
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX
Tel: 028 9052 1078

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 10 October 2008

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Strategic Investment Board

Mr McGlone asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the Strategic Investment Board has considered specialist advice from the Department of the Environment in relation to the causes of climate change as part of its assessment of infrastructure needs and design; and if so, to detail (i) the nature of that advice; and (ii) whether the Minister of the Environment's analysis of the causes of climate change has impacted on the Strategic Investment Board's decision-making. (AQW 680/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): Specialist advice from the Department of the Environment on the causes of climate change has not been considered by the Strategic Investment Board in assessing infrastructure needs and design.

Neighbourhood Renewal Posts

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what Neighbourhood Renewal posts and services it will fund from March 2009. (AQW 713/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: OFMDFM as a Department has a role to play across a number of activities which form part of the overall Neighbourhood Renewal network but does not directly fund Neighbourhood Renewal posts and services.

Former Military Sites

Mr Craig asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline what plans the Department has in relation to securing the transfer of former military sites from the Government.

(AQW 965/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Along with the Minister of Finance and Personnel we have corresponded with and held meetings with the UK Government in order to progress the gifting of former military sites. Our officials also maintain regular contact with the Ministry of Defence in relation to these matters.

We will continue to press the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for a favourable response and will ensure the Assembly is informed of progress on this issue.

Civic Forum

Mr McCausland asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the attendance record of each member at meetings of the Civic Forum. (AQW 1089/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The attendance record of members at plenary meetings of the Civic Forum is detailed in the attached schedule. The Civic Forum met in plenary format twelve times between 9 October 2000 and the suspension of devolution in October 2002 with its last plenary meeting on 28 August 2002.

Surname	Known As	No of Meetings Attended
Bicker	Elizabeth	11
Bowser	Avery	9
Bryan	Frank	12
Buchanan (i)	Pauline	0
Bustard (ii)	Susan	4
Carvill	Lynn	9
Chapman	Jeannette	9
Cooper	Kevin	12
Cradden	Keith	12
Daly	Kevin	8
Donaldson	Peter	11
Dougherty	Brian	8
Elliott	Doug	9
Farrell	Duane	10

Surname	Known As	No of Meetings Attended
Frazer (iii)	Hugh	3
Gallagher	Eileen	11
Gibson	Clare	8
Gibson	Chris	12
Gilmour	Daphne	10
Glenn	George	7
Gregg (iv)	Margaret	5
Haughey	Sharon	11
Jay	Richard	10
Johnston	Bryan	9
Keenan	Eamonn	8
Lucy	Gordon	11
MacBride	Patricia	5
MacNiallais	Donncha	9
Mahony	Patrick	10
McBride	Alan	8
McClean	P.J	12
McClurg	Betty	8
McConaghie	David	10
McCormack (v)	Inez	0
McCulla	Alan	3
McDowell	Emma	11
McGlone	Roisin	8
McKeever	Jim	11
McKinney	Carmel	4
McLaughlin	Kevin	8
McMichael	Gary	6
McNamee (vi)	Aidan	6
McNulty	Eithne	10
Monteith	Richard	2
Muller	Janet	7
O'Reilly	Mick	2
O'Reilly	Brian	8
Orr	James	10
Porter	David	9
Savage (vii)	Gwen	5
Shillington	Colin	12
Stelfox	Dawson	10
Symington	Brian	11

Surname	Known As	No of Meetings Attended
Warde Hunter	Louise	9
Watson	Avril	8
Weldon	Annabel	8
Whatmough (viii)	Jo	5
White	David	8
Williams	Ryan	7
Woods	Gordon	11
Yu	Patrick	1

- (i) Pauline Buchanan resigned November 2000
- (ii) Susan Bustard resigned December 2001
- (iii) Hugh Frazer resigned June 2001
- (iv) Margaret Gregg appointed August 2001
- (v) Inez McCormack resigned November 2001
- (vi) Aidan McNamee resigned May 2002
- (vii) Gwen Savage resigned 2002
- (viii) Jo Whatmough resigned November 2001

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Animal Cruelty

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration she has given to increasing the penalties that can be imposed for animal cruelty, in light of recent high profile cases.
(AQW 648/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): Since Questions 648/09 and 649/09 refer to the same subject matter, this response deals with both questions together.

The Department consulted on proposals for new animal welfare legislation in late 2006, including on whether penalties for cruelty offences should be significantly increased.

Following an initial consideration of responses to the 2006 consultation, I have been meeting a number of stakeholders in order to hear at first hand their concerns on existing animal welfare legislation. The level of penalties available to the Courts has been discussed during these meetings, and has also been the subject of a number of recent letters to me and my officials. The issue of penalties will therefore form a significant part of my deliberations on what new animal welfare legislation may be needed.

I have asked my officials to finalise a report that will summarise the responses to the 2006 consultation, and in doing so to reflect on emerging legislative developments in the South and on the outcome of my stakeholder meetings. While I have not specifically assessed the legislative position in Germany, I have asked my officials to take cognisance of legislation in other jurisdictions in order to inform my policy review.

It is my intention to ensure that the penalties available for animal cruelty are a sufficient deterrent and will therefore provide adequate protection for animals. However, until I complete my review I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of my deliberations.

Animal Cruelty

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of animal welfare legislation in Germany, where a 3 year prison sentence can be imposed for the killing of a vertebrate as a result of cruelty; and what consideration she has given to the introduction of similar legislation. (AQW 649/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since Questions 648/09 and 649/09 refer to the same subject matter, this response deals with both questions together.

The Department consulted on proposals for new animal welfare legislation in late 2006, including on whether penalties for cruelty offences should be significantly increased.

Following an initial consideration of responses to the 2006 consultation, I have been meeting a number of stakeholders in order to hear at first hand their concerns on existing animal welfare legislation. The level of penalties available to the Courts has been discussed during these meetings, and has also been the subject of a number of recent letters to me and my officials. The issue of penalties will therefore form a significant part of my deliberations on what new animal welfare legislation may be needed.

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It is my intention to ensure that the penalties available for animal cruelty are a sufficient deterrent and will therefore provide adequate protection for

animals. However, until I complete my review I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of my deliberations.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much compensation was paid out to farmers whose cattle tested positive for bovine tuberculosis, in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 685/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Compensation paid to farmers with respect to bovine tuberculosis was as follows:

2003/04	£15,408,521
2004/05	£12,586,405
2005/06	£9,225,891
2006/07	£7,887,123
2007/08	£8,547,534

Bio-Security

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what guidance her Department has issued to farmers and landowners about bio-security. (AQW 686/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department believes that the prevention of disease spread in the North is essential to promote a competitive industry, protect public health and safeguard the interests of all.

In 2004 the Department issued a booklet entitled "Biosecurity Code for NI farms", which also included guidance for official visitors and recreational users of farms. This booklet was issued to all livestock keepers and is also available on the DARD website. Copies are also available on request.

In June 2006, as a result of the increased threat of avian influenza, the Department issued biosecurity advice to all registered bird keepers. This is available on the DARD website as well as additional biosecurity guidance for people organising bird shows.

With the increased threat of foot and mouth disease following a reported case in England in August 2007, leaflets on biosecurity were printed for distribution by DARD staff.

In May 2008 all cattle herd owners were sent letters and leaflets with details on measures they could take to protect their herds from brucellosis infection. The leaflets were also sent to Divisional Veterinary Offices to be made available at their counters and to

Newry & Mourne District Council, who had made a request for information.

A series of farmers meetings on brucellosis were held in the spring of 2008 at which biosecurity issues were discussed and verbal advice given. Biosecurity has also been on the agenda for the farmers' liaison groups on brucellosis, which my Department is leading.

The DARD booklet 'TB In Your Herd' is available from Divisional Veterinary Offices as well as on the DARD website. The booklet covers various aspects of a TB breakdown including detailed biosecurity advice to reduce the risk of infection in cattle. In the event of a tuberculosis breakdown, herd owners are issued with this booklet.

In the event of any disease outbreak, the keeper is visited and issued with detailed animal and public health advice, which outlines advisory and legislative biosecurity practices, to prevent spread of the disease.

Biosecurity includes the prudent sourcing of stock and associated on-farm quarantine. I, and my Department, have repeatedly stressed this message in relation to bluetongue by regular press releases.

Flood Risk Management Plan

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the progress of a flood risk management plan for (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) Belfast; and to detail the climate change science this plan is based upon. (AQW 689/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A number of flood risk management plans covering all of the North will be prepared in accordance with the European Union Directive on the assess and management of flood risks, known as the Floods Directive. These plans will be the culmination of a process of assessment, mapping and the setting of management objectives for areas identified at potential significant risk of flooding. The Directive requires completion and publication of flood risk management plans by 22 December 2015.

Work on the assessment of the areas at potential significant risk is already underway. In addition, a flood management study for Belfast which will form part of a catchment based flood risk management plan is about to commence.

The Floods Directive requires climate change to be taken into account which in the North will be based on the latest available research, information and guidance from numerous sources including the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP), the Scottish NI Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER), the Community Climate change Consortium for Ireland (C4I), and the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC).

Production of Eggs

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what proportion of eggs produced originate from (i) battery cages; (ii) barn production systems; and (iii) free range. (AQW 702/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The most recent figures held by my Department, from November 2007, would indicate that 81% of eggs produced in the North are from Battery / Intensive systems of production, 18% are from Free Range and 1% are produced in Barn systems.

Price of Beef

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to decrease the beef price differential between Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom. (AQW 734/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I appreciate the concern of local beef farmers caused by the price differential. The price of beef, both here and in Britain, is a commercial matter and therefore entirely outside my control. However I do believe that I have a role to encourage and facilitate dialogue to increase understanding about the issues. I have therefore met with representatives of the Norths meat exporters and with many of the major retailers to express these concerns and to emphasise the importance of everyone in the supply chain sharing in the profits.

I should point out that EU State Aid Rules place severe constraints on the use of Government funds for promotional activities, therefore DARD cannot provide direct funding for marketing or advertising of beef in the North.

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) is responsible for the promotion of red meat in the domestic and export markets. Promotional activities aimed at the domestic market include; a press and television campaign highlighting the importance of red meat as part of a balanced diet; provision of advertising posters for butchers' shops and promoting Farm Quality Assured beef.

In relation to the export market, the LMC is heavily involved in major international red meat trade shows, such as ANUGA in Germany and SIAL in France.

Clay Lakes

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development who currently owns the existing

lake sluices at the Shrigley end of the Clay Lakes, Killyleagh. (AQW 756/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: DARD Rivers Agency is in the process of establishing ownership of the existing sluice gates at the Shrigley end of the Clay Lakes. Work is ongoing with a view to the Agency taking over legal responsibility for control of the sluice gates at the Shrigley end of Clay Lakes from the current private landowners Dunbia.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what role the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme will have within the new Countryside Management scheme. (AQW 768/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Scheme commenced in 1988 and continues to provide funding for farmers for positive environmental work across 5 areas in the North (Mournes and Slieve Croob, Antrim Coast, Glens and Rathlin, West Fermanagh and Erne Lakeland, Sperrins and Slieve Gullion).

The Scheme closed for applications at the end of 2006. Farmers with a current ESA Scheme agreement will continue to receive funding according to the terms and conditions of their agreement.

The land within the ESA represents some of the most important habitat areas in the region. In recognition of this, the ESA, together with designated sites such as Natura 2000 and Areas of Special Scientific Interest, will be given high priority in the new Countryside Management Scheme.

River Bann Bank Erosion

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to finance the reinstatement of agricultural lands in the Hilltown area that were washed into the River Bann as a result of the floods on 16 and 17 August 2008. (AQW 780/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Bank erosion has taken place to the River Bann at various locations. Remedial measures on bank erosion are normally undertaken by Rivers Agency where the erosion presents a threat to flood defences, roads or built property and structures and works are cost beneficial. However, effective works to arrest erosion on designated watercourses are very expensive and can seldom be justified in relation to the benefits gained. Unfortunately bank protection works by Rivers Agency in this area cannot be justified as

it would not be cost beneficial. I am very aware of the crop losses suffered by farmers and am currently considering funding options available to me, subject to affordability and business case considerations.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the proposed timetable for issuing letters of offer to each of the 7 local action groups bidding to deliver part of the Rural Development Programme. (AQW 782/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The letter of offer or contract must issue to the legal entity responsible for the corporate governance of the programme. In this case this will be the Joint Committee. I would hope that we will soon be able to approve the completeness of the strategies and enter into these contracts for the initial allocations of funding. My officials have reported that all areas are working towards the opening of calls and putting in place the required structures to implement the programme as soon as these allocations have been made. To support this work and the work of the Local Action Groups we are looking at the possibility of extending animation contracts to allow the lead councils to set up their administration units so that on approval of initial allocations areas can move quickly to issuing letters of offer.

Assistance for Farmers

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what provision has been made for farmers who suffered financial loss as a result of the flooding that occurred in August 2008; and how many applications for assistance have been successful. (AQW 833/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There is currently no compensation available or reimbursement scheme for crop or other losses and therefore no applications have been made or been successful.

However, following the severe flooding on 15/16 August I tasked my officials with conducting an assessment of the damage, concentrating on potato and cereal crops in the worst affected river catchment areas of, Moyola, Lagan, Upper Bann, Blackwater, Maine and Sixmilewater. That assessment is now almost complete and an estimate of the cost is in the order of £600,000. I am currently considering funding options available to me, subject to affordability and business case considerations.

MEP Meetings

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the meetings she has had with the 3 MEPs over the past 12 months; and (ii) the purpose of these meetings. (AQW 849/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Details of meetings with MEPs since September 2007.

Date	MEP meetings	Purpose of meetings
28/02/2008	Tele call with Jim Nicholson MEP and Bairbre de Brún MEP	To update MEPs on my proposals for Bluetongue Import Controls
01/04/2008	Meeting with Jim Nicholson MEP Meeting with Bairbre de Brún MEP	To brief the MEPs on the outcome of the Commissioner Borg meeting on the 01/04/08
02/06/2008	Meeting with Jim Nicholson MEP	Meeting to discuss: - Funding for the NI Equine Industry - DARD position on Bio Fuels - Rising feed prices - Animal diseases Rural Development Scheme 2007 - 2013.
23/09/2008	Meeting with Bairbre de Brún MEP	Update given on position with Europe re FNMS, Sheep tagging and CAP Health Check.

I have been pro-active in seeking meetings with all our local MEP's.

Production of Milk Powder

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the standards of quality assurance in relation to the production of milk powder. (AQW 857/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department is not responsible for monitoring the standards of quality assurance in relation to the production of milk powder. Food hygiene and food standards inspections of milk powder plants are undertaken by Local Authority, Environmental Health Officers who report to the Food Standards Agency NI (The central competent authority for food hygiene and safety)

Independent Panel

Mr Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the role; (ii) the membership; and (iii) the appointment process, in relation to the Independent Panel. (AQW 910/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) The role of the External Panel is to consider representations in relation to DARD's decision on the awarding or withholding of financial support, taking account of the constraints imposed by the relevant EU and national legislation. After considering a case the Panel members make a written recommendation to me.
- (ii) Panels are selected from a pool of 22 people. The Single Farm Payment Stage 2 Panel comprises 2 members, one of whom has a legal background. Panel members are required to declare, prior to considering a case, any conflict of interest, for example if they have a personal interest in a case under consideration or if the applicant is known to them eg a relative, friend or associate. In such a situation the Panel Member is excluded from involvement in that particular case.
- (iii) Panel members are appointed by publicly advertised competition. Applications are subject to shortlisting and interviews are subsequently held for those who are shortlisted. Panel members are appointed initially for a three-year period with the possibility of renewal thereafter for a further three year period.

New Entrants Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide (i) the number of applications received for the new entrants scheme; (ii) the breakdown of applications by parliamentary constituency; (iii) what plans she has to hold discussions with the European Commission on possible future funding schemes to encourage young people to enter the agriculture industry. (AQW 1019/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There have been 431 applications received for the New Entrants Scheme.

My Department does not record applications received for the New Entrants Scheme by Parliamentary Constituency.

The European Commission, under Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, has already made provision for granting support to young farmers both in terms of the initial establishment and the structural adjustment of their holdings after the initial set up.

This Regulation governs the period up to 2013. You will be aware that my Department's New Entrants Scheme is currently suspended to new applications as we have reached the stage where the number of applications to the Scheme could fully commit the budget. At this time it is looking unlikely that we will re-open the Scheme. An in-depth assessment of the Scheme has commenced in order to reach an assessment of its impact and cost effectiveness. I will make a decision on the way ahead for the North after I review that evaluation.

In-Vessel Composting

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will carry out research into the composting of agri-green waste and poultry waste, being carried out at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Environment and Renewable Energy Centre, through the process of in vessel composting. (AQW 1056/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The aerobic process of in-vessel composting is not undertaken at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Hillsborough site.

However, AFBI has recently installed a mesophilic anaerobic slurry digester at its Hillsborough site. Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a treatment that composts waste material in the absence of oxygen, producing a biogas that can be used to generate electricity and heat.

The research programme for this digester that is being agreed with and funded by my Department is based around cattle slurry, which constitutes 88% of farm slurry feedstock available within the North. Additionally, the draft research programme includes studying the feasibility of enhancing digester performance by co-digesting cattle slurry with other farm organic materials, e.g. silage, farmyard manure, pig slurry and poultry manure.

It is, however, important to note that planning approval for the AD plant at Hillsborough specifically restricts the AD to use of materials produced on site. As no poultry litter is currently produced on the Hillsborough site, specific approval from planning authorities would be required prior to the commencement of research using poultry waste.

In relation to composting of agri-green waste, AFBI has carried out an extensive programme of Research & Development (R&D) into mushroom composting at its Loughgall and Newforge Lane sites over many years. AFBI Loughgall is equipped with 4 fully computer controlled forced aeration enclosed composting units. AFBI Newforge Lane has the latest analytical technology that allows investigation of decomposition during the composting process.

Adjustment of the composting research programme to include non mushroom related materials is being considered by AFBI and the Department.

Fishing Council

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the likely areas of co-operation with the Republic of Ireland in the December meeting of the Fishing Council; and what discussions she has held on this matter with her counterpart in the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 1060/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I had the opportunity to meet with Brendan Smith TD last month and I raised fisheries matters with him at that time. We agreed that the Fisheries Council in December would be a difficult negotiation and that issues surrounding the scientific advice on prawns, the outcome of the review of Cod Recovery and the prospects of further TAC cuts and the Commission's proposals for discard reduction have the potential to impact severely on fishing opportunities for our fleets. I will be having a further meeting with Fisheries Minister, Tony Killeen TD about these issues and others in more detail prior to the December Council.

Rural Development Programme

Mrs McGill asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to publicise the new rural development programme. (AQO 447/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Rural Development Programme offers tremendous opportunities for rural communities across the North. I want to ensure that people know what is available and how both funding and support can be accessed.

Officials within my Department's Rural Development Division, Press Office and OFMDFM's Government Advertising Unit have been working closely to develop and deliver an integrated communications campaign in support of the Programme. The campaign will raise awareness of the Programme and its benefits, provide details of how and when to apply for funding and encourage applications. It will involve a consistent campaign identity across all advertising and design work, to include a campaign website and a variety of publicity materials including an information pack that can be requested via a bespoke enquiry RDP phone-line. I expect the main advertising element of the campaign to launch early in the New Year.

In the preceding months additional promotional activities will be undertaken at both local and regional levels. District Councils through Local Action Groups will be responsible for ensuring maximum publicity for funding available under Axis 3 of the Programme. In addition, I have recently announced the appointment of a dedicated Rural Network which will also play an important role in publicising the Programme at local level.

Over the lifetime of the Programme my Department will invest over £500m in rural communities. The Rural Development Programme provides a wide range of opportunities for all and will make a significant contribution to the future sustainability of farmers and rural dwellers generally.

