed to help people to become homeowners. The Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association started the current financial year with a grant of £15m, which is almost 4 times its opening grant last year. In addition, my Department has bid for additional funding as part of the September Monitoring Round.

Winter Fuel Allowance

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to introduce a winter fuel allowance for (i) carers; and (ii) people with learning disabilities living independently. (AQW 298/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The level and eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment are drawn up at Westminster. Under parity arrangements these provisions are then applied in Northern Ireland.

(i) Carers have access to the full range of social security benefits and tax credits, depending on their individual circumstances, and to a wide range of support services. I am satisfied that targeting help in this way represents the best use of resources, and there are no plans at present to introduce a winter fuel allowance specifically for carers.

(ii) Help is already available through disability benefits and the disability premium in income support in recognition of the extra costs, including heating. People with learning disabilities who live independently are entitled to these disability benefits on the same basis as anyone else with a severe disability.

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