EU Fisheries Council

Mr Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what preparations have been made for the December EU Fisheries Council.
(AQO 434/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Following the publication of the scientific advice on Irish Sea stocks I met with the key Commission officials in July to discuss the implications of this advice. Fisheries Administrations have agreed a programme of meetings in the lead-up to the December Council to discuss and develop negotiating priorities. These arrangements include meetings with key stakeholders. I had the opportunity to meet with the representatives of local fishermen on 22 September to discuss my priorities for these negotiations and to hear their views. I intend to meet with them again prior to my attendance at Council in December. I have also had the opportunity to discuss those priorities with my Southern counterpart, Brendan Smith TD when I met with him on 19 September. A further meeting will be held with the Fisheries Minister, Tony Killeen TD prior to Council. I will be briefing the ARD Committee on my approach to this year's Council when I meet them tomorrow.

Code of Good Agricultural Practice

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken to promote the Code of Good Agricultural Practice.
(AQO 441/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A fully revised Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Prevention of Pollution of Water, Air and Soil was published at the beginning of September. The latest Code outlines environmental

legislative requirements for farmers. It also provides practical advice on management practices designed to reduce any negative impact from agricultural activities on the environment.

My Department hosted an event to launch the revised Code on 3 September. Following this I began a programme of promotion to raise awareness of the Code amongst members of the farming public, industry representatives and non-government organisations. A press release was issued encouraging all farmers to follow the guidelines within the Code. Subsequently, four press articles and two radio interviews on BBC Radio Ulster's 'Farm Gate', have further promoted the Code, including information of how to obtain a copy. The DARD E-newsletter has also carried information about the Code, and copies are available on the RuralNI and DARD websites.

I anticipate that this programme of promotion will continue on an ongoing basis. My Department will release press articles, containing advice from the Code, to coincide with seasonal activities such as silage cutting and slurry spreading to maximize their impact on protecting the environment. DARD will also promote the Code at the Winter Fair in December.

Locally Produced Mushrooms

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken to encourage local food retailers to sell locally produced mushrooms.
(AQO 437/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have met with the senior management from 5 of the large retailers operating in the North over the past 15 months. During these meetings we have discussed their relationship with producers of all farm products including mushrooms. I have encouraged them to increase the amount of produce that is sourced from the North for both their stores here and further afield. They have expressed to me their desire to source product in the North and to support local communities. They have also stated their willingness to identify new products and to source more produce from here.

In addition, I have recently written to all of the retailers operating in the North to express my concerns about producers having to absorb a disproportionate share of rising costs. I highlighted the pressure that producers are under due to increased production costs, particularly with respect to feedstuffs, fertiliser and fuel, and the need for sustainable farm gate prices.

Neighbourhood Renewal Posts

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide details of the neighbourhood renewal posts and services that her Department will fund from March 2009. (AQO 462/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Neighbourhood Renewal is a Department for Social Development funded programme, operating in urban areas. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has no direct involvement in the Programme, and would have no remit to fund posts and services in connection with it.

Assistance for Farmers

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assistance her Department has made available to farmers given the losses they have suffered due to the recent heavy rain and flooding. (AQO 432/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There is currently no compensation available or reimbursement for crop or other losses. However, following the severe flooding on 15/16 August I tasked my officials with conducting an assessment of the damage, concentrating on potato and cereal crops in the worst affected river catchment areas, Moyola, Lagan, Upper Bann, Blackwater, Maine and Sixmilewater.

That assessment is now almost complete and an initial estimate of the cost is in the order of £600,000. I am currently considering funding options available to me, subject to affordability and business case considerations.

Executive's Brussels Office

Mr Neeson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what contact she has had with the Executive's Brussels Office in the last month. (AQO 448/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Europe is central to the future of the local agricultural, fishing and agri-food industries and I firmly believe that local interests need to be represented. Since I came into office the development of a more direct relationship with Europe has been an important objective of mine. I am working to widen our influence in Brussels and have personally lobbied the European Commission on key local matters.

The Executive's Brussels office is an important resource that I have used on my many visits to Brussels. The officials in Brussels are working

continually to improve our relationship with the EU institutions. My Department has posted a member of staff to the office who is dedicated to agri-food, veterinary, fisheries and rural development issues. Daily contact is made between DARD staff based in the North and the DARD staff member in Brussels. Over the past month, the contacts have included exchanges of information on such issues as the process of the negotiations for the CAP Health Check, state aid regulations in relation to flooding damage, content and outcome of fisheries, veterinary and agriculture meetings, arrangements for September's Agriculture and Fisheries Council, facilitation of an LFA meeting for officials and the setting up of a telephone discussion between myself and Commissioner Fisher Boel.

I assure the House that I will continue to press Brussels for the best deal I can get for local farmers and fishermen.

Foyle and Carlingford Loughs Agency

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the estimated annual cost of operating the catamaran owned by the Foyle and Carlingford Loughs Agency. (AQO 464/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Based on the economic appraisal carried out on the procurement of the monitoring vessel, estimated running costs will be in the region of £113,500. The Loughs Agency has not sought any increase in its budgets to cover these running costs.

Local Fishing Boats

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with fishing organisations to ensure that local fishing boats are not prevented from fishing for clams. (AQO 452/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has had a number of discussions with local fishermen about fishing opportunities for scallops (clams). Following proposals made by the NI Scallop Association the Department will shortly bring forward legislation which will introduce conservation measures that industry has requested which will contribute to a more sustainable fishery offering better fishing prospects for local fishermen.

Dangerous Dogs Legislation

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide an update on the review of dangerous dogs legislation. (AQO 460/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Since I announced my Review of dangerous dogs and dog fighting legislation, I have met a number of key stakeholders including the PSNI and local Councils. I have also held discussions with a number of animal welfare representatives, including the Kennel Club and the Companion Animal Welfare Committee. Additionally, I have raised issues of mutual concern with my Ministerial counterpart in the South. I have found the discussions to date very constructive and informative and many of the views expressed will be reflected in my findings. Before completing the Review, I also plan to meet the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

My review is therefore ongoing. Once it is complete I will consider a number of policy options, including any requirement for new legislation.

In the meantime, as enforcement of the legislation is crucial to my Review, and as many of the issues raised to date have been about public safety, a Working Group made up of my officials, PSNI and local Councils, continues to meet to consider enforcement issues. The Working Group is drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding which will provide a mechanism for better co-operation in the enforcement of current legislation. Having met the Working Group in September, I am delighted to say that the Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be finalised soon.

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Expenditure on Leisure Facilities

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expenditure on leisure facilities and provision per person, broken down by parliamentary constituency; and how these calculations are made. (AQW 542/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): Details pertaining to the expenditure on leisure facilities and provision per person, broken down by parliamentary constituency are set out below.

The Member should note that although spend may be allocated to a parliamentary constituency; the catchment area of a particular leisure facility may be beyond the constituency's boundaries, for example the investment in the refurbishment of the Ulster Museum, based in Belfast South, represents investment for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Total expenditure by DCAL and its relevant arms length bodies in 2007/08 on leisure facilities amounted to £97,060,273.

ARTS & MUSUEMS*

Parliamentary Constituency	Population Per Constituency (2007 Mid Year Estimate)	Capital Spend (£) 2007/08	Revenue Spend (£) 2007/08	Total Spend (£) 2007/08	Spend Per Capita (£) 2007/08
Antrim East	87,054	0	15,750	15,750	0.18
Antrim North	108,559	0	14,281	14,281	0.13
Antrim South	106,087	0	0	0	0
Belfast East	78,249	0	1,150,000	1,150,000	14.70
Belfast North	82,455	3,300	78,250	81,550	0.99
Belfast South	91,722	20,406,000	4,694,047	25,100,047	273.65
Belfast West	84,473	7,000	388,486	395,486	4.68
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	100,024	0	17,212	17,212	0.17
Foyle	108,535	3,190,940	904,724	4,095,664	37.74
Lagan Valley	108,758	0	25,417	25,417	0.23
Londonderry East	91,243	10,001	78,922	88,923	0.97
Mid Ulster	94,101	0	30,000	30,000	0.32
Newry & Armagh	108,511	161,000	1,283,000	1,444,000	13.31
North Down	88,934	824,000	8,917,000	9,741,000	109.53

Parliamentary Constituency	Population Per Constituency (2007 Mid Year Estimate)	Capital Spend (£) 2007/08	Revenue Spend (£) 2007/08	Total Spend (£) 2007/08	Spend Per Capita (£) 2007/08
South Down	114, 724	0	7, 661	7, 661	0.07
Strangford	101, 841	0	0	0	0
Tyrone West	90, 938	412, 000	1, 489, 500	1, 901, 500	20.91
Upper Bann	112, 850	0	40, 788	40, 788	0.36

* Figures were calculated using the 2007 mid-year estimated population in the parliamentary constituencies.

DCAL is unable to breakdown, by parliamentary constituency; spend on sports, libraries, inland waterways and inland fisheries facilities. Details pertaining to breakdown spend per capita for the whole of Northern Ireland are however set out below.

Division	Spend (£) 2007/08	Spend Per Capita (£) 2007/08*
Libraries	35, 191, 000	20
Sport (inclusive of Lottery)	13, 595, 868	7.73
Inland waterways Inland Fisheries	4, 124, 126	2.34

* Figures were calculated using the 2007 mid-year estimated population in the whole of Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland population June 2007 mid-year estimate: 1, 759 148).

Fixed Bag Nets

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action he is taking to protect and safeguard people who have the right to fish using fixed bag nets on the North coast. (AQW 784/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture (DCAL), Arts and Leisure has a statutory responsibility to conserve and protect wild salmon stocks and research has shown that Atlantic salmon populations are under threat. DCAL also has to comply with EU legislation under the Habitats Directive and other European legislation to conserve and protect this endangered species. The Department has offered the remaining commercial salmon net licence holders on the North Coast compensation for a voluntary cessation of fishing. This has not been accepted and the Department is now consulting with the netsmen on a way forward.

I am aware of the cultural and social factors associated with the commercial salmon industry. I will consider all relevant information before making a final decision regarding the fixed bag nets on the North Coast.

After School Sports Activities

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what grants are available from his Department to assist with transport costs for after school sports activities. (AQW 983/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport, including the distribution of funding. One possible source of funding would be the Awards for All programme, under which grants may be available to assist with transport costs for after schools sports activities. Awards for All is a joint Lottery distributor programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and the Big Lottery Fund.

Irish Language Groups

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the Irish language groups that have been funded by his Department; and (ii) the amount of funding provided to Irish language groups in the Mid-Ulster constituency over the last 3 years. (AQW 994/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The only Irish language group funded directly by my Department is Foras na Gaeilge, the Irish language agency, which along with the Ulster-Scots Agency comprises the North/South Language Body.

Foras na Gaeilge provides funding for community based Irish language groups and has identified the following payments to groups in the Mid-Ulster constituency between 2006 and 2008.

Year	Details	Award
2008	Coiste Forbartha (Maghera) Cairde Uí Néill (Coalisland) & Pobal Speirín (Cookstown)	£66,974 £2,792
2007	Naiscoil Charn Tochair (Maghera)	£2,100
2006		Nil

EDUCATION

After School Sports Events

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what grants are available through her Department for after school sports events. (AQW 340/09)

The Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Tá ráite ag an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta go mbíonn Sport NI (SNI) freagrach as spórt a fhorbairt i dtuaisceart na hÉireann lena n-áirítear maoiniú a dháileadh.

The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure have commented that Sport NI (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in the north of Ireland including the distribution of funding. SNI currently runs two programmes from which funding may be available for after school sports events. These are an Awards for All Programme and a Sport in Our Community Programme. Details of these programmes are available from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

The Department of Education provides funding of some £10m under the Extended Schools programme, targeted on children and young people who are disadvantaged, marginalised or have the most limited access to current services. Funding can be spent on diverse activities including after schools sports activities. In the first year of the programme, 2006/07, the Education and Library Boards Extended Schools Annual Reports indicated that 66% (322 out of 486) of schools offered additional sporting activities funded by the Extended Schools Programme.

The Boards Extended School Annual Reports for 2007/08 should be available late autumn.

Children and young people can benefit greatly from developing their physical literacy skills and participating in sporting activities. My curriculum sports programme provides additional opportunities to do so for our youngest primary school children, and I welcome the opportunities available to pupils in after school settings.

Educational Facilities

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to improve educational facilities in the East Antrim constituency. (AQW 735/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá scéimeanna um mionoibreacha á bpleanáil chun áiseanna a fheabhsú ag na scoileanna seo a leanas sa toghcheantar:

Schemes of minor works are in planning to improve facilities at the following schools in the constituency:

School	Scheme
Acorn Integrated Primary School, Carrickfergus	CCTV and Fire alarm system
Corran Integrated Primary School, Larne	Refurbishment of toilets
St James' Primary School, Newtownabbey	Upgrade of bell system and refurbishment of toilets
St Comgall's High School, Larne	Replacement fire doors
Larne Grammar School	Air conditioning
Belfast High School	Comfort cooling system in ICT room and replacement hot water cylinder
St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower	Toilet refurbishment, fire risk assessment work and CCTV

There are a number of proposed schemes for major works for schools in the area which have been identified by the relevant education authority and are the subject of consideration within the department.

Free School Meals

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education how many pupils were in receipt of free school meals in each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school, in the East Belfast constituency, for each of the last 5 years. (AQW 821/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos.

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE EAST BELFAST CONSTITUENCY – 2003/04 – 2007/08

School name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08
Belmont Primary School	7	7	5	6	8
Euston Street Primary School	96	108	114	131	115
Strand Primary School	59	44	37	65	45
Mersey Street Primary School	68	71	60	N.A.	N.A.
Strandtown Primary School	59	61	47	71	69
Elmgrove Primary School	191	205	184	167	177

School name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08
Avoniel Primary School	133	105	105	111	112
Beechfield Primary School	71	73	70	84	73
Orangefield Primary School	38	42	43	39	30
Sydenham Infants Primary School	39	35	34	43	36
Greenwood Primary School	7	10	11	8	7
Knocknagoney Primary School	67	64	48	52	57
Dundela Infants School	46	41	49	45	37
St Joseph's Primary School	*	*	*	*	*
St Matthew's Primary School	208	190	199	176	163
Bloomfield Collegiate	0	0	0	0	*
Cabin Hill School	0	0	*	0	*
Strathearn School	0	0	0	0	0
Gilnahirk Primary School	21	24	30	28	37
Cregagh Primary School	47	42	42	54	61
Lisnasharragh Primary School	50	48	45	51	44
Knockbreda Primary School	16	19	19	11	17
Braniel Primary School	35	31	31	35	36
Tullycarnet Primary School	91	80	75	51	45
Lead Hill Primary School	5	6	5	5	5
St Bernard's Primary School	0	*	*	*	8
Loughview Integrated Primary School	28	26	16	20	12

PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE EAST BELFAST CONSTITUENCY – 2003/04 – 2007/08

School name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08
Ashfield Girls' High School	144	149	132	132	122
Ashfield Boys' High School	175	161	154	145	129
Orangefield High School	158	142	124	122	122
Grosvenor Gs	41	34	42	46	36
Bloomfield Collegiate	13	14	17	19	15
Campbell College	5	5	6	6	7
Strathearn School	17	19	20	15	12
Lisnasharragh High School	120	111	107	93	36
Knockbreda High School	180	184	166	151	162
Our Lady And St Patrick's College	28	23	23	16	18

Source: Annual school census

“*” denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

Note: Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

Free school meal entitlement for nursery class pupils measured as those children who have a parent in receipt of Income Support or Job Seeker's Allowance or who are recorded as entitled to free school meals.

Post-Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education to detail by grade how many pupils transferred to each post-primary school in the (a) Newry and Mourne District Council; and (b) Armagh City and District Council areas. (AQW 878/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlaine an Deiscirt don Roinn gur mar seo a leanas líon na ndaltaí de réir na ngrád a fuair siad, a d'aistrigh chuig gach iarbhunscóil i limistéir (a) Chomhairle Cheantar an Iúir agus Mhúrn; agus (b) Chomhairle Chathair agus Cheantar Ard Mhacha.

The Southern Education and Library Board have advised that the number of pupils by grade that transferred to each post-primary school in the (a) Newry and Mourne District Council; and (b) Armagh City and District Council areas is as detailed in the tables below.

(A) NEWRY AND MOURN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

Post Primary School	Pupils Admitted 2008/09					
	Grade A	Grade B1	Grade B2	Grade C1	Grade C2	Grade D
Kilkeel High School	0	0	2	2	3	3
Newry High School	1	0	6	1	5	7
Newtownhamilton High School	1	0	0	1	2	8
St Columban's College	0	0	0	6	4	8
St Joseph's Boys' High, Newry	0	0	5	8	6	23
St Joseph's High, Crossmaglen	9	2	7	9	10	25
St Mark's High, Warrenpoint	1	3	5	13	16	56
St Mary's High School, Newry	0	1	4	3	7	32
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	23	15	15	28	17	53
Christian Bros Abbey Grammar	108	17	3	1	0	0
Our Lady's Grammar School	79	31	8	1	1	0
Sacred Heart Grammar School	113	2	4	2	0	0
St Colman's College	88	16	10	1	0	2
St Louis' Grammar School	45	14	14	4	2	1

(B) ARMAGH CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

Post Primary School	Pupils Admitted 2008/09					
	Grade A	Grade B1	Grade B2	Grade C1	Grade C2	Grade D
City of Armagh High School	0	0	0	0	3	7
Markethill High School	2	0	0	3	3	9
Tandragee Junior High	0	0	0	0	1	1
Armagh Integrated College	0	0	0	0	1	0
St Brigid's High School, Armagh	0	0	0	0	0	6
St Catherine's College	14	4	6	7	4	19

Post Primary School	Pupils Admitted 2008/09					
	Grade A	Grade B1	Grade B2	Grade C1	Grade C2	Grade D
St Patrick's High School, Keady	3	5	2	1	1	8
Royal School, Armagh	46	15	15	14	2	2
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	32	10	17	18	16	13

Post-Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education how many pupils transferred to each post-primary school without sitting the transfer test, in the (i) Newry and Mourne District Council; and (ii) Armagh City and District Council areas. (AQW 880/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt don Roinn gur mar seo a leanas líon na ndaltaí a d'aistrigh chuig gach iarbhunscóil i limistéir (a) Chomhairle Ceantair an Iúir agus Mhúrn; agus (b) Chomhairle Chathair agus Cheantar Ard Mhacha gan an scrúdú aistrithe a dhéanamh.

The Southern Education and Library Board have advised the Department that the number of pupils that transferred to each post-primary school without sitting the transfer test, in the (i) Newry and Mourne District Council; and (ii) Armagh City and District Council areas is as detailed in the tables below.

(I) NEWRY AND MOURN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

Post Primary School	Pupils Admitted that opted out of the transfer test 2008/09
Kilkeel High School	117
Newry High School	58
Newtownhamilton High School	23
St Columban's College	26
St Joseph's Boys' High, Newry	24
St Joseph's High, Crossmaglen	56
St Mark's High, Warrenpoint	56
St Mary's High School, Newry	31
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	74
Christian Bros Abbey Grammar	0
Our Lady's Grammar School	0
Sacred Heart Grammar School	0
St Colman's College	8*
St Louis' Grammar School	0

(II) ARMAGH CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

Post Primary School	Pupils Admitted that opted out of the transfer test 2008/09
City of Armagh High School	29
Markethill High School	83
Tandragee Junior High	75
Armagh Integrated College	7
St Brigid's High School, Armagh	28
St Catherine's College	120
St Patrick's High School, Keady	141
Royal School, Armagh	0
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	4*

* The Southern Education and Library Board have advised the Department that these pupils were admitted under the special provisions which exist for:

- Children whose parents/guardians wish them to transfer to a Grammar School from a school outside the North of Ireland;
- Children who have received more than half their education outside the North of Ireland;
- Children entered for the transfer tests, who because of unforeseen and serious medical problems, which are supported by medical evidence, were unable to participate in the transfer tests.

Post-Primary Transfer

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education when she will circulate a Policy Memorandum to Ministers on the future post-primary transfer arrangements from next year. (AQW 906/09)

The Minister of Education: Déanfaidh mé cinnte go dtabharfar Meabhrán Beartais ar mo thograí le haghaidh leasú na socruithe um aistriú iarbhunscoile d'Airí roimh an chéad chruinniú eile de chuid Choiste an Fheidhmeannais.

I will arrange for the circulation to Ministers of a Policy Memorandum on my proposals for the reform of post-primary transfer arrangements in advance of the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Post-Primary Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what post-primary schools in the North Down constituency cater for special needs children. (AQW 933/09)

The Minister of Education: Since the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order (SENDI) in September 2005, all mainstream schools have the potential to cater for most pupils with SEN. Special schools continue to play a vital role in supporting pupils with significant and complex needs, in accordance with parental wishes and the professional advice given.

Is iad na hiarbhunscoileanna seo a leanas i dtoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh a dhéanann freastal ar pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu:-

The following post-primary schools in the North Down constituency currently cater for children with special educational needs:

School	SEN stage 1 - 5 pupils
Donaghadee High School	129
Bangor Academy	174
St Columbanus' College	96
Priory College	98
Glenlola Collegiate	13
Bangor Grammar school	29
Sullivan Upper School	26
Clifton Special School	56
Lakewood Special School	11

Source: School Census 2007/08

Note: 1. Figures for Special schools relate to children of post-primary school age.

Educational Facilities

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to improve educational facilities in the North Down constituency. (AQW 934/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá scéimeanna faoifa móroibreacha agus mionoibreacha ann chun áiseanna a fheabhsú ag na scoileanna seo a leanas:

There are approved schemes of major and minor works to improve facilities at the following schools:

School	Current position
Major Capital Works Schemes:	
Bangor Grammar School	In planning
Hollywood/Redburn Primary School	In planning
Priory College	In planning
St Columbanus' College	In planning
Towerview PS	Project underway
Minor Capital Works Schemes:	
St Patrick's Primary School, Hollywood - Replacement Windows	In planning
Bangor Grammar School -	
Essential Home Economics accommodation	In planning

Post-Primary Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what proportion of pupils left post-primary education with no qualifications in each of the last 5 years; and how do these figures compare with those for (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales. (AQW 940/09)

The Minister of Education: Féach an tábla thíos. Ba chóir bheith faichilleach faoi aon chomparáidí mar go mbíonn modheolaíochtaí éagsúla ann sna réigiúin.

Please see the table below. Any comparisons should be viewed with caution as methodologies differ between Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.

Percentage of school leavers achieving no formal qualifications 2001/02 to 2006/07 in England, Scotland, north of Ireland and Wales.

	North of Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales
2006/07	3.0	2.7	4.1	2.0
2005/06	3.2	3.3	4.0	2.6
2004/05	3.5	3.6 ⁽²⁾	4.3	2.7
2003/04	4.9	5.3	4.0	2.8
2002/03	N/A ⁽¹⁾	5.2	4.7	2.8
2001/02	5.2	5.4	4.6	3.0

1. Due to technical problems in schools no North of Ireland data for the 2002/03 academic year are available.
2. Results from 2004/05 onwards incorporate GCSEs, GNVQs and a wide range of other qualifications approved pre-16. Prior to 2005 results are based on GCSEs and GNVQs only.

Slemish College

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on her consideration of replacing temporary buildings at Slemish College with a permanent building. (AQW 1004/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní dhearna Slemish College teagmháil oifigiúil leis an Roinn maidir le foirgneamh buan a thógáil in áit na bhfoirgneamh sealadach.

Slemish College has not formally approached the Department about replacing temporary buildings with a permanent building. The College is currently engaging with the Department with regard to repairs to the roof and metal substructure of some temporary classrooms and the provision of a sports hall.

Unauthorised Absence

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education (i) how many incidences of unauthorised absence were recorded in each Education and Library Board area in each of the last 4 years; and (ii) what advice was provided by her Department to schools for dealing with persistent cases. (AQW 1025/09)

The Minister of Education: The Department does not currently hold the information sought.

Since September 2006, a new standardised system of recording absences has been used in schools, following an update of the attendance module of the Classroom 2000 (C2K) system. This enables schools to record pupils' absences, the reasons for the absence and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The Department had planned to collect this new data with the annual school census in October 2007. However additional software is required to facilitate the transfer of detailed, yet anonymised, attendance data to the Department for analysis. This software has been commissioned and the intention is to collect data for the 2006/07 and 2007/08 school years during the census in October 2008.

A separate exercise took place earlier this year to collect detailed attendance data from all post-primary schools and this data was published on the Department's website (www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch_pg/32-statistics_and_research_statistics_on_education_pg/32_statistics_and_research_-_statistics_on_education-pupil_attendance.htm).

This information and the data from both primary and post-primary schools that will be collected this month will be used to inform the setting of targets on pupil attendance. Once targets have been developed, the Department will issue guidance to schools on how best to promote regular attendance and on approaches to early and effective intervention.

Faigheann an Roinn eolas ó na boird oideachais agus leabharlainne faoi dhaltaí a mbíonn buarthaí ann fúthu toisc go mbíonn fadhb acu le freastal. Cruinnítear an t-eolas seo ag deireadh gach scoilbhliana agus foilsítear ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne é.

The Department does collect information from the education and library boards about pupils referred due to concerns around non-attendance. This information is collected at the end of each school year and is published on the Department's website (www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils_parents-pg/pupils_parents-suspensions_and_expulsions_pg.htm). The Education and Welfare Service will receive a referral from a school when a pupil's attendance pattern causes

concern and each referral will be dealt with according to the individual circumstances.

School Pupils

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many pupils (i) there are in each constituency; and (ii) travel to schools outside the constituency where they live. (AQW 1027/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an freagra le fáil sna táblaí thíos.

The answer is contained in the tables below.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS BY CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE AND THE NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO ATTEND SCHOOLS OUTSIDE THEIR CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE – 2007/08

Constituency	No. of pupils resident	No. of pupils who attend schools outside the constituency they reside in
Home Postcode Not Known/Provided	748	NA
Belfast East	5,893	706
Belfast North	7,082	480
Belfast South	6,425	862
Belfast West	8,243	975
East Antrim	7,656	825
East Derry	8,138	509
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	9,097	692
Foyle	11,346	58
Lagan Valley	10,106	1,749
Mid Ulster	9,297	318
Newry and Armagh	10,958	642
North Antrim	9,966	479
North Down	6,713	376
South Antrim	9,741	1,050
South Down	11,061	920
Strangford	8,722	1,252
Upper Bann	10,656	613
West Tyrone	9,091	148
Total	166,639	12,654

POST PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS BY CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE AND THE NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO ATTEND SCHOOLS OUTSIDE THEIR CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE – 2007/08

Constituency	No. of pupils resident	No. of pupils who attend schools outside the constituency they reside in
Home Postcode not Known/Provided	2,113	NA
Belfast East	5,314	2,168
Belfast North	6,714	1,420
Belfast South	5,820	2,265
Belfast West	8,410	1,680
East Antrim	7,077	1,527
East Derry	7,303	1,257
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	8,425	570
Foyle	10,652	403
Lagan Valley	8,831	3,882
Mid Ulster	8,726	1,537
Newry and Armagh	9,781	1,425
North Antrim	8,461	1,087
North Down	6,222	1,690
South Antrim	8,434	3,697
South Down	10,351	2,288
Strangford	7,909	4,089
Upper Bann	9,218	1,322
West Tyrone	8,181	725
Total	147,942	33,032

SPECIAL SCHOOL PUPILS BY CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE AND THE NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO ATTEND SCHOOLS OUTSIDE THEIR CONSTITUENCY OF RESIDENCE – 2007/08

Constituency	No. of pupils resident	No. of pupils who attend schools outside the constituency they reside in
Home Postcode not Known/Provided	160	NA
Belfast East	231	199
Belfast North	380	337
Belfast South	215	88
Belfast West	501	370
East Antrim	236	61

Constituency	No. of pupils resident	No. of pupils who attend schools outside the constituency they reside in
East Derry	184	26
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	194	7
Foyle	272	14
Lagan Valley	389	72
Mid Ulster	123	63
Newry and Armagh	154	31
North Antrim	253	76
North Down	242	162
South Antrim	259	175
South Down	183	120
Strangford	286	91
Upper Bann	141	47
West Tyrone	208	27
Total	4,611	1,966

Source: Annual school census 2007/08

Note: Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes
Home postcode details are not available for some pupils.

Bangor Academy and St Columbanus College

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education if she will increase the enrolment figures for Bangor Academy and St Columbanus College, to prevent a recurrence of the inability of secondary schools in Bangor to provide places for all year 8 pupils.
(AQW 1029/09)

The Minister of Education: Níl ganntanas áiteanna scoile ann do phaistí i gceantar Dhún Thuaidh taobh istigh d'achar réasúnach taistil óna mbailte. Socraítear líonta iontrálacha agus rollaithe Bangor Academy agus St Columbanus College de réir na cóiríochta atá ar fáil sna scoileanna.

There is no shortage of school places for children in the North Down area within a reasonable travelling distance of their homes. The admissions and enrolment numbers of Bangor Academy and St Columbanus College are set in accordance with the accommodation available at the schools. There are no plans to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers of Bangor Academy. St Columbanus College has a capital scheme in development for a new school in the future but there are no plans to increase its numbers based on its present accommodation.

The Department is always willing to consider requests from schools for temporary variations to their

admissions and enrolment numbers. However when considering such requests, the Department must take account of the availability of alternative school places in order to maintain a viable schools' estate.

Charge Levied by Hochtief

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the charge levied by Hochtief for (i) cleaning up a lemonade spill; and (ii) replacement of an internal ceiling tile at Bangor Academy/ Nendrum College.
(AQW 1043/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheisirt go bhfuil glanadh frithghníomhach ar cheann de na seirbhísí a sholáthraítear faoin chonradh agus mar sin de, ní bhíonn aon táille ar iarratais aonair glanta.

The Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that reactive cleaning is one of the services that is provided under the contract and there is, therefore, no charge applied to individual cleaning requests. Similarly, the replacement of a ceiling tile comes under the heading of building maintenance, which is provided under the contract, and there is, therefore no charge for this work.

Dalriada Sure Start Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to provide funding to the Dalriada Sure Start programme to extend it to include the Glens of Antrim.
(AQW 1061/09)

The Minister of Education: Is é an beartas reatha atá ag an Roinn Oideachais ná Sure Start a chothú in 20% de na ceantair barda is díothaí i dtuaisceart na hÉireann, mar a rangáítear iad de réir Scór Tomhais Díthe Ilchineálaí.

The current policy of the Department of Education is to maintain Sure Start coverage of the 20% most deprived ward areas in the North of Ireland, as ranked by the Multiple Deprivation Measure Score. As the Glens of Antrim fall outside the catchment areas there are no plans to increase funding to Dalriada Sure Start for it to extend and include the Glens of Antrim.

School Amalgamations

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what proposals for school amalgamations she is (i) involved in; and (ii) aware of.
(AQW 1072/09)

The Minister of Education: School amalgamation proposals emanate from the relevant education

authorities and the Department is not involved in formulating such proposals. Proposals for amalgamations require the support of a published development proposal. This is a statutory process which facilitates public consultation and includes a two-month period during which comment or objection may be offered to the Department. I will reach a decision on a development proposal as soon as possible after that period.

Tá dhá mholadh foilsithe cónasctha á mbreathnú ag an Roinn faoi láthair, mar atá:

There are currently two published amalgamation proposals with the Department which are:

School	Proposal
St Comgall's College, Larne, St Aloysius High School, Cushendall and St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower	Amalgamation of the 3 schools on the Garron Tower site.
Augher, Clogher and Carntall Primary Schools	Amalgamation of the 3 schools in a new school on a new site.

Threshold Payment Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education why musical instrument tutors employed by the South Eastern Education and Library Board have not been able to access the Threshold Payment scheme; and what plans she has to extend this to musical instrument tutors. (AQW 1121/09)

The Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé do Simon Hamilton MLA, an Comhalta do thoghcheantar Loch Cuan, ar AQW 659/09 a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 3 Deireadh Fómhair 2008.

I would refer the Member to the reply I gave Simon Hamilton MLA, the Member for Strangford, to AQW 659/09 published in the Official Report on 3 October 2008.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Educational Groups

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what educational groups are funded by his Department in the North Down area. (AQW 660/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): My Department funds one educational group in the North Down area, Conservation Volunteers NI. The funding is made available under the European Social Fund programme.

In addition, the following groups and organisations have contracts with the Department to deliver Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI in the North Down area:

- A4E
- Belfast Central Training
- Belfast College of Training
- Conservation Volunteers NI
- CAFRE Rural Enterprise Team
- CRAFT Training
- Dairy Farm
- Electrical Training Trust
- Engineering Training Services
- Food and Drink Training Council
- Hair Academy/Jennymount
- National Federation of Roofing Contractors
- NIE
- North Down Training Ltd. & Datalink Reprographics
- Oriel Training Services
- Opportunity Youth
- Paragon Training
- People 1st
- Plumbing and Mechanical Services Training
- Protocol Skills
- RT Resources
- Rutledge Joblink
- Seven Towers Training
- TTE Training
- Transport Training Services
- VT Training

Neighbourhood Renewal Posts

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what Neighbourhood Renewal posts and services his Department will fund from March 2009. (AQW 710/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department does not core fund posts. It does, however, deliver a range of programmes related to employment and skills which aim to address disadvantage and are targeted at the needs of individuals, many of whom live in Neighbourhood Renewal areas. These include ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success, the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) and the new Steps to Work provision. FE Colleges across Northern Ireland are also in the process of contracting for the delivery of learner mentoring and support under the auspices of the new Learner Access

and Engagement provision. Organisations which are currently funded through Neighbourhood Renewal monies therefore have the opportunity to bid for a variety of contract opportunities for the delivery of services as and when they arise.

Southern Regional College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what the budget is for the Southern Regional College this financial year. (AQW 723/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Further Education College allocations are made on an academic year basis, and for the 2008/09 academic year the Southern Regional College will receive £24,770,900 through their main recurrent block grant allocation. Additionally, almost £12million is made available in-year sector wide, for specific purposes which are allocated through demand led ear marked funds, and as such cannot be disaggregated to college level at this stage in the academic year.

Belfast Regional College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what the budget is for the Belfast Regional College this financial year. (AQW 724/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Further Education College allocations are made on an academic year basis, and for the 2008/09 academic year the Belfast Metropolitan College will receive £34,561,800 through their main recurrent block grant allocation. Additionally, almost £12million is made available in-year sector wide, for specific purposes which are allocated through demand led ear marked funds, and as such cannot be disaggregated to college level at this stage in the academic year.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what the budget is for the South Eastern Regional College this financial year. (AQW 725/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Further Education College allocations are made on an academic year basis, and for the 2008/09 academic year the South Eastern Regional College will receive £21,756,000 through their main recurrent block grant allocation. Additionally, almost £12million is made available in-year sector wide, for specific purposes which are allocated through demand led ear marked funds, and as such cannot be disaggregated to college level at this stage in the academic year.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what education groups the South Eastern Regional College funds in the North Down Area. (AQW 726/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The South Eastern Regional College does not fund any education groups in the North Down area.

Irish Medium Colleges

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning the number of Irish medium colleges. (AQW 816/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: There are no colleges which deliver their provision solely through the medium of Irish. St Mary's University College does, however, provide a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) to train aspiring teachers who wish to teach through the medium of Irish.

St Mary's University College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning the budget for St Mary's University College in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 818/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Details of grants allocated by my Department to St Mary's University College in each of the last 3 academic years are shown in the attached table. Prior to 2008/09 recurrent grant was allocated as a block funding amount, based on the previous year's allocation, and did not take account of the number of students enrolled at the college.

A new funding methodology has been introduced from academic year 2008/09 which takes account of actual student numbers.

**FUNDING ALLOCATED TO
ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC YEARS 2006/07 – 2008/09**

	2006/07 £	2007/08 ¹ £	2008/09 £
Recurrent grant	5,077,493	5,077,493	5,210,358
Widening Participation for students from disadvantaged backgrounds	62,442	62,442	65,923
Widening Access for students with disabilities	10,000	10,000	10,000
Diversity and Mutual Understanding (DMU)	30,000	30,000	30,000
International Awareness	40,000	40,000	40,000
Irish Medium Education (IME)	100,000	145,226	194,334
Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLS)	66,520	47,154	48,000
Capital Equipment	50,000	50,000	50,000
Total Allocations	£5,436,455	£5,462,315	£5,648,615
Conversion Funding			£50,000
Development of Strategic Options			£30,000
			£5,728,615

Notes on the allocations

- (1) Pending the introduction of a new funding model, and in light of declining student numbers, funding for both university colleges in academic year 2007/08 was held at 2006/07 levels except for the separate initiative funded elements of IME and CETLS.

North West Regional College

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) if he is aware of student numbers on some part-time courses offered by the North West Regional College being reduced to a limit of 25 people; (ii) his assessment of the impact of this on the number of people in the North West who are able to access third-level education; and (iii) if the Department has been informed of any reason why this limit may have been imposed. (AQW 870/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: North West Regional College (NWRC) has advised me that there has been no reduction of places on part-time courses. However, to comply with health and safety requirements, classes which have an element of practical tuition continue to operate a ceiling on the number of enrolments.

Where a course is over-subscribed, subject to sufficient demand, a further class will be created or,

alternatively, provision on a comparable course within the College will be offered.

Steps to Work Programme

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if any organisations that were awarded contracts under the tender process for Steps to Work, were granted time extensions to comply with tender/contract requirements in the period up to and after 28 September 2008; if TWL have been granted any extension beyond 28 September 2008 in relation to its tender/contract obligations; and if TWL (i) was open for business; (ii) were able to accept Steps to Work referrals; and (iii) had staff in place in operational premises on 28 September 2008. (AQW 1171/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Contracts for the Steps to Work Programme were awarded on 17th September 2008. No organisations were granted time extensions to the required timescales.

TWL was open for business, were able to accept Steps to Work referrals and had staff in place in operational premises on 29th September 2008, the date on which Steps to Work commenced

**ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND
INVESTMENT**

GAA Games

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to feature significant GAA games on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's consumer website. (AQW 655/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) features events and sporting activities on its website:

- when it is notified of these;
- when these are relevant to tourists and NITB's corporate plans and objectives; and
- when these are of national and international prominence.

NITB retains full editorial control of its website and the information uploaded to it.

Cruise Ships Visiting Northern Ireland

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many cruise ships have visited Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. (AQW 775/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The number of cruise ships which have visited Northern Ireland in the last 5 years is as follows:

Year	Belfast	Londonderry	Total
2004	13	7	20
2005	18	3	21
2006	23	2	25
2007	31	8	39
2008*	39	2	41
Totals	124	22	146

* By the end of November 2008

It is estimated that 42 cruise ships will be coming to Belfast in 2009.

Merger of HBOS and Lloyds TSB

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she intends to take to safeguard jobs at HBOS following the takeover by Lloyds TSB. (AQW 809/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: HBOS was one of the first major financial institutions to invest in Northern Ireland and its presence here continues to be of significant strategic importance to our economy. The First Minister and deputy First Minister have written to Mr Eric Daniels, Group Chief Executive of Lloyds TSB, stressing the importance of the HBOS investment to the Northern Ireland economy and outlining the Northern Ireland proposition for further investment.

I plan to write to Mr Andy Hornby, Chief Executive HBOS Plc, again stressing the importance of the HBOS investment here and requesting a meeting to discuss any implication this proposed acquisition may have for Northern Ireland and how Northern Ireland may contribute positively to their future plans.

In addition, Invest NI continues to work closely with senior management in HBOS to develop its contacts within both Lloyds TSB and HBOS to ensure all parties are aware of the importance of HBOS's continued presence here and the opportunities for further investment in Northern Ireland.

It should be noted that the proposed acquisition is still in the very early stages and it is not expected to be completed until the end of February 2009. However, I can assure you that I, together with Invest NI, will continue to work proactively to secure the best possible outcome for Northern Ireland.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much public money has been invested by Invest NI in Perfecseal; and what measures are in place to safeguard the public investment made in this company's operations in the North West. (AQW 855/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has offered a total of £5.35 million financial assistance to Perfecseal. Most of this assistance (£5.3 million) relates to an offer made in December 2005 in respect of Perfecseal's planned new premises. The remainder relates to two small offers for consultancy support in relation to training and costs for a Business Improvement Agent.

The December 2005 Financial Assistance Agreement included a number of conditions to facilitate Invest NI's monitoring of the project. The company agreed to furnish Invest NI with quarterly management accounts and signed year end accounts within specified timescales. The Financial Assistance Agreement also required that the company submit to Invest NI a quarterly report providing information on areas such as sales growth, job creation, capital expenditure and an update on progress towards relocation to the new factory at Campsie Industrial Estate. Invest NI completes financial and project monitoring reports for this project in line with

Invest NI monitoring guidelines. The relocation project was successfully completed as Perfecseal relocated to a new, purpose built facility at Campsie in mid 2007. In addition to the information submitted by Perfecseal, Invest NI has held regular meetings with the company to ensure that Invest NI is fully aware of current business activities, future plans and business issues.

Invest NI considers Perfecseal to be of strategic importance to both the Life Sciences sector and the North West. The Managing Director (Clients Group and Entrepreneurship, Invest NI) met senior management of Perfecseal on 23rd June 2008 and offered to travel to the US to meet with senior management of Perfecseal's parent company if such a meeting would be helpful in attracting further investment to Perfecseal in Northern Ireland. At a meeting on 12th September 2008, senior officials from Invest NI and I, again offered to meet with

Perfecseal's senior management and that of its parent company in order to promote Northern Ireland as an investment location.

Invest NI remains in close contact with Perfecseal and is working to secure any further potential Perfecseal investment at Campsie. Recent discussions have included considering options to support research and development and training projects in addition to any potential financial assistance for capital expenditure/ growth in employment.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many meetings Invest NI has had with Perfecseal during the last 12 months; and what action it is taking, in conjunction with the company (i) to secure existing employment; and (ii) to facilitate new investment and employment at its existing plant. (AQW 856/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has met with Perfecseal on 9 occasions, in total, over the last 12 months. This includes two meetings organised by my office, which I attended and one meeting attended by the Permanent Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Invest NI offered Perfecseal £5.3 million of financial assistance in December 2005 which helped to secure existing jobs and to assist the creation of new jobs. This £18 million project saw the relocation of Perfecseal from Springtown Industrial Estate to a new, purpose built 120,000 sq ft factory at Campsie Industrial Estate, Londonderry, in mid 2007. Current employment at Perfecseal, Londonderry is approximately 277.

Over the last year Invest NI has provided advice to Perfecseal in respect of expansion into new export markets. The company also participated in the Invest NI sectoral trade mission to MEDICA (a medical device trade fair, held in Germany) in November 2007. Invest NI remains in close contact with Perfecseal and is working to secure any further potential Perfecseal investment at Campsie. Recent discussions have included considering options to support research and development and training projects in addition to any potential financial assistance for capital expenditure/ growth in employment.

Invest NI considers Perfecseal to be of strategic importance to both the Life Sciences Sector and the North West. Ian Murphy, Managing Director, Clients Group and Entrepreneurship, Invest NI, met senior management of Perfecseal on 23rd June

2008 and offered to travel to the US to meet with senior management of Perfecseal's parent company to help attract further investment to Northern Ireland. At a later meeting which I attended, senior officials from Invest NI and I, again offered to meet with Perfecseal's senior management and that of its parent company in order to promote Northern Ireland as an investment location.

Unemployment in Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the current level of unemployment in the Carrickfergus area. (AQW 873/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: At August 2008 there were 520 Claimant Count Unemployed persons in Carrickfergus District Council area, 374 males and 146 females. This corresponds to 2.1% of persons of working age, compared to 2.7% in Northern Ireland as a whole. Carrickfergus had the equal ninth lowest rate of all the 26 District Council areas.

Neighbourhood Renewal Posts

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide details of the neighbourhood renewal posts and services that her Department will fund from March 2009. (AQW 885/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department will not be funding any Neighbourhood Renewal posts from March 2009.

In terms of specific services support, an element within the new Small Business Support Programme is targeted at Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

This programme is currently at tender stage with annual resource estimates to the specific Neighbourhood Renewal element of £700,000.

NACCO

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she will take to secure the 93 jobs under threat in the NACCO plant in Craigavon. (AQW 893/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI is in regular contact with NACCO management at their Craigavon plant.

The potential 93 job losses at the factory have been triggered by a reported significant downturn in the

market for forklift trucks. NACCO management has reviewed production requirements on that basis.

Invest NI provided selective financial assistance towards two major manufacturing projects in 2003 and 2004 and these projects are still active.

Invest NI continues to work closely with NACCO to maintain the Craigavon plant's position as a competitive manufacturing unit, and to encourage new investment in Northern Ireland by the NACCO group.

Electricity Price Rises

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the Department has made an assessment of the lifetime cost difference between electricity produced by wind and the average cost of electricity produced by fossil fuels, given the recently announced electricity price rises. (AQW 945/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Neither the Department nor the Utility Regulator has carried out a detailed consideration of the lifetime cost of electricity produced by fossil fuels compared to electricity produced from wind. While some comparative costs were calculated within the Grid Study completed in late 2007, these would require updating in light of the recent significant increases in fossil fuel costs, and would not be considered suitable as a basis for comparison without substantial further analysis.

Renewable Energy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the all-island Single Electricity Market, how many megawatt hours of renewable energy have been traded from (i) Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland, over the last year; and what is the expected number to be traded between north and south from now until 2012. (AQW 947/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: It is not possible to differentiate between the types of electricity transmitted along the interconnector at any one time, and therefore not possible to identify the volumes of renewable energy transmitted between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and vice versa.

In any event, since the Single Electricity Market (SEM) was established on 1 November 2007, the electricity interconnector between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is considered as an integral part of the electricity grid network on the island. In effect, wholesale electricity is no longer traded

between North and South, as generated electricity produced from both conventional and renewable generation is traded within the SEM trading pool.

Renewable Energy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to give the year on year target for the percentage of electricity to be produced by renewable energy between now and 2012; and (ii) what is the current proportion of energy produced by renewables. (AQW 948/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland's renewable energy target is that, by 2012, 12% of electricity consumption will come from indigenous renewable energy sources and, of that renewable element, at least 15% will be from non-wind sources. There are no formal interim targets although DETI's current Operating Plan does include a milestone of 7% to be met by 31 March 2009 against the 12% target. Currently, renewables generation is providing around 6% of our electricity consumption.

Renewable Energy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the energy targets apportioned to Northern Ireland following the meeting of the EU Energy Council in spring 2007; and given that the burden of renewable energy will not be borne equally by the various consumption sectors, what percentage of electricity will need to be produced by renewable sources in order to meet the overall 2020 targets. (AQW 949/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The EU Energy Council meeting in Spring 2007 set a 20% target for the proportion of total energy within the EU that is to be met from renewable energy sources by 2020. Total energy includes heating and transport fuels as well as electricity. The draft EU Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources sets the UK target at 15% and the UK Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform recently completed a consultation on how the UK, including Northern Ireland, as an EU Member State is to achieve this target. Given the low levels of renewables penetration in heating and transport fuels, the UK Government has suggested that the UK scenario for meeting the 15% target might be around 14% in heat, 10% in transport and 32% in electricity. No targets have been apportioned to Northern Ireland but I intend to set a target within the context of the overall UK national action plan and a revised Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland, once the Directive has been finalised.

European Social Fund

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she has taken to ensure that projects that have sought match funding from her Department, or its agencies under the European Social Fund, will be informed of the outcome of any requests for funding at the earliest opportunity. (AQW 950/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I can confirm that projects that have sought match funding from my Department, or its agencies under the European Social Fund, have been informed of the outcome of any requests for funding at the earliest opportunity.

New Approved Complaints Scheme

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide details of (i) the number of estate agents; (ii) how many have joined the new approved complaints scheme; and (iii) what plans the Minister has to ensure that all estate agents have joined the scheme when it comes into force on 1 October 2008. (AQW 951/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The premises data base of the Trading Standards Service (TSS) currently has a record of 603 estate agency branches in Northern Ireland.

There are two approved redress schemes in the UK established by The Estate Agents (Redress Scheme) Order 2008. These are the Ombudsman for Estate Agents and the Surveyors Ombudsman Scheme. I am advised by the administrators of the Estate Agents Ombudsman Scheme that 132 Northern Ireland Estate Agency branches had signed up by 2 October 2008. The administrators of the Surveyors Ombudsman Scheme were unable to supply numbers of Northern Ireland Branches that had signed up with them on that date.

To help improve awareness of the new law my officials in TSS wrote to all 603 estate agent businesses practising in Northern Ireland on 18 September 2008 advising them of their new obligations under the Estate Agents (Redress Scheme) Order 2008, giving them the contact details of the relevant schemes and informing them of the legal and financial consequences of non-compliance.

On 24 September my Department issued a press release covering the key aspects of the new law and followed this up with a number of newspaper and broadcast media interviews.

My Department, in liaison with the two Redress Scheme administrators, plans to monitor the level of compliance within Northern Ireland and to identify those businesses which have not joined a redress

scheme for appropriate follow-up action. This could include the issue of £1,000 penalty charge notices or, ultimately, a banning order by the Office of Fair Trading, for businesses which refuse to comply.

Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to her answer to AQW 6561/08, when the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland research project will be completed; and (i) how; and (ii) when, it will be made available to the public. (AQW 967/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland is currently working on this project, and as indicated in the answer to AQW 6561/08, expect to have this work completed by the end of 2008. Invest NI intends to present this information within its next Performance Information Report, which is planned for publication before the end of March 2009.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 166/08, to detail (i) each item of expense; (ii) the cost of each item; and (iii) the number and identity of officials who submitted expense claims on 25 and 26 November 2006, in relation to Invest NI activity in Shanghai. (AQW 969/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The total expenditure reported in answer to AQW 166/08 in respect of the visit to Asia in November 2006 was £22,005. The visit included Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong and Tokyo. The Shanghai expenditure totalled £20,668, and is broken down as follows:

Air Fares**	£18,490
Other travel	£ 132
Internet and telephone costs	£ 135
Hotel accommodation	£ 1,620
Meal allowances	£ 131
Trade mission dinner/Lunch etc	£ 160
	£20,668

** Please note that this is the total air fare cost and therefore also includes an element for onward travel to Hong Kong, Beijing and Tokyo.

The attached appendix shows the expenditure broken down by staff member, as requested.

The names of other staff involved are not being disclosed in order to protect the privacy of the individuals concerned.

APPENDIX

Total Reported	Detail Reported	
	AQW 166/08	
25/11/2006	12,128	Hong Kong Beijing, Shanghai
26/11/2006	4,596	Shangai
26/11/2006	5,281	Shangai, Tokyo
	22,005	

Shanghai								Other Destination (Not Shanghai) (included in Original) £22,005 reported
Job title	Grade	Air fare **	Other travel Taxi's rail etc	Internet access Telephone costs	Hotel Accomodation	Meals	Trade mission Dinner / Lunch & Embassy costs	
Chief Executive	1	5,178.00			405.00	73.44		330.00
Managing Director	3	4,033.00	52.84	17.68	405.00	28.74		192.37
Director	5	4,739.00	25.41		405.00	28.91	132.50	355.11
Trade Executive	SO	4,540.00	53.83	117.17	405.00		27.93	460.00
Totals		18,490.00	132.08	134.85	1,620.00	131.09	160.43	1,337.48
Total costs relating to Shanghai							20,668.45	22,005.93

** Note that as some staff also travelled to Tokyo, Beijing and or Hong Kong the air fares costs shown include elements of costs for destinations other than Shanghai

Public Private Partnerships Accommodation Contract

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to identify the names of the Permanent Secretaries or Deputy Permanent Secretaries of his Department or its predecessor, the Department for Economic Development, who were serving board members of Dunloe Ewart plc when the Public Private Partnerships accommodation contract for Invest NI's new headquarters was processed by invited application in July 2003 and awarded to McAleer and Rushe Ltd and Dunloe Ewart Ltd (MRDE) Accommodation Services in April 2004. (AQW 970/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There were none.

Public Private Partnership Accommodation Contract

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the precise terms and conditions of the Public Private Partnership

accommodation contract; and (ii) the amount paid to date, for Invest NI's new headquarters at Bedford Street, Belfast, which was processed by invited application in July 2003, and awarded to McAleer and Rushe Ltd and Dunloe Ewart Ltd (MRDE) Accommodation Services. (AQW 971/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Following a competition initiated in the OJEC in April 2003, the McAleer Rushe Dunloe Ewart (MRDE) Consortium was awarded the Invest NI HQ Contract in November 2004. The contract is in line with the Treasury and Strategic Investment Board guidance "Standardisation of PFI Contracts Northern Ireland". (A copy of this detailed contract has been placed in the Assembly Library.)

The Contract is for the provision of fully-serviced accommodation for the 25 year operational phase of the Project, to include cleaning, catering, maintenance, waste management, helpdesk facility etc.

The method of payment is by a Unitary Charge, currently £4,337,573 per annum, but is subject to an annual increase based on the Retail Price Index figure for February each year.

Within the contract certain additional services (e.g. hospitality, catering, additional file management) are paid for based on volume of usage.

For the period October 2005 – September 2008 the total of these fixed and variable elements is £12,921,852.

Public Private Partnership Accommodation Contract

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to confirm the identities of any former (i) Chief Executives; (ii) Deputy Chief Executives; and (iii) Board Members, of either (a) Invest NI; (b) the Industrial Development Board; and (c) LEDU, who were serving as Board Members of Dunloe Ewart plc. when the Public Private Partnership accommodation contract for Invest NIs new headquarters at Bedford Street, Belfast, was processed by invited application in July 2003 and awarded to McAleer and Rushe Ltd and Dunloe Ewart Ltd (MRDE) Accommodation Services in April 2004. (AQW 973/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There were none.

Accommodation Sectors

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the levels of growth in the (i) Hotel; (ii) Bed & Breakfast; and (iii) Self Catering sectors in terms of visitors numbers. (AQW 980/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In 2004, it is estimated that there were 1,129,200 arrivals to hotels in Northern Ireland, 217,100 arrivals to bed & breakfasts and 109,100 arrivals to self-catering establishments.

For 2007, it is estimated that there were 1,134,600 arrivals to hotels in Northern Ireland, 247,100 arrivals to bed & breakfasts and 135,300 arrivals to self-catering establishments.

In the last three years these are respective increases of 0.5%, 13.8% and 24% in terms of arrivals to these accommodation sectors.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the level of marketing support given to the (i) Hotel; (ii) Bed & Breakfast; and (iii) Self Catering sectors by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. (AQW 982/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: With reference to developing markets and delivering world class visitor experiences, NITB has and will continue to support the accommodation sector in a number of ways.

A series of marketing campaigns is delivered annually by NITB and Tourism Ireland Ltd. One of the key aims of these campaigns is to drive visitors to the www.discovernorthernireland.com website where certified accommodation providers are promoted.

NITB also produces a variety of publications that promote the accommodation sector. These include:

- (i) Hotels and Guest Houses Northern Ireland
- (ii) B&B and Guest Houses Northern Ireland
- (iii) Self Catering
- (iv) Budget Accommodation

NITB regularly provides insights and intelligence to the industry in the form of a monthly ezine and regular research reports. These are available to the industry to download from www.nitb.com.

From 2005-2008 NITB piloted a programme of Masterclasses, Learning Journeys and Workshops to assist the industry including accommodation providers to develop its competitive skills in a number of business areas. This programme will continue and will be extended in 2008-2011.

Electricity and Gas Consumption

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment her Department has made of the anticipated reduction in electricity and gas consumption which will occur in a 12 month period as a result of the increase in prices this year. (AQW 990/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Due to the large number of uncontrollable variables e.g. temperature variation, possible changes in weather patterns, and fluctuations in customer numbers, it is not possible for my Department to accurately predict if there will be any reduction in electricity and gas consumption which will occur in a 12 month period as a result of the increase in electricity and gas prices this year. However, it is anticipated that consumers are more likely to consider energy efficiency measures when faced with higher fuel bills, thus reducing energy consumption.

Electricity Consumption

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to state (i) which measures

the Department is taking to reduce the consumption of electricity; (ii) the estimated (a) annual; and (b) lifetime saving each measure will contribute; (iii) the total cost of each measure; (iv) the proportion of cost that will be borne by the public purse; (v) the proportion of cost borne by consumers; and (vi) the average and total savings to householders.
(AQW 991/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Statutory authority for implementing measures in relation to energy efficiency is shared between DETI, DSD, DFP and Invest NI. DETI, through Invest NI, funds the Carbon Trust to deliver an energy saving programme to the industrial and commercial sectors. The latest savings data available covers the period May 07- Mar 08 and is detailed below.

DETI / INVEST NI Measures	Estimated Annual saving (Giga watt hours GWh)	Estimated Lifetime saving	Total Cost of Measure (07/08)	Proportion of cost borne by public purse	Proportion of cost borne by consumers	Average and total savings to householders
Carbon Trust - Carbon Management Energy Efficiency and Carbon Surveys	84.255	£270m	£593,885	£593,885 (subsidy for surveys)	None	N/A
Energy Efficiency Interest-free loans	4.8	£15.3m	£2.0 million of interest free loans	£279,191 (grant to cover administration management and marketing costs)	None	N/A
SME Energy Grant Scheme	3	£9.6m	£180,000	£180,000 (capital grant)	None	N/A

Electricity Consumption

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment given the Department's target of reducing electricity consumption by 1% below trend, to state (i) the number of megawatt hours of electricity which must be saved to meet this target; and (ii) if this 1% reduction below trend is based on a rebasing of the trend line as a result of successful saving in the previous year.
(AQW 992/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The 1% reduction in electricity consumption target amount for 2007/08 is based on actual electricity consumption for 2006/07. This equates to 88,270 megawatt hours.

Clearly there will be a number of factors, including weather, economic development climate, energy efficiency and social influences, which could contribute to changes in Northern Ireland's annual electricity consumption. Consequently the equivalent of a 1% reduction in electricity consumption may not be detectable in the trend on consumption alone. Monitoring of the 1% target is therefore based on a bottom up approach of monitoring energy efficiency performance data which is the method favoured in the EU Directive on Energy End-Use Efficiency and Energy Services. This method of measurement takes into account all the measures put in place to save electricity during the year across all organisations with statutory responsibility for energy efficiency.

Each year the target is based on actual consumption of the previous year with an allowance for economic growth which was taken as 1.8% in 2006/07 and 2007/08. Therefore for 2008/09 the target becomes 89,329 megawatt hours.

Carbon Emission Targets Report

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when she expects the report on the 'Economic research on business opportunities and challenges presented by carbon emission targets' to be published.
(AQW 993/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Work on this research project is ongoing. The analysis will provide a much greater understanding of the implications of carbon emission targets for businesses locally in Northern Ireland. Climate change is a key issue, and this research will provide comprehensive information on the level of emissions in Northern Ireland, and the challenges and opportunities presented by emissions targets.

The research is scheduled to be completed early in the New Year. I intend to publish the final report in the first quarter of 2009. The report will be issued for consultation with key stakeholders and other interested parties.

Incinerator Plant in Glenavy

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the progress to date of her Department's involvement in the Rose Energy's proposals for an incinerator plant in Glenavy; and (ii) how much public money her Department is considering offering for this project. (AQW 1017/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI completed a full commercial appraisal of the Rose Energy project in February 2008. Since then, there has been ongoing discussion between Invest NI/DARD/DETI and between Invest NI and the promoters of the project about potential support. In July, the Chairman of Rose Energy wrote to Invest NI indicating that the project costs had escalated significantly due to the rising steel price, Euro exchange rate and increasing global market for biomass energy generation. A review of the commercial appraisal was commissioned and will be completed in October 2008. Following this, further negotiations on a potential support package will be carried out and, depending on the outcome a case for support will be completed and presented for my consideration. DFP approval for financial support would also be required.

Consideration of the amount of public expenditure support is dependent on the outcome of the appraisal and negotiations between Invest NI and the project promoters. It would not be in the public interest to discuss this before the negotiations were completed.

Unemployment in Larne

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the current level of unemployment in the Larne area. (AQW 1066/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: At August 2008 there were 340 Claimant Count Unemployed persons in Larne District Council area, 247 males and 93 females. This corresponds to 1.8% of persons of working age, compared to 2.7% in Northern Ireland as a whole. Larne had the fifth lowest rate of all the 26 District Council areas.

Carbon Usage

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if records are kept of carbon usage; and what plans the Department has to purchase carbon offsets each time a long distance journey is undertaken, as is practiced in other European parliaments. (AQW 1107/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment does not record carbon usage and has no plans to purchase carbon offsets each time a long distance journey is undertaken.

Number of Page Views for DETI Website

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many page views her Department's website received each month, for the last 12 months. (AQW 1113/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The number of page views at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment website for the past 12 months are set out in the table below.

Month	Page Views
Oct 2008	26307 (up to 8th October 2008)
Sep 2008	123285
Aug 2008	126074
Jul 2008	123087
Jun 2008	110083
May 2008	125696
Apr 2008	206327
Mar 2008	201624
Feb 2008	178610
Jan 2008	403284
Dec 2007	335904
Nov 2007	297997
Total	2,258,278

Estimated Uptake of Broadband

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to indicate the estimated uptake of broadband by (i) business users; and (ii) domestic users, broken down by council area. (AQW 1133/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The information requested is not available broken down by council area. Under the terms of the contract this Department has with BT, data on broadband uptake is available for each district exchange area across Northern Ireland, but on a strictly commercial-in-confidence basis. Broadband uptake data for cable operators is also available for Northern Ireland as a whole, but a sub-regional split is not available. At the Northern Ireland level, the uptake

of broadband by (i) business users is estimated to be 46,000; and by (ii) domestic users is estimated to be 330,000. According to recent survey evidence business uptake equates to some 63% of businesses, whilst domestic uptake equates to some 52% of households.

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) what engagements she had with Professor Bain in relation to the review of the location of public sector jobs; and (ii) any offers she made to relocate jobs in her Department.
(AQW 1139/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Professor Bain met DETI officials to discuss the functions of the department and its NDPBs. The options canvassed in Professor Bain's report reflect the Review teams own views.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment what his Department's scientific and technical position is in relation to the causes of climate change.
(AQW 644/09)

The Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 181/09.

Climate Change

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all policy advice given by his Department to other departments in relation to the causes of, and most appropriate policy response, to climate change.
(AQW 645/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I have not been asked by other Departments for policy advice in relation to the causes of, and most appropriate policy response, to climate change.

Planning Service

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the guidance given to Planning Service staff following the change in the definition of Brownfield land outlined in the Review of the Regional Development Strategy.
(AQW 654/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department is currently working on a policy

addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7 'Quality Residential Environments'. This will consider new policy provisions on apartment development and flat conversions, and highlight the need for appropriate design measures to alleviate the risk of localised flooding due to rain and storm run-off. The policy addendum will also reinforce the application of current policy and take account of recent adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy.

Climate Change

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the (i) scientific; and (ii) policy, differences between the approach adopted by his Department in relation to the causes of climate change and those adopted by (a) the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs; and (b) the Scottish Government.
(AQW 677/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department's approach to both the science and policy response to the causes of climate change has not led to any differences with other UK Government Departments.

Flood Risk Management Plan

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the progress of a flood risk management plan for (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) Belfast; and to detail the climate change science upon which this plan is based.
(AQW 678/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department is not responsible for the preparation of a Flood Risk Management Plan for Belfast and Northern Ireland. Flood Risk Management is the responsibility of DARD Rivers Agency and only they could comment on the climate change science upon which the Flood Risk Management Plans are based.

My Department has a published policy in terms of planning for new development in areas of flood risk (PPS15: Planning & Flood Risk). It provides a robust set of land-use policies to deal with the potential for flood risk where new development is proposed. PPS15 seeks to prevent unnecessarily increasing future flood risk by adopting a precautionary approach to the location of new development.

Equality Legislation

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 323/09, to detail how this legislation is applied to applicants who are not resident in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 679/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Equality legislation applies regardless of whether or not the person is resident in Northern Ireland.

Divisional Planning Office

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many enforcement officers are currently employed in each Divisional Planning Office; (ii) the average number of cases being dealt with by each officer; and (iii) for his assessment of the caseload compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. (AQW 699/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department has provided the following information on (i) how many enforcement officers are currently employed in each Divisional Planning Officer and (ii) the average number of cases being dealt with by each officer.

Division	No. of Enforcement Staff	Average No of Cases being dealt with by each officer
Ballymena	5	104
Belfast	8	125
Craigavon	8	100
Downpatrick	7	317
Headquarters	6	71
Londonderry	8	120
Omagh	5	95

At this time my Department does not hold any statistics in relation to local authority enforcement cases in Great Britain.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all prosecutions for damage to Areas of Special Scientific Interest since 1 April 2001. (AQW 700/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Details of prosecutions for damage to Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) are given in the following table:

Defendants Name	ASSI	Fine
Mr McShane	White Park Bay	£300 plus £88 costs
Mr McLernon	Lough Neagh & Lough Beg	£1,000 plus £31
Mr Cooke	Strangford Lough Part 3	£3,000 plus £85 costs
Mr & Mrs Steele	Lough Neagh	£200

Defendants Name	ASSI	Fine
Mr McGrogan	Lough Beg	£500 plus £85 costs
Mr Foster	Knockninny Hill	£20,000 reduced on appeal to £4,000 with restoration order for damaged lands.
Mr Coleman	Lough Neagh & Lough Beg SPA	Bound over 2yrs
Sandycove Holiday Homes Ltd	Outer Ards	£300 plus £18 costs

Planning Office and Site Meetings

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many (i) planning office meetings; and (ii) site meetings, were held in the period 1 April 2007 to 31 July 2008, broken down by council area. (AQW 791/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I regret in order to provide figures for the number of office and site meetings a manual search of all files in the Divisions would have to be carried out. This could not be done in the time available and would incur a disproportionate cost.

Single Dwellings in the Countryside

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many applications for single dwellings in the countryside, submitted in the Down District Council area before (i) 1 February 2005; and (ii) 16 March 2006, have yet to be determined. (AQW 792/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The number of applications for single dwellings in the countryside in the Down District Council area, submitted before (i) 1 February 2005; and (ii) 16 March 2006 and yet to be determined, is set out in the attached table.

Application Id	Date Received	Development Type	Proposal
R/2004/0748/O*	17/05/2004	Erection of Building(s)	Rural style dwelling.
R/2004/1732/O*	14/10/2004	Erection of Building(s)	Site for dwelling and detached garage
R/2004/2096/O*	08/12/2004	Replacement	Renewal of outline permission R/2001/1397.

Application Id	Date Received	Development Type	Proposal
R/2005/0438/F*	01/03/2005	Change of Use	Restoration & Conversion to Single Residential Dwelling.
R/2006/0189/RM*	20/02/2006	Erection of Building(s)	Erection of new bungalow of rural character

Source: August 2008 Outstanding Report

* F, RM and O represent Full, Reserved Matters and Outline applications.

Caveat

These figures have been extracted from a live dataset 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.

Enforcement Case Files

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many enforcement case files (i) have been opened since April 2001; and (ii) have arisen as a result of (a) detection by Planning Service staff; (b) a complaint by a member of the public; and (c) a complaint by a public representative. (AQW 793/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The number of enforcement files that have been opened since 2001 is 26,593. These figures must be considered in terms of our current live enforcement caseload which as of September 2008 stands at 5570. Clearly a large proportion of the 26, 593 cases opened since 2001 have been dealt with and resolved by my Department.

In relation to points (ii) (a-c), the current system of electronic data retrieval – 20/20 – does not record applications in sufficient detail to provide the information requested.

To provide accurate figures for the period in question can only be done by a manual search of all our existing files. This information would not be available in the time specified and would incur disproportionate costs.

Drainage

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that building does not occur on flood plains; and where building does take place, that adequate drainage is provided. (AQW 800/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My Department's general policy approach to dealing

with flooding is contained within Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15 'Planning and Flood Risk' which adopts a precautionary approach to decision making.

My Department will consult DARD Rivers Agency on planning applications on flood risk and continues to liaise with DARD Rivers Agency on planning and flood matters. Where it is clear mitigation measures are insufficient to offset any risk my Department may refuse planning permission. Northern Ireland Water's role in the consultation process where new development is proposed has been to provide advice on the availability of water and sewerage infrastructure to service the development.

My officials are continuing to liaise with Rivers Agency officials regarding consultation in areas of flood risk. As part of this process Planning Service will be contacting NIW to clarify if any of the recent flood events has identified any specific areas at particular risk from flooding associated with existing storm drainage infrastructure.

Roads Safety Strategy

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on his Department's performance in relation to the targets set out in the Roads Safety Strategy 2002-2012. (AQW 801/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The 2012 road safety targets are to reduce by 33% the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads and by 50% the number of children killed or seriously injured (from the 1996-2000 average). These would represent reductions from 1750 people per annum to fewer than 1200 and from 250 children to fewer than 125.

The latest published statistics show that in 2007, 1,210 people were killed or seriously injured on our roads, 106 of whom were children. These represent reductions of 31% and 57% against the respective targets.

Emergency Relief Payments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the total amount of money paid in emergency relief payments as a result of the recent floods, broken down by district council area. (AQW 810/09)

The Minister of the Environment: A total of 1,911 claims have been received by 24 district councils under the current "Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance", of which 1,519 were successful. Details for each district council are set out in the attached table.

The total expenditure on the Scheme to date is £1,519,000. Councils will be reimbursed for additional

costs incurred by them but the Department does not yet have details of this expenditure.

Council	Grant Applications	No. of successful claims
Antrim	201	176
Ards	6	5
Armagh	13	8
Ballymena	164	151
Ballymoney	15	11
Banbridge	113	106
Belfast	462	333
Carrickfergus	4	4
Castlereagh	101	75
Coleraine	5	3
Cookstown	8	8
Craigavon	153	119
Londonderry	0	0
Down	171	127
Dungannon & South Tyrone	21	17
Fermanagh	3	1
Larne	8	6
Limavady	1	1
Lisburn	193	145
Magherafelt	24	24
Moyle	2	1
Newry & Mourne	52	45
Newtownabbey	163	131
North Down	10	7
Omagh	18	15
Strabane	0	0
Total	1,911	1,519

Emergency Relief Payments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the total amount of money paid in emergency relief payments as a result of the flooding that occurred in June 2007, broken down by district council area. (AQW 812/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The total amount of money paid in emergency relief payments, as a result of the June 2007 flooding, was £1,419,099. This figure includes £1,181,000 paid to individual

householders, which represents 1181 successful applications. A balance of £238,099 related to payments made to district councils to cover their additional costs for carrying out the operation. The Department does not hold a record of the total number of claims submitted to councils. The details for individual councils are set out in the attached table.

Council	No. of successful claims	Total amount paid £
Antrim	4	4,000
Ards	17	17,393
Armagh	6	6,000
Ballymena	11	11,000
Ballymoney	0	0
Banbridge	0	0
Belfast	609	827,626
Carrickfergus	0	0
Castlereagh	354	366,096
Coleraine	6	6,325
Cookstown	5	5,000
Craigavon	0	0
Londonderry	0	0
Down	17	17,536
Dungannon & South Tyrone	7	7,370
Fermanagh	0	0
Larne	9	9,000
Limavady	2	2,000
Lisburn	8	8,000
Magherafelt	3	3,000
Moyle	17	18,716
Newry & Mourne	5	5,000
Newtownabbey	1	1,000
North Down	3	3,000
Omagh	95	99,037
Strabane	2	2,000
Total	1,181	1,419,099

Emergency Relief Payments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many claims for emergency relief payments (i) were made; and (ii) were successful, in relation to the flooding that occurred in June 2007, broken down by district council area. (AQW 813/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The total amount of money paid in emergency relief payments, as a result of the June 2007 flooding, was £1,419,099. This figure includes £1,181,000 paid to individual householders, which represents 1181 successful applications. A balance of £238,099 related to payments made to district councils to cover their additional costs for carrying out the operation. The Department does not hold a record of the total number of claims submitted to councils. The details for individual councils are set out in the attached table.

Council	No. of successful claims	Total amount paid £
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Ballymena	11	11,000
Ballymoney	0	0
Banbridge	0	0
Belfast	609	827,626
Carrickfergus	0	0
Castlereagh	354	366,096
Coleraine	6	6,325
Cookstown	5	5,000
Craigavon	0	0
Londonderry	0	0
Down	17	17,536
Dungannon & South Tyrone	7	7,370
Fermanagh	0	0
Larne	9	9,000
Limavady	2	2,000
Lisburn	8	8,000
Magherafelt	3	3,000
Moyle	17	18,716
Newry & Mourne	5	5,000
Newtownabbey	1	1,000
North Down	3	3,000
Omagh	95	99,037
Strabane	2	2,000
Total	1,181	1,419,099

Emergency Relief Payments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many claims for emergency relief payments (i) were made; and (ii) were successful, in relation to the recent flooding, broken down by district council area. (AQW 814/09)

The Minister of the Environment: A total of 1,911 claims have been received by 24 district councils under the current "Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance", of which 1,519 were successful. Details for each district council are set out in the attached table.

The total expenditure on the Scheme to date is £1,519,000. Councils will be reimbursed for additional costs incurred by them but the Department does not yet have details of this expenditure.

Council	Grant Applications	No. of successful claims
Antrim	201	176
Ards	6	5
Armagh	13	8
Ballymena	164	151
Ballymoney	15	11
Banbridge	113	106
Belfast	462	333
Carrickfergus	4	4
Castlereagh	101	75
Coleraine	5	3
Cookstown	8	8
Craigavon	153	119
Londonderry	0	0
Down	171	127
Dungannon & South Tyrone	21	17
Fermanagh	3	1
Larne	8	6
Limavady	1	1
Lisburn	193	145
Magherafelt	24	24
Moyle	2	1
Newry & Mourne	52	45
Newtownabbey	163	131
North Down	10	7
Omagh	18	15
Strabane	0	0
Total	1,911	1,519

Climate Change

Mr Ford asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 181/09, whether the view expressed is in line with his Department's assessment of the link between human activity and climate change. (AQW 827/09)

The Minister of the Environment: As I said in my answer to AQW 181/09, I believe there is still considerable debate on the degree to which climate change is caused by human activity.

Perfecseal

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment if he is aware of concerns on a planning application which could have a negative impact on the Perfecseal plant in Derry/Londonderry; and to detail what steps he is taking to address these concerns and safeguard the plant. (AQW 834/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I am aware of the planning application and of the concerns raised by Perfecseal Ltd in relation to the potential impact the proposal may have on their continuing operation. Consideration of the planning application is ongoing and it is understood that Perfecseal Ltd intend to submit further information in support of their objection in the near future.

I can assure you that in processing the planning application, careful consideration will be given to all the relevant material considerations including the relevant policies and the impact on adjacent industrial enterprises before a decision is reached.

Perfecseal

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment what meetings and correspondence he has had with management of Perfecseal in the last year; and to outline the key areas raised in these engagements. (AQW 835/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I have received two requests to meet with Perfecseal. I met with representatives from Perfecseal on one occasion and they outlined the background to their move to the site at Campsie, the company's expansion plans and their concerns about the proposed waste management facility.

Introduction of Environmental Taxes

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the introduction of environmental taxes. (AQW 846/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Taxation in Northern Ireland is a reserved matter and the responsibility of the Treasury.

Planning Service

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many enforcement cases have been discontinued since 2001 as a result of Planning Service staff failing to serve an enforcement notice before the (i) 4 year; and (ii) 10 year, rule came into force. (AQW 852/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The information held by Planning Service on its computer system does not include a facility related specifically to time limits. Unfortunately the only way this information could be ascertained would be through a manual search which could not be done in the time available and would incur disproportionate costs.

Epic Project

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to give details (i) of the costs to date associated with development of the Epic Project; and (ii) changes to the original specification for the project. (AQW 858/09)

The Minister of the Environment:

(i) Costs to Date Associated with Development of the ePIC Project.

- The project is being delivered by a consortium led by Hewlett Packard (HP), with BT and IDOX (formerly known as CAPs). The capital expenditure for the project per our audited accounts to 31 March 2008 was £7.39m. In addition, non capital expenditure relating to the project was £1.29m up to 31 March 2008. These amounts do not include Planning Service staff costs in relation to the development and delivery of the project.
- Further capital investment will be required to achieve full implementation and work on completion of a revised Business Case is ongoing. This further capital investment is required to address the following issues:
 - Additional development work to make ePIC fully compliant with Northern Ireland legislation; and
 - Essential improvements needed to e-forms, document scanning facility and the internet portal.

(ii) Changes to the Original Specification for the Project

- The scope of the ePIC business functionalities has not changed since the beginning of the project. The technical components used to deliver the business benefits highlighted in the ePIC business case have been revised to take into account time and value-for-money constraints. The ePIC benefits remain unchanged:
 - Make optimum use of ICT to re-engineer, streamline and/or automate the current Planning Service business processes and facilitate changes in these processes;
 - Provide a 'portal' for online submission of planning applications;
 - Facilitate online issuing of property certificates;
 - Enable faster, quality decision-making;
 - Improve access to information throughout core Planning Service processes;
 - Improve information sharing with consultees; and
 - Improve management of the planning service processes.

Noise Nuisance

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment how many prosecutions for noise nuisance there have been in Carrickfergus Borough Council in the last 5 years. (AQW 871/09)

The Minister of the Environment: There have been no prosecutions for noise nuisance in Carrickfergus Borough Council over the last five years.

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/local_environmental_issues/noise/complaint_statistics_for_ni.htm

Public Transport Services

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) all the private operators who currently offer public transport services; and (ii) what routes they operate. (AQW 877/09)

The Minister of the Environment: There are 29 Road Service Licensees that offer stage carriage and/or express transport services.

1. Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway Company T/A The Swilly Bus Service
 - Londonderry – Culmore Point
2. Mairead McAnulty & Hugh McAnulty T/A Yellow Line Coach Hire
 - Warrenpoint – Newry Market
 - Warrenpoint Town Centre – Ballydesland Road, Warrenpoint
 - Burren Chapel, Warrenpoint – Upper Dromore Road, Warrenpoint
 - Trevor Hill, Newry – Crieve Road, Newry
 - Church Street, Rostrevor – University of Ulster Jordanstown
3. Mr Francis McGinn T/A McGinn's Coach Hire
 - Rathlin Pier – West Lighthouse, Rathlin Island
 - Ballycastle – Belfast (Express Service)
4. Chambers Coach Hire Ltd
 - Ballygruby, Moneymore - Cookstown HS, Coolnafrankie Estate
 - Dunronan Road, Moneymore - Loup PS
 - Holy Trinity HS, Cookstown – Dunamore
 - Moneymore – Tamlaght
 - High Street, Moneymore - Cookstown HS, Coolnafrankie Estate
 - Moneyhaw Road, Moneymore – Magherafelt
 - Lough Fea Road, Cookstown – Churchtown
 - Beechway, Cookstown - Lissan Primary School, Cookstown
 - Moneymore - Savile Row, Castledawson
 - Moneymore - Desmond's Factory, Dungannon
 - Moneymore – Slaughtneill
 - Rockview Park, Moneymore – Loup, Moneymore
 - Magherafelt - Queen's University, Belfast
 - James Street, Cookstown - Queen's University, Belfast
 - James Street, Cookstown - Antrim Area Hospital
 - Dungannon - Viva bingo, Cookstown
 - Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt - Viva bingo, Cookstown
 - High Street, Moneymore - Cookstown High School
 - Kilrea Square - Empire bingo, Union Road, Magherafelt
 - Jonnys Corner, Draperstown - The Elk Bar, Hillhead Road, Toome
 - The Square, Kilrea - The Elk Bar, Hillhead Road, Toome
 - Randalstown Main Street - Empire bingo, Union Street, Magherafelt
 - Ardboe Hall, Killycanavan Road, Ballymaguigan - Islandhill, Ballymaguigan

- Moneymeena - Viva bingo, Cookstown
 - Moneymore – Foyle Street, Londonderry (Express Service)
 - Moneymore – Glengall Street, Belfast (Express Service)
 - Omagh, Bus Station – Belfast, Europa Bus Centre (Express Service)
 - Londonderry – Belfast (Express Service)
 - Moneymore – Belfast (Express Service)
 - Foyle Street, Londonderry – Belfast (Express Service)
5. Gerard, Elizabeth & Paul McCauley T/A McCauley Coaches
Garrison – Univeristy of Ulster, Jordanstown
6. Patrick, Sean & Dorothy Logan T/A Logan Executive Travel
- Dunloy Road, Ballymoney – Ballymoney Town Hall
 - Rogans Shop, Rasharkin – Ballymoney Town Hall
 - Main Street, Cloughmills – Ballymoney Town Hall
 - Loughguile – Ballymoney Town Hall
7. Robert Darragh T/A Darragh's Coaches
- Cloughmills – Kilrea Bingo
 - Rasharkin – Clady Bingo
8. Gerald Cordner & Bernard Lyness T/A Lyness Coaches
- Lurgan – Moypark, Portadown
9. Adrian McDermott T/A McDermott Coach Hire
- The Square, Portaferry – Castle Park, Bangor
10. Patricia Mary Sheridan, Gerald Sheridan T/A Sheridan Coaches
- Crossmaglen – Queens University & University of Ulster, Jordanstown (Express Service)
11. John Cyril Matthew Bell T/A Ards Tours
- Dundonald High School – North Down Tech, Bloomfield Road, Bangor
 - Tullycarnet – Dundonald High School, Dundonald
12. Fredrick Ferguson T/A Cavehill Coaches
- Maghaberry Village – Crumlin High School, Crumlin
13. Slo-Coaches Ltd
- Greencastle Street, Kilkeel – Buttercrane Area, Newry
14. Ronnie Bullick T/A RJG Bullick Coach Hire
- Lissize Avenue, Rathfriland – Iveagh Primary School, Castle Hill
15. Colin Biggs T/A Biggs Coaches
- Cornmill Centre, Coalisland – Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown
 - Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown – Cornmill Centre, Coalisland
16. Eamonn Rooney T/A Rooney International Coach Hire
- Hilltown Square – Queen's University, Belfast
 - Stonebridge, Newry – Coleraine University (Express Service)
 - Queen's University, Belfast – Coleraine University, Portstewart (Express Service)
 - Hilltown – Jury's Hotel, Great Victoria Sreet, Belfast (Express Service)
 - Hilltown – University of Ulster Jordanstown (Express Service)
17. Daniel J Monaghan T/A Dial-A-Bus/Titanic City Tours/Diplomat Car & Coach Hire
- Elmwood Avenue, Belfast - Queens Road Science Park, Belfast
18. Sean Patterson T/A Ace Coaches
- Granville/Ballygawley Road/Newell Road, Dungannon – Moypark – Wilanco Industrial Estate, Dungannon
 - Donaghmore Road/Thomas Road – Granville Industrial Estate, Dungannon
 - Dungannon Square – Moypark factory, Killyman Road, Dungannon
19. Francis Bosco McAlinden T/A B&C Coaches
- Mayfair Business Centre, Portadown – Victoria Centre, Chichester Street, Belfast
 - Mayfair Business Centre, Garvaghy Road, Portadown – Glenavon House Hotel, Drum Road, Cookstown
 - Bank of Ireland, High Street, Portadown
 - Costcutters, Garvaghy Road, Portadown – Rushmere Shopping Centre, Craigavon
 - Costcutters, Garvaghy Road, Portadown – Glengannon Hotel, Dungannon
 - Bank of Ireland, High Street, Craigavon –Portadown, Town Centre
 - Ashbrooke, Portadown – St Catherine's College, Armagh
 - Maghery – Ashbrooke, Portadown
 - Mayfair Business Centre, Portadown - IKEA
 - The Mall, Armagh – City Hall, Belfast (Express Service)

20. Joseph Lavelle, Lee Lavelle & Paul Johnston T/A Belfast City Sightseeing/Belfast City Coaches
- HSS Stena Terminal, Belfast – Castle Place, Belfast
 - University Street, Belfast – St Mary’s College, Falls Road, Belfast
21. West Belfast Taxis (Transport) Ltd
- Stewartstown Road, Belfast – Lagmore Drive, Belfast
 - Whiterock Road, Belfast – Monagh-By-Pass, Belfast
 - Falls Road, Belfast – Junction at Stewartstown Road, Belfast
 - Falls Road, Belfast – Ladybrook Cross, Belfast
 - Falls Road/Glen Road Junction, Belfast – Suffolk Road, Belfast
 - King Street, Belfast – Glen Road, Belfast
 - Andersonstown Road, Belfast – Upper Dunmurry Lane, Belfast
 - Andersonstown Road, Belfast – Bell Street Road, Belfast
 - Castle Street, Belfast – Estoril Park, Belfast
22. Stephen Davidson T/A Davidson Coach Hire
- Dunavon Park, Dungannon – Moypark, Killyman Road, Dungannon
 - George Street, Dungannon – Moypark, Killyman Road, Dungannon
23. Anthony Leo (Liam) Murray T/A Murray’s Coaches
- Drumcree Road, Portadown – Moypark Factory, Seagoe Industrial Estate, Portadown
24. Maura Breen T/A A 2 B Coaches
- Garvaghy Road, Portadown– Bank Disco, Newry
25. Airporter Ltd
- Londonderry to Belfast International and Belfast City Airports via Dungiven
26. Randal Carberry T/A Carberry’s Coaches
- Courthouse car park, Lurgan – Killeen, Newry
 - Courthouse car park, Lurgan
 - Cricket Club, Armagh – Rathfriland Road, Banbridge
 - Portadown – Rathfriland Road, Banbridge
27. B & I Transport Ltd, McGread Omagh
Omagh – Portrush
28. Eamonn Duff T/A Duff’s Coaches
- William Street, Lurgan – Moypark, Seagoe Industrial Estate, Craigavon

29. Derry Taxis Ltd
- Galliagh – Shantallow
 - Ballymagroarty/Hazelbank/The Glen & Foyle Springs
 - Greater Shantallow Area
 - Creggan/Rosemount/Brandy Well

Ards & Down Area Plan

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to (i) explain the delay in the publication of the Ards & Down area plan; and (ii) confirm when it will be published. (AQW 918/09)

The Minister of the Environment: As previously advised, the Department received the Planning Appeals Commission’s report on the public inquiry, requested by Planning Service to hear objections into the draft Ards and Down Plan, at the end of March 2008, later than was originally anticipated.

The specific content of the PAC report is confidential and can only be made available at adoption so there is a limit to what I can discuss at this stage. I can say, however, that it has raised a number of complex issues, which are linked to broader regional policy considerations and also contains a number of recommendations on the adoption process.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to finalise our consideration of the PAC report as early as originally programmed, due to the complexity of the issues involved. That said, I can assure you that considerable progress has been made and we anticipate having the remaining issues resolved by the end of October.

The Department is confident that a final Plan for Ards and Down will be published by the end of March 2009, in line with our Business Plan Objective.

Lecale Area

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to; (i) outline the current status of the Lecale area of outstanding natural beauty; and (ii) what plans he has to review the status of the area. (AQW 920/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Lecale Coast was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1967 under the Amenity Lands Act (1965). NIEA is currently conducting a review of Lecale AONB in conjunction with a review of Strangford Lough AONB which will be completed by the end of this year. The Agency will use the findings of the review to develop proposals for the future of Lecale AONB.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to identify what measures have been taken to prevent further pollution incidents in the Quoile River, Downpatrick; and (ii) to outline the recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and its predecessor the Environment and Heritage Service to resolve this matter. (AQW 977/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency works to reduce the number of pollution incidents occurring in Northern Ireland, including the Quoile River, through a range of proactive initiatives including:-

- Education about the effects and consequences of pollution;
- Advisory publications;
- Offering advice at site meetings;
- Promoting good environmental practices through responses to planning consultations;
- Pollution prevention programmes;
- Promoting sustainable drainage systems; and
- Conducting environmental audits.

The Agency has formed nine Catchment Stakeholder Groups (CSGs) in Northern Ireland which meet twice a year. The Strangford and Lecale CSG covers the Quoile area. The Group met on 23 April 2008 and next meets with the Agency on 4 November 2008.

The CSG meetings have been successful in helping to encourage local people to get involved in water management and have helped to improve awareness of local pollution problems and the reporting methods.

Draft River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), which detail measures which will be implemented to improve water quality across Northern Ireland, including the Quoile River, will be issued for public consultation from December 2008 until June 2009. During this consultation period, NIEA will actively engage with local CSGs on key local water management issues and use this feedback to prioritise the issues and implement solutions.

At a local level these measures include an upgrade to the Downpatrick Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) which is currently underway. This is a £9.7 million investment by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) which is due to be completed in June 2010. As well as bringing benefits to the local economy and environment, the upgrade will ensure that the WWTW in Downpatrick complies with all current national and European regulations.

NIEA operates a freephone pollution response system that is available to the public at all times. The Agency also has a number of Water Quality Investigators who are actively working in the Quoile River System to investigate pollution concerns and prosecute polluters where appropriate.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment (i) if the Northern Ireland Environment Agency investigated reasons for low oxygen levels in the Quoile River, Downpatrick; and (ii) to detail the outcome of that investigation. (AQW 979/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, in conjunction with the Fisheries Conservancy Board and the Agri-Food and Bio-Sciences Institute, undertook an extensive chemical sampling programme of the Quoile River following the fish kill on 29 August 2008. The results did not identify the presence of any pollutants however they did detect low levels of oxygen throughout the Quoile Pondage.

The Quoile pondage contains saline water from Strangford Lough and freshwater from the Quoile River. Because the saline water is more dense than the freshwater, two distinct layers are formed in the system with the freshwater flowing over the saline water. The oxygen in the lower saline layer becomes depleted because of the breakdown of organic matter in the river sediments but, normally, there is still plenty of oxygen in the upper freshwater layer which allows fish to survive.

Following heavy rainfall and flooding, which also introduced additional organic matter into the pondage, the two layers mixed. This caused the available oxygen levels to fall which resulted in the fish kill.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment what potential negative impact the failure to reinstate the representative of the Irish government onto the Advisory Committees of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, will have on the protection and monitoring of migratory birds. (AQW 1037/09)

The Minister of the Environment: None.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment what potential negative impact the failure to reinstate the representative of the Irish government onto the Advisory Committees of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, will have on the protection and monitoring of native birds on the island of Ireland. (AQW 1038/09)

The Minister of the Environment: None.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment what potential negative impact the failure to reinstate the representative of the Irish government onto the Advisory Committees of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, will have on the pollution of streams and rivers that flow in both jurisdictions. (AQW 1039/09)

The Minister of the Environment: None.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment what potential negative impact the failure to reinstate the representative of the Irish government onto the Advisory Committees of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, will have on the protection of birds, animals and insects under threat. (AQW 1040/09)

The Minister of the Environment: None.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment what potential negative impact the failure to reinstate the representative of the Irish government onto the Advisory Committees of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, will have on the prevention of fly tipping in rural areas. (AQW 1041/09)

The Minister of the Environment: None.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Armagh City and District Council

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he is aware of the shortfall in rates

revenue being experienced by Armagh City and District Council; and if he will discuss remedial options, such as transitional relief, with council officials. (AQW 462/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): For the year 2008-2009 Armagh City and District Council is due to receive £12,535,526 from the Department of Finance and Personnel for estimated revenues raised from district rates.

Land and Property Services has, through improved in-year monitoring arrangements, reviewed the Council's estimated income for 2008-2009 and has found that the Council is likely to raise £600,000 less than originally forecast. The review is based on rateable values in the Valuation Lists at 30 June 2008, as well as losses and the cost of collection at 31 March 2008.

I am advised that losses, for example, vacancies, and the cost of collection have increased significantly since the original estimate was provided in December 2007. In addition, a number of military bases are now considered closed, which also affects the forecast. However, the revised figures remain an estimate based on a worst case scenario and the position could change by the end of the financial year.

Land and Property Services will undertake a further review of the Council's projected income for 2008-2009 at the end of December 2008 and will discuss this with the Council.

Rating legislation confirms that any repayments of rate revenue falling due must be paid by the end of the financial year in which they become due. Providing transitional relief as has been suggested is not, therefore, an option, as this would be contrary to statutory obligations. Any shortfall in revenue will be dealt with in the finalisation process in mid-2009 and repayment made by March 2010 at the latest. However, it is too early to predict exactly what the Council's revenue position will be at 31 March 2009. Officials from Land and Property Services will be in a better position to discuss this following the December review.

Mr John Wilkinson, the Chief Executive of Land and Property Services, met Council officials on 2 October 2008 to discuss a range of issues including a special exercise on vacant property designed to minimise the amount of rates foregone in the 2008-2009 year. I asked him to use that meeting to discuss all possible options to increase the Council's revenue income between now and 31 March 2009 and thereby reduce to a minimum the potential for claw back in the 2009 finalisation process. I also asked him to consider, in conjunction with the Council, a further interim review of the revenue estimate for 2008/2009 based on figures at the end of September 2008.

Lone Pensioner Allowance

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what the present level of uptake is for Lone Pensioners Allowance in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) each local council area, detailing the number of recipients and the total monetary value; and how these figures compare to his Department's original estimate of the level of uptake for (a) Northern Ireland; and (b) each local council area. (AQW 615/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Lone Pensioner Allowance is administered jointly by Land and Property Services and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. At 19 September 2008 19,564 had been received; 16,640 by Land and Property Services, and 2,924 by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Table 1 shows, by council area, the number of recipients and the monetary value of the claims processed by Land and Property Services.

Table 2 shows the Northern Ireland Housing Executive applications and their monetary value, although these are not available by council area. The monetary values represent annual figures on the basis that these claims will continue in payment until the end of the financial year.

The Department did not estimate the level of uptake by council area, but estimated that for Northern Ireland as a whole the uptake could be in the range of 50,000, equating to between £2 and £3 million. The total amount of relief awarded under the Lone Pensioner Scheme to date is in the region of £2m.

TABLE 1. CLAIMS FOR LONE PENSIONER ALLOWANCE PROCESSED BY LAND AND PROPERTY SERVICES SHOWING MONETARY VALUE.

Council	Applications processed	Monetary value £
Antrim	262	39,961.69
Ards	635	104,947.93
Armagh	349	48,195.42
Ballymena	529	83,092.72
Ballymoney	182	26,768.70
Banbridge	230	31,550.28
Belfast	2060	331,099.18
Carrickfergus	339	50,394.36
Castlereagh	902	127,428.67
Coleraine	548	91,055.39
Cookstown	122	16,574.33
Craigavon	495	66,896.53
Derry	423	67,272.98

Council	Applications processed	Monetary value £
Down	444	75,060.24
Dungannon & Sth Tyrone	203	27,401.29
Fermanagh	369	46,146.74
Larne	273	35,883.14
Limavady	129	19,139.32
Lisburn	816	128,937.06
Magherafelt	142	17,542.42
Moyle	105	17,854.17
Newry & Mourne	416	60,722.56
Newtownabbey	778	114,443.61
North Down	1051	173,085.68
Omagh	256	34,892.70
Strabane	125	15,335.23
Total	12,183	1,851,682.34

Lone Pensioner Allowance

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel the take up of the Lone Pensioner Allowance in the last 12 months, broken down by constituency. (AQW 840/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Lone Pensioner Allowance is administered jointly by Land and Property Services and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Since the introduction of this rate relief in April 2008, 19,564 applications have been received - Land and Property Services has received 16,640 applications, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has received 2,924.

While a breakdown of this information by constituency is not available, the table below shows, by council area, the number of applications (12,183) which, to date, have been processed by Land and Property Services.

Table showing applications for Lone Pensioner Allowance received and processed by Land and Property Services to date, broken down by council area.

Council	Applications processed by LPS to date
Antrim	262
Ards	635
Armagh	349
Ballymena	529
Ballymoney	182

Council	Applications processed by LPS to date
Banbridge	230
Belfast	2,060
Carrickfergus	339
Castlereagh	902
Coleraine	548
Cookstown	122
Craigavon	495
Derry	423
Down	444
Dungannon & S.Tyrone	203
Fermanagh	369
Larne	273
Limavady	129
Lisburn	816
Magherafelt	142
Moyle	105
Newry & Mourne	416
Newtownabbey	778
North Down	1,051
Omagh	256
Strabane	125
Total	12,183

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms Ni Chuilín asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide details of the neighbourhood renewal posts and services that his Department will fund from March 2009. (AQW 886/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: DFP does not take forward any initiatives in order to provide Neighbourhood Renewal services. Other departments may take forward such initiatives and services.

Unclaimed Asset Scheme

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the unclaimed asset scheme. (AQW 966/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The unclaimed assets/dormant accounts scheme presents the citizens of Northern Ireland with a real opportunity. It represents a new and innovative concept for the setting of local priorities for distribution of funds

currently locked in dormant bank and building society accounts for the benefit of the community under the broad heading of social and environmental purposes whilst ensuring the rights of the account holder to reclaim their money remain protected.

Whilst it is unclear how much money is available, I believe that it is important that all interested parties should have the opportunity to be involved in the establishment of the spending priorities for Northern Ireland. Subject to Executive agreement, I am proposing the launch of a 12 week consultation on the Dormant Accounts Scheme during November.

Number of Births Broken Down by Mother's Place of Birth

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, for each of the last 3 years, the number of births in each parliamentary constituency, broken down by the mother's country of birth. (AQW 975/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The tables attached give the number of births registered by parliamentary constituency, broken down by country of birth groupings for the mother, for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007.

BIRTHS BY MOTHER'S COUNTRY OF BIRTH GROUPING AND PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, 2005

Parliamentary Constituency	Mother's Country of Birth Grouping					All Births
	Northern Ireland	Rest of UK	Irish Republic	A8 Countries ¹	All Other Countries ²	
Belfast East	767	52	12	2	65	898
Belfast North	982	51	13	5	47	1,098
Belfast South	707	63	39	12	136	957
Belfast West	1,087	24	20	3	51	1,185
East Antrim	946	61	14	2	41	1,064
East Londonderry	857	105	30	6	43	1,041
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	989	82	104	24	51	1,250
Foyle	1,288	99	97	2	42	1,528
Lagan Valley	1,160	131	26	5	83	1,405
Mid Ulster	1,201	60	32	10	31	1,334
Newry and Armagh	1,307	82	113	17	50	1,569
North Antrim	1,221	78	12	2	50	1,363
North Down	761	92	16	1	54	924
South Antrim	1,154	127	23	6	55	1,365
South Down	1,276	115	52	2	38	1,483

Parliamentary Constituency	Mother's Country of Birth Grouping					All Births
	Northern Ireland	Rest of UK	Irish Republic	A8 Countries ¹	All Other Countries ²	
Strangford	1,028	65	13	5	58	1,169
Upper Bann	1,307	87	30	8	78	1,510
West Tyrone	1,001	88	59	6	31	1,185
Northern Ireland	19,039	1,462	705	118	1,004	22,328

- 1 A8 countries refer to the eight Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in May 2004, (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).
- 2 Includes a small number of births where the mother's country of birth was not known.

BIRTHS BY MOTHER'S COUNTRY OF BIRTH GROUPING AND PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, 2006

Parliamentary Constituency	Mother's Country of Birth Grouping					All Births
	Northern Ireland	Rest of UK	Irish Republic	A8 Countries ¹	All Other Countries ²	
Belfast East	760	65	13	16	59	913
Belfast North	1,042	53	22	9	56	1,182
Belfast South	686	66	39	22	146	959
Belfast West	1,138	39	15	3	45	1,240
East Antrim	935	62	17	3	35	760
East Londonderry	942	86	27	21	53	1,129
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	1,065	89	109	72	52	1,387
Foyle	1,291	94	87	6	52	1,530
Lagan Valley	1,191	110	20	19	72	1,412
Mid Ulster	1,172	60	35	57	36	1,360
Newry and Armagh	1,341	88	134	48	41	1,652
North Antrim	1,201	92	24	13	41	1,371
North Down	766	124	16	10	77	993
South Antrim	1,188	126	17	12	68	1,411
South Down	1,379	106	51	15	49	1,600
Strangford	1,031	74	14	5	64	1,188
Upper Bann	1,428	72	31	46	86	1,663
West Tyrone	1,055	71	65	13	26	1,230
Northern Ireland	19,611	1,477	736	390	1,058	23,272

- 1 A8 countries refer to the eight Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in May 2004, (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).
- 2 Includes a small number of births where the mother's country of birth was not known.

BIRTHS BY MOTHER'S COUNTRY OF BIRTH GROUPING AND PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, 2007

Parliamentary Constituency	Mother's Country of Birth Grouping					All Births
	Northern Ireland	Rest of UK	Irish Republic	A8 Countries ¹	All Other Countries ²	
Belfast East	827	59	13	34	85	1,018
Belfast North	1,039	64	18	30	57	1,208
Belfast South	771	69	38	61	166	1,105
Belfast West	1,188	43	20	15	52	1,318
East Antrim	913	77	11	8	52	1,061
East Londonderry	937	78	29	51	46	1,141
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	1,056	80	103	105	71	1,415
Foyle	1,331	83	91	12	60	1,577
Lagan Valley	1,319	108	22	25	77	1,551
Mid Ulster	1,261	60	33	65	37	1,456
Newry and Armagh	1,335	88	143	90	54	1,710
North Antrim	1,257	80	9	42	36	1,424
North Down	875	92	18	5	66	1,056
South Antrim	1,286	121	21	52	76	1,556
South Down	1,415	115	50	40	47	1,667
Strangford	1,041	79	13	13	62	1,208
Upper Bann	1,463	86	35	97	102	1,783
West Tyrone	1,011	74	56	30	26	1,197
Northern Ireland	20,325	1,456	723	775	1,172	24,451

- 1 A8 countries refer to the eight Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in May 2004, (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).
 - 2 Includes a small number of births where the mother's country of birth was not known.
- P Provisional data

Number of Page Views for DFP Website

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many page views his Department's website received each month, for the last 12 months.
(AQW 1110/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table shows the number of page views per month, for the last 12 months, for the website www.dfpni.gov.uk.

Month	Page Views
October 2007	95,442
November 2007	81,845
December 2007	62,970
January 2008	88,179
February 2008	84,479
March 2008	69,562
April 2008	107,238
May 2008	70,858
June 2008	84,596
July 2008	75,802
August 2008	80,962
September 2008	136,732
Total	1,038,665

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) what engagements he had with Professor Bain in relation to the review of the location of public sector jobs; and (ii) any offers he made to relocate jobs in his Department. (AQW 1135/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Review of Policy on the Location of Public Sector Jobs was commissioned by the Department of Finance and Personnel on behalf of the Executive. As the commissioning Minister I met with Professor Bain on two occasions to discuss general progress on the Review. While I have made no offers to relocate jobs in my department it is evident from the report that two organisations within the Department of Finance and Personnel – Land and Property Services and the Northern Ireland Civil Service Shared Services – are included in the pool of candidates for relocation.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

New Fire Station in Cushendall

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the provision of a new fire station in Cushendall. (AQW 647/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): I refer the

honourable member to my responses to Assembly Questions AQO 2171/08 and AQW 4464/08. The matter of determining when any refurbishment or rebuild of fire stations, including Cushendall is to commence, remains a matter for the Chief Fire Officer and the Board of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Land in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to sell land owned by his Department in the North Down area. (AQW 662/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has no plans to sell any land/property in the North Down area, as it does not own any land/property in this area.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to use the drug Embril to treat people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. (AQW 664/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The decision to prescribe a particular medicine is a matter for clinicians, taking into account the patient's condition, a drug's licensed indications, the best available evidence about treatment options and local prescribing policies. Enbrel (etanercept) is not licensed for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, nor has it been assessed or approved by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease.

In general, I would not anticipate any new drug therapy being available on the health service until its efficacy, safety and cost effectiveness have been rigorously assessed.

Alcohol Related Brain Damage

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases of alcohol related brain damage have been recorded in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 668/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of cases of alcohol related brain damage, in each of the last 10 years, is not available.

Meningitis

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases of meningitis were diagnosed in the last 12 months; and what action his Department is taking to increase awareness of the symptoms of the illness. (AQW 684/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Meningitis is caused by a range of bacterial and viral infections, the most frequent bacterial infection causing meningitis in Northern Ireland being *Neisseria meningitidis* (meningococcal meningitis). The rates of meningococcal meningitis and *Haemophilus influenzae b* (Hib) meningitis have both decreased dramatically since the introduction of specific vaccines for these conditions.

Provisional figures provided by Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (NI) for the number of cases of meningitis (all types) show that 82 cases were reported during the period 10/07/07 to 21/06/08. Of these 82, 25 were cases of meningitis caused by *N. meningitidis* infection, and 57 were laboratory reports of meningitis caused by a bacterial or viral organism other than *N. meningitidis*. These data are derived from the regional programme for Enhanced Surveillance of Meningococcal Disease and routine laboratory reporting to CDSC(NI).

Regarding action taken by the Department to increase awareness of the symptoms, steps take the form of:

- information for the public and health professionals on symptoms and signs of meningitis on the DHSSPS website;
- distribution of information leaflets to all new parents, in particular immunisation leaflets and the 'Birth to 5' book;
- information given to parents for the pre-school immunisation programme;
- promotional campaigns for teenagers and university students to raise awareness of symptoms
- training, and distribution of information to, GPs, district nurses, health visitors and other health professionals;
- updates to all doctors in CMO Update;
- financial assistance to the Meningitis Research Foundation; and
- press releases.

All Trusts, Boards and primary care professionals are proactive in increasing awareness of the symptoms and signs of meningitis during periods when the number of cases of meningitis and septicaemia are likely to increase, especially during the winter.

Accident and Emergency Unit of Belfast City Hospital

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people had to wait in excess of 3 hours to receive treatment at the Accident and Emergency Unit of the Belfast City Hospital, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 693/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of people who had to wait in excess of 3 hours to receive treatment at the Accident and Emergency Unit of the Belfast City Hospital, in each of the last 3 years is given in the table below.

Year	Number of people
2005	15,705
2006	16,334
2007	17,416

Source: Belfast Health & Social Care Trust

A Priorities for Action target has been set that states that 'by March 2008, 95% of patients who attend A&E should be either treated and discharged home, or admitted within four hours of their arrival in the department?.'

Accident and Emergency Unit of Belfast City Hospital

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many admissions there have been to the Accident and Emergency Unit of Belfast City Hospital, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 694/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Accident and Emergency Department at Belfast City Hospital plays a vital role providing emergency care for the public and the A&E Department at Belfast City Hospital and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Information on the number of attendances at the Accident and Emergency Unit at Belfast City Hospital, for each of the last three years, is outlined below.

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
First Attendances	39,441	40,897	40,648
Follow up Attendances	8,345	7,765	6,099
Total Attendances	47,786	48,662	46,747

Source: Departmental Return KH09 (Part 2)

Ballycastle Primary Care Facilities

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's response to the business case submitted for a new purpose built facility to meet the primary care demand and GP contractual requirements in Ballycastle.

(AQW 707/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department is still considering the business case submitted by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for a range of schemes within the Primary and Community Care Infrastructure programme, which includes proposals for Ballycastle primary care facilities. These and other capital schemes are currently being reviewed as part of a Capital Priorities Review which I am expecting to be completed in the near future.

Emergency Ambulance Response

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why there was a delay in the response of an emergency ambulance called to Main Street, Waterfoot, on 21 September 2008.

(AQW 708/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has advised that an emergency 999 call was received to respond to an incident at the Mariner's Bar, Waterfoot at 17.40 hours on 21 September 2008. The nearest available ambulance was dispatched from Antrim and arrived on scene at 18.23 hours.

The response time for an emergency ambulance response is dependent on a number of factors such as unexpected peaks in demand, the time of day, traffic and distance to travel. Normally an incident in Waterfoot would be attended by an ambulance deployed from Ballymena or Ballycastle. At the time of the emergency 999 call however, these vehicles were attending other calls and an ambulance was therefore dispatched from the Antrim station. The time taken to arrive therefore reflects the distance the vehicle had to travel to get to the call and the fact that other potentially closer vehicles were already dealing with other 999 calls.

NIAS is currently working to achieve a target response time that, from April 2008, 70% of Category A (life-threatening) emergency calls should be responded to within eight minutes with performance in individual Board areas being improved to at least 62.5% by March 2009. I regret that in this instance the response time was longer than I would normally expect from the service.

Ambulances

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been invested in new ambulances in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 717/09)

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

Vehicle type	2003/04 £k	2004/05 £k	2005/06 £k	2006/07 £k	2007/08 £k
A&E ambulances	1,621	0	0	2,100	0
Patient care service vehicles	593	473	0	327	481

On 1 October 2008 I announced my intention to invest some £100 million over the next ten years to enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. This includes an investment of £17 million capital funding over the CSR period 2008-2011 to modernise the ambulance service fleet, estate, equipment and IT infrastructure.

Rapid Response Vehicles

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if funding is being diverted from the purchase of new ambulances to the purchase of rapid response vehicles in the next 5 years; and if so, how much.

(AQW 718/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 1 October 2008 I announced my intention to invest almost £100 million over the next ten years to enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. This includes an investment of £17.4 million capital funding over the CSR period 2008-2011 which will allow the purchase of some 60 new A&E ambulances, 26 rapid response vehicles and 60 Patient Care Services vehicles.

NIAS has submitted a business case to my Department identifying its requirements for capital investment over the next 10 years. This does not focus on the purchase of particular types of emergency response vehicles in isolation but sets out proposals for a rolling programme of investment for the whole ambulance service fleet, and will ensure that the fleet is of a suitable size and composition to respond effectively to patients with emergency care needs.

Ambulances

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times ambulances have broken down while on call, in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 719/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer you to the answer I gave to AQW 488/09 on 24 September 2008.

Dental Services

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many dental services are directly employed by a Health and Social Services Board, broken down by board area. (AQW 721/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of dentists¹ holding contracts with each Health and Social Services Board², as at September 2008, is shown in the table below.

Health & Social Services Board	
Eastern	364
Northern	202
Southern	168
Western	125
N Ireland ³	824

Source: Central Services Agency

Notes:

- Figures include Principal dentists only - excludes assistants and Vocational Dental Practitioners.
- In order to obtain a split by Board, dentist numbers are taken from the list of dentists who have Health Service contracts with the Health Boards.
- Dentists may work in more than one Health Board, therefore the total for all Health Boards will not equal the Northern Ireland figure.

Services for Older People

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are provided by his Department for older people in the Lagan Valley constituency. (AQW 730/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust provides a full range of health and social care services for older people in the Lagan Valley area including Nursing Services, District Nursing, Treatment Room Nursing and Specialist Services for chronic diseases management, continence services and annual flu vaccines. Domiciliary care is provided by the Social Care Team who undertake the assessment and

support of older people in partnership with families to enable older people to remain at home for as long as possible. Interim care and rehabilitation services such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy are also available. Specialist Stroke Services are offered by a dedicated Trust stroke team. Other support schemes for the elderly include Fracture & Falls Schemes, Carers support groups and Dementia support groups. Voluntary organisations supported by the Trust to provide support services for older people include Luncheon clubs, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Access to Benefit Scheme (A2B), Lisburn Voluntary Laundry Service, Home safety checks through the 'Safe Home, Happy Home' Scheme, Lisburn Aftercare, Lisburn Secure Scheme (Help the Aged), Lisburn Handy Van Scheme, Lisburn Adults At Risk & Home Accident Prevention Group and Rural Lisburn Safe & Well Scheme.

Ambulances

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what procedures are in place for the maintenance and regular assessment of ambulances to ensure they are fit for purpose. (AQW 744/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) A&E ambulances are comprehensively inspected and serviced every 12,000 miles. This is a proactive measure to reduce the risk of vehicle breakdown and exceeds manufacturers' recommendations. In addition, all NIAS vehicles, where required, undergo an annual MOT.

Ambulances

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to replace ambulances that are older than the recommended age. (AQW 746/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 1 October 2008 I announced my intention to invest some £100 million over the next ten years to enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. This includes an investment of £17 million capital funding over the CSR period 2008-2011 to modernise the ambulance service fleet, estate, equipment and IT infrastructure. This expenditure is subject to the normal public sector business case approval process.

Bamford Recommendations

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how much additional funding was given to each Health and Social Care Trust this year for the implementation of the Bamford recommendations; (ii) how that money has been invested; and (iii) which new community services have been developed. (AQW 761/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: An additional £87m was allocated in the Comprehensive Spending Review over the three year period, 08/09, 09/10 and 10/11, for Mental Health and Learning Disability to implement the Bamford recommendations. For this year 08/09, the allocation was broken down (full year effect figures) as follows:

	Mental Health	Learning Disability
Belfast Trust	£2.8m	£1.4m
South Eastern	£2.05m	£1.3m
Northern Trust	£3m	£1.7m
Western Trus	£2.1m	£1.2m
Southern Trust	£2.3m	£1.3m

The additional monies have been invested in recruiting and training extra staff and new services will be established as new staff come into post.

Consultants

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many consultants are currently employed in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area; and how this compares with figures for each of the last 3 years. (AQW 764/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of Consultants currently employed in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area and for each of the previous 3 years is given in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CONSULTANTS EMPLOYED IN THE NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST AREA AS AT 30 JUNE 2005 - 2008.

Year	Headcount	WTE
2008	180	166.05
2007	176	169.47
2006	160	153.75
2005	145	135.90

Source: Human Resources Management System

Note: WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

Disability Discrimination Act

Mr O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what obligations are placed on premises owned by his Department and health agencies by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005; and how his Department is performing in relation to these obligations. (AQW 766/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Premises owned by my Department and health agencies are required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Detailed information regarding performance in relation to this legislation is not held centrally.

Ketogenic Diet

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the research evidence that demonstrates the value of the ketogenic diet used to treat some forms of epilepsy in children, what provision is currently available to children suffering from such conditions. (AQW 776/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As pioneered by Professor Helen Cross of Great Ormond Street Hospital, the ketogenic diet may be considered as a adjunctive treatment in children with drug resistant epilepsy. A decision to commence any particular child on the ketogenic diet will be taken in light of their individual condition and its management, and in conjunction with the child's parent or guardian.

Maintenance and monitoring of the ketogenic diet requires support from a dietician. The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children has a dietician skilled and experienced in managing the ketogenic diet, and further dieticians are expected to complete relevant training in the near future.

Intractable Epilepsy in Children

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what diagnostic tools are used to assess the presence of intractable epilepsy in children. (AQW 777/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Intractable epilepsy is defined as epilepsy which does not respond to two appropriate anti-epilepsy drugs.

Intractable Epilepsy

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases of intractable epilepsy have been diagnosed in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 778/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available.

Intractable Epilepsy

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are in place to treat infants suffering from intractable epilepsy. (AQW 779/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Treatment of an infant who suffers from intractable epilepsy will be tailored to their individual needs. Most children with intractable epilepsy are under the care of consultants in paediatric neurology, based in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. This care may be provided in conjunction with the child's general and/or community paediatrician. There is also a paediatric neurology specialist nurse, who liaises with the family of children with epilepsy and provides advice.

Children with intractable epilepsy may be referred to a specialist centre in the UK, usually Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, which provides a supra-regional epilepsy service. Referrals outside Northern Ireland are made on the basis of clinical need.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration was given to advice provided by the Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee when changes were made to the conditions of the Minor Ailments Service. (AQW 785/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Officials have held a number of meetings with PCC over the last year and made a number of revisions to the scheme in light of concerns they raised. To address their concerns we built into the offer a commitment to review the service after a 6 month operational period, including evaluating its remuneration mechanism.

Despite extensive discussions, it has not been possible to agree the terms of the enhanced service and the PCC advised their members not to take part. As a result it is only available in a limited number of pharmacies.

I have also met with PCC recently to listen to the issues they have and have agreed to back to them following consideration of those issues.

Northern Health and Social Services Board

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will rural proof any decision his Department takes that affects staff employed by the Northern Health and Social Services Board. (AQW 787/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In relation to decisions taken as part of the Health and Social Care Reforms under the Review of Public Administration, where these decisions impact on issues such as location of jobs, rural proofing and other equality perspectives will be taken into account and associated human resources issues will be addressed in line with the Department's Human Resource Framework and the Public Service Commission Guiding Principles.

Other future decisions taken by the Department will take cognisance of rural proofing and other equality perspectives as required.

Northern Health and Social Services Board

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that people currently living and working in the Northern Health and Social Services Board area still have jobs that are accessible to them once the Review of Public Administration is completed. (AQW 788/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am very aware that the location of jobs is important for people living and working in all the Boards' areas. In July 2008 I announced that a human resources framework, and other policies, would be in place that would underpin the Review of Public Administration changes. I also anticipate that both the new Regional Health and Social Care Board and Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being will have a significant local presence irrespective of the location of any headquarters function. The final decisions on location will be subject to approved business cases and equality considerations will be taken into account.

All positions will be recruited and appointments will be made in line with the human resources framework and will be underpinned by Guiding Principles of the Public Service Commission.

Notional Rent Scheme

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on building developments through the Notional Rent scheme in the North Antrim constituency between January 2007 and July 2008.

(AQW 796/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the form requested.

Alcohol Related Violent Attacks

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many alcohol related violent attacks have been recorded in accident and emergency units over the last 12 months.

(AQW 799/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Violent attacks against healthcare staff have been formally monitored by my Department since April 2004 and are recorded on a 6 monthly basis. The current monitoring process records the number of incidents relating to verbal and physical abuse against health care staff by staff groups. It does not identify specific attacks where alcohol has been a contributory factor.

The attached table details the number of incidents in accident and emergency units for the last full 12 month period 1st April 2007 to 31 March 2008.

HSC Trusts	A&E UNIT	2007/08
Northern HSC Trust	Antrim Hospital	19
	Mid Ulster Hospital	10
	Whiteabbey Hospital	4
	Causeway Hospital	25
Southern HSC Trust	Craigavon Area Hospital	11
	Lurgan Hospital	14
	Daisy Hill Hospital	18
South Eastern HSC Trust	Downe Hospital	2
	Lagan Valley Hospital	4
	Ulster Hospital	11
Western HSC Trust	Erne Hospital	14
	Urgent Care Centre, Tyrone County Hospital	2
	Altnagelvin Hospital	26

HSC Trusts	A&E UNIT	2007/08
Belfast HSC Trust	Belfast City	40
	Mater	37
	Royal Group of Hospitals	44
Total		281

New South West Hospital in Enniskillen

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the tender process for the construction of the new South West Hospital in Enniskillen.

(AQW 802/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The New Acute Hospital is being procured in accordance with treasury guidance, under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), and utilising the Competitive Dialogue procurement procedure in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. There are four key stages to the procurement process and these are set out below:

Stage	Activity
Stage 1 Pre- Qualification	OJEU Notice Pre-Qualification Questionnaire/ Selection
Stage 2 Competitive Dialogue	2A: Strategic Approach (Shortlist) Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (IPID) issued 2B: Design Concept Proposals 2C: Firm Design Proposals 2D: Total Package Proposals Closure of Competitive Dialogue
Stage 3 Bid Evaluation	Invitation to Submit Final Bid (IFB) issued Final Tenders Preferred Bidder Selection
Stage 4 Finalisation	Appoint Preferred Bidder Financial Close

New South West Hospital in Enniskillen

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the names and addresses of the firms that submitted a tender; and (ii) the amounts tendered, for the construction of the new South West Hospital in Enniskillen.

(AQW 803/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Three consortia submitted a tender for the new Enniskillen Hospital, they were:

Name	Address
The Northern Ireland Health Group	17th Floor, Windsor House 9-15 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7EG
Consort Healthcare	Premier Business Centre 20 Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8GB
Direct Health	19 Clarendon Road Belfast BT1 3GB

- (ii) The Preferred Bidder submitted the most economically advantageous bid for the new Enniskillen Hospital. The procurement process is not yet complete and I am therefore unable to disclose at this time further detail on specific costings as this information is commercially sensitive.

New South West Hospital in Enniskillen

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the criteria used for shortlisting; and (ii) the firms shortlisted, for the construction of the new South West Hospital in Enniskillen. (AQW 804/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) At the start of the Competitive Dialogue process, stage 2A, the four initial bidders were issued with detailed information on project requirements, which would form the basis of their formal responses.

Submissions were received in response to 10 questions that related to the key areas of the project, namely

- Design & Construction;
- Human Resources;
- Facilities Management;
- Finance;
- Project Management; and
- Socio-Economic factors.

The bidder's responses were evaluated against pre-defined model answers and an evaluation report was produced and quality assured. Following the evaluation of responses, bidders were short-listed from four to three. As the procurement process has not yet complete I am unable to disclose at this time further detail on specific model answers.

- (ii) The short-listed consortia were Consort Healthcare, DirectHealth and Northern Ireland Health Group.

New South West Hospital in Enniskillen

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the criteria used to select the successful tender from the shortlist; and (ii) the weighting system used in the scoring matrix, for the construction of the new South West Hospital in Enniskillen. (AQW 805/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Stage 3 of the procurement process built on information provided at the previous stages. The project requirements were defined specifically, with 170 deliverables required to be addressed in the final tenders. These were communicated to the bidders. Final bids were received in February 2008. The bids were evaluated on the following workstreams:

- Design & Technical (including equipment and ICT)
- Facilities Management
- Human Resources
- Finance (including insurance)
- Legal
- Project Management
- Social and Economic Regeneration

Evaluation teams applied a pre-determined evaluation methodology that had been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and senior Trust staff and shared with all Bidders. The evaluation assessed the bids on both a quantitative basis - all bids had to pass the affordability hurdle or else they would be excluded; - and qualitative basis. The bids were then ranked based on the combined quantitative and qualitative scores.

Bids were evaluated against pre-defined model answers, for each workstream and covering the project deliverables, and the benchmarks established in the exemplar design. Once the evaluation was completed an evaluation report, was presented with the Appointment Business Case to Trust Board in May 2008 for scrutiny and subsequent approval. The Department approved the appointment of the Northern Ireland Health Group as the Successful Tenderer on 21st August 2008 and they were appointed in September 2008.

- (ii) The scoring matrix used in the evaluation process is set out below.

Assessment	Allocated Score
Very Poor - completely fails to demonstrate technical capacity and capability.	0
Poor - some, but very limited evidence of technical capability and capacity.	1-3
Satisfactory - provides evidence of sufficient capability and capacity to undertake the project.	4-6
Good – shows capacity and capability that meet the project requirements and in some areas, shows innovation in excess of the project requirements.	7-9
Very good - shows capacity and capability in all areas that are in excess of the project requirements.	10

The weighting scores for the quantitative assessment was 10% and the weightings for the qualitative assessment is set out in the table below.

Workstream Area	Weighting
Organisational Fit	5%
Project Management (including socio-economic)	5%
Design & Technical (including Equipment, ICT and socio-economic)	35%
Facilities Management (including socio-economic)	20%
Human Resources (including socio-economic)	10%
Legal	10%
Financial (incl payment mechanism and Insurance)	15%
Total	100%
Total Weighted out of 90%	90%

NB: 5% of the qualitative assessment was allocated for Social and Economic Regeneration Planning The 5% spanned across Design & Technical (2%), Facilities Management (1%), Human Resources (1%) and Project Management (1%).

New South West Hospital in Enniskillen

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline (i) the additional community benefit included in each shortlisted tender and (ii) the extent to which this influenced the outcome of the tendering process, for the construction of the new South West Hospital in Enniskillen.

(AQW 806/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) From the Strategic Approach stage in the procurement process, all bidders were asked to provide proposals to address the social and

economic aspects of the project. At final tender stage, bidders were required to submit a Social and Economic Regeneration Plan, demonstrating how their bid provided benefit for the local community, the five key areas covered are:

- Training, placement and employment.
 - Addressing social exclusion and long-term unemployment.
 - Maximizing Opportunities for the Local Supply Chain
 - Addressing Equality and Diversity
 - Community Engagement.
- (ii) A total of 5% of the qualitative assessment of final tenders was assigned to the evaluation of Social and Economic Regeneration Plans.

I am not in a position to release the information supplied by the Selected Tenderer, Northern Ireland Health Group, at this point in the procurement process.

Prescription Charges for Cancer Patients

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to abolish prescription charges for cancer patients in line with proposals in the rest of the UK. (AQW 808/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I announced on the 29 September 2008 that, subject to Executive agreement, I intend to reduce and then abolish prescription charging in Northern Ireland for all patients.

As from 1 January 2009 the price of a prescription item will reduce from £6.85 to £3.00, the price of a pre-payment certificate will also reduce from £35.85 to £9.00 for a four month certificate and from £98.70 to £25.00 for a twelve month certificate.

From 1 April 2010 prescriptions will be free of charge in Northern Ireland.

Elderly Care

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provisions his Department plans to put in place for elderly care following the closure of the Elderly Care Units in the Royal Victoria Hospital and Belfast City Hospital. (AQW 817/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Reform and Modernisation Programme is designed to ensure that more people will be supported to live independently in their own homes. As part of the Trust's Programme, Care of the Elderly facilities at the City and Royal Victoria Hospitals will be

closed and the services transferred from these older buildings, which are no longer fit for purpose, to new more modern facilities within both the City Hospital's Tower Block and the main building of the Royal Victoria Hospital. Following the completion of the Reform and Modernisation Programme the range of services across hospital and community will be expanded and will provide a full range of services for the elderly in the most appropriate location.

Skills Shortages

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) skills shortages; and (ii) hard to fill vacancies, currently within his Department, broken down by job category; and what action he is taking to address this problem. (AQW 819/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) No skills shortages have been identified by the Department. The Department has an annual process in place to identify the priority generic and business specific skills needs of staff, which are met through ongoing training and development.
- (ii) The Department currently has 1 Staff Officer Accountant vacancy and 1 Deputy Principal Accountant vacancy which have proved difficult to fill. Difficulty in filling vacancies in the Accountancy discipline is a corporate issue affecting other NICS Departments. As a result, advertising and recruitment measures are now handled corporately for Departments by the Department of Finance & Personnel. Methods of addressing this problem across the NICS include the re-introduction of a Trainee Accountant programme and consideration of salary issues.

Dental Care

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to allow children to receive NHS dental care regardless of where their parents or guardians are registered. (AQW 820/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: While the issue of access to health service dental care is problematic in certain areas of Northern Ireland, in the majority of cases, dental practices are still providing health service dental provision for children.

Unfortunately, under the current dental contract we are unable to compel dentists to accept any patient for

health service treatment, irrespective of the patient's personal circumstances.

My officials are in negotiations with the British Dental Association to develop a new dental contract. This new contract will ensure greater access to health service care for all, and in the interim we hope to be tendering shortly for additional dental services to fill geographical gaps in access to health service dentistry.

New Women's and Children's Hospital

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the new women's and children's hospital on the Royal Victoria Hospital site. (AQW 822/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This and other capital schemes have been considered as part of the Review of Capital Priorities which has just been completed. I am now considering the findings of the Review and will comment in due course.

The business case for this project is currently being considered by the Department.

Respite Care

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans will be made to accommodate respite care for adults with learning difficulties outside of their Health and Social Care Trust area if provision is unavailable within their own locality. (AQW 823/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The responsibility for operational matters in the provision of services rests with the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts within Northern Ireland. Trusts have advised that where possible respite provision is provided near to the client's home area. On occasions where there are no vacancies within a Trust's catchment area or where specialist respite services are required, Trusts may consider contracting services from outside their catchment area.

Clinical Drug Trials

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the circumstances under which senior citizens are involved in clinical drug trials whilst in the care of hospital or care centre facilities; and how consent for these trials is obtained. (AQW 824/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The participants in any clinical trial of a

drug will vary depending on the protocol and the inclusion and exclusion criteria that are specified for the trial. Senior citizens may participate in any trial as appropriate for the drug being tested.

The Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (2006) sets out the requirements regarding obtaining consent for participation in a clinical trial. The Department requires that all health and social care research involving service users is reviewed independently to ensure that it meets ethical standards. All studies must have appropriate arrangements for obtaining consent. The ethics review process pays particular attention to the arrangements for obtaining consent. Written and verbal versions of the information will be presented to the subject detailing no less than: the exact nature of the study; the implications and constraints of the protocol; the known side effects and any risks involved in taking part. Specifically participants will be provided with a Patient Information Sheet, which they can either read for themselves or have read to them. The information will be presented in clear understandable language, and have been evaluated and approved by a Research Ethics Committee. It will be made clear at the outset that refusal to participate will under no circumstances cause any detriment to the patient's normal care, and any participant will be able to withdraw from a trial at any stage, again without any detriment to their normal care

Magherafelt District Council Area

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are on supported living in the Magherafelt District Council area. (AQW 828/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not collected centrally.

Vulnerable Adults

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many vulnerable adults are currently waiting on a supported living placement in the Magherafelt District Council area; and what is the average waiting time. (AQW 831/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not collected centrally.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the proposals for the future of the Minor Ailments service, given the comments made by the Pharmaceutical

Contractors Committee in its press release of 4 August 2008, stating that the proposals are so unreasonable and unfair that pharmacies are finding it impossible to continue the service. (AQW 845/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I regard the offer made to pharmacy contractors for the provision of an enhanced Minor Ailments Service as fair and reasonable. The new service implemented on the 1 August 2008 offers considerable benefits including:

- 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;
- A much improved remuneration package for pharmacists, which more than doubles the previous investment in this service to £1.5m, and
- The commitment to review the service following a 6 month period of operation, including the remuneration package

To move this issue forward I met recently with representatives of the Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee to hear at first hand the concerns they had. I have agreed to consider their comments and will be going back to them in due course.

Old Ambulance Stock

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to replace old ambulance stock; and to detail the timetable. (AQW 847/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 1 October 2008 I announced my intention to invest some £100 million over the next ten years to enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. This includes an investment of £17 million capital funding over the CSR period 2008-2011 to modernise the ambulance service fleet, estate, equipment and IT infrastructure. This expenditure is subject to the normal public sector business case approval process.

Northern Health and Social Services Board Workers

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Northern Health and Social Services Board workers have resigned in each of the last 5 years, broken down by (i) gender; and (ii) full-time and part-time staff. (AQW 850/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the tables below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF RESIGNATIONS FROM THE NORTHERN HSSB BY GENDER

2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
3	0	25	2	13	2	15	1	14	5

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF RESIGNATIONS FROM THE NORTHERN HSSB BY FULL-TIME/PART-TIME WORKING

2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
3	0	20	7	10	5	11	5	15	4

Source: Northern Health & Social Services Trust.

Domiciliary Packages

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many domiciliary packages have been provided in the Ards and Strangford area in the last year. (AQW 863/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the form requested.

Health Service Recruitment

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there is legislation in place or proposed that will restrict the recruitment of overseas workers into the Health Service. (AQW 866/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The recruitment of staff from outside the European Economic Area is bound by Home Office rules.

Health Service Dentists

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health Service dentists are available in the East Antrim constituency. (AQW 876/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At 1 October 2008, Central Services Agency figures show that there are 35 dentists registered to provide Health Service dental treatment in the East Antrim constituency².

Source: Central Services Agency

Notes: Figures include Principal dentists only; figures exclude assistants and vocational dental practitioners.

Based on location of the dental surgery where the dentist is employed.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide the average waiting time for people to see a doctor or nurse, in each hospital's A&E unit, for each month in the past year. (AQW 882/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available.

Patient Client Council

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) membership; and (ii) functions, of the proposed Patient Client Council. (AQW 899/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) I am presently giving consideration to the membership of the proposed Patient and Client Council and expect to confirm proposals in the near future for consideration in subordinate legislation.
- (ii) The functions of the proposed PCC would be:
 - representing the interests of the public;
 - promoting involvement of the public;
 - providing assistance (by way of representation or otherwise) to individuals making or intending to make a complaint relating to health and social care;
 - promoting the provision of advice and information to the public about the design, commissioning and delivery of health and social care; and
 - such other functions as may be prescribed by the Department.

Health and Social Care Reforms

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the framework document for the new functions under the Health and Social Care reforms will be completed. (AQW 900/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Framework Document, which will set out the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each of the new organisations and how they will work, will be completed before the establishment of the new organisations on 1 April 2009.

Regional Support Services Organisation

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what functions will be transferred from Health and Social Care Trusts to the new Regional Support Services Organisation. (AQW 901/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: When the Regional Support Services Organisation comes into operation on 1 April 2009, it will be formed by consolidating the Central Services Agency, the Directorate of Information Services, the Health and Personal Social Services Superannuation Branch and some services transferred from the four Health and Social Services Boards. It will not include any of the functions currently provided by Trusts at this time.

On a phased basis after April 2009, and subject to approval of a business case, services that will be transferred from the Trusts will include the recruitment of staff, payment of salaries and wages, payment to suppliers and other functions that would release resources for investment in front line services.

It is intended that the Regional Support Services Organisation will also provide Information Technology, Information Management and Estate Services to the HSC. This will require a further transfer of functions from Trusts and will only be undertaken following further consideration of the best way to provide these functions.

Commissioning Groups

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Commissioning Groups will have a free role to make decisions. (AQW 902/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Local Commissioning Groups will have devolved responsibility for addressing the needs of their local community and as such will have planning, service procurement and performance management responsibilities. As committees of the Regional Health and Social Care Board they will also be expected to work within regional policy and strategy frameworks, available resources and performance targets.

Commissioning Groups

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many members will be on the Commissioning Groups. (AQW 903/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I supplied to AQW 387/09.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr Paisley Jnr asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the provision of a Minor Ailments Service by pharmacies will commence. (AQW 907/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to my reply to his correspondence sent to him dated 19th September 2008. I reiterate the points I made in that letter that the enhanced Minor Ailments Service commenced on 1st August 2008, and although the majority of pharmacy contractors opted out of providing the service, it still remains open for them to join. I welcome that a small number of contractors are providing this worthwhile service for their patients.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the proposal to remove the second fire engine from 12 Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service stations, to confirm if Portstewart is now the only station that will lose its second fire engine. (AQW 915/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following a comprehensive review and assessment of its fire and rescue requirements, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has proposed that Portstewart Fire Station will be the only fire station to lose its second pumping appliance. The proposal was published for consultation on 1 October. No final decision will be taken until the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has had an opportunity to consider the responses to that consultation.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how much the removal of the second fire engine in Portstewart will save the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; and (ii) what percentage this represents of the overall savings the service is trying to achieve. (AQW 916/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: If, following the current consultation, it is decided that the second appliance at Portstewart should be removed, it is anticipated that this would deliver Revenue savings as detailed below:

- 2009/10 — £80k out of £3,800k efficiency savings (2%)
- 2010/11 — £80k out of £5,800k efficiency savings (1.4%)

The proposed re-allocation of the second appliance from Portstewart is also expected to generate a one-off Capital saving of £180k.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there will be any job losses due to withdrawal of the second fire appliance in Portstewart. (AQW 959/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service proposal to withdraw the second pumping appliance from Portstewart Fire Station was published for public consultation on 1 October. No final decisions will be taken until the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has had an opportunity to consider the responses to that consultation.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will detail the reasons (i) for the proposed withdrawal of the second fire appliance in Portstewart; and (ii) all other stations in the original proposal have been withdrawn from the new proposal. (AQW 961/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The detailed reasons for the proposed withdrawal of the second appliance from Portstewart Fire Station are set out in the related consultation document, issued by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on 1 October 2008 and published on their website. That is the only proposed appliance withdrawal at this time.

New Acute Hospital in Enniskillen

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to (i) provide an update on the new acute hospital in Enniskillen; and (ii) confirm if works are on target and within budget. (AQW 985/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to AQO 485/09 answered in the Assembly on 6 October 2008.

Rheumatology Consultant at Altnagelvin

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to confirm if the Rheumatology Consultant at Altnagelvin Hospital is due to retire in April 2009; and (ii) if so, what action his Department and the Western Health and Social Care Trust are taking to ensure a new consultant is in place, prior to his retirement. (AQW 986/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The decision for any member of the HSC workforce to retire is a private matter, therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment. The Western Health and Social Care Trust assure me that robust succession planning arrangements are pursued, as need arises.

Medinet Consultants

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm the costs associated with Medinet consultants being flown to Tyrone County Hospital on 27 and 28 September 2008 to attend neurology clinics. (AQW 988/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Waiting lists have been transformed in Northern Ireland over the past 2 years through the implementation of a comprehensive reform programme together with investment in additional capacity, including the transfer of some patients to the independent sector.

In that context I am advised that a neurology clinic was held by Medinet at Tyrone County Hospital on 27 and 28 September at a total cost of £4,800.

Loyal Orders

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has held with the Loyal Orders about health and public safety issues. (AQO 486/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Over the summer months I met with representatives from the Belfast Orange Order to discuss specific issues relating to health and public safety at parades and bonfires.

I am keen to have further meetings with a broader representation from the Loyal Orders, and indeed any other organisation with a similar large representation

of men. These meetings will focus on how existing structures and communication channels can be used to engage with this target group, which is difficult to reach with traditional public health messages, and help further promote positive health and well-being.

Children and Vulnerable Adults

Mrs O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to protect children and vulnerable adults under the interim arrangements in place, due to delays in the processing of applications by Access NI. (AQO 473/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The interim arrangements to which the Honourable member refers, are those which I put in place during August 2008 to help employers in health and social care who were experiencing grave difficulties caused by AccessNI delays. Members should be aware that these interim arrangements were put in place after very careful consideration and are subject to monitoring.

Last week, I wrote to NIO Minister, Paul Goggins, to impress upon him the serious impacts that AccessNI delays are having on employment in health and social care and emphasised the absolute necessity for AccessNI to return to full service as soon as possible.

Minor Ailments Service

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the costs of running the Minor Ailments Service in Community Pharmacies; and the corresponding amount saved by the service in reducing unnecessary visits to GPs and hospitals. (AQO 470/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In 2007-08 the Minor Ailments Scheme cost £645,000 in service fees. For the new enhanced service available from 1 August 2008, the funding package offered is worth £1.5m in service fees, almost two and a half times what the scheme cost last year.

The Minor Ailments Service is a non-cash-releasing initiative and operates to improve efficiency within the Health Service. Although patients may go to their pharmacy rather than their GP for advice and treatment, this does not generate cash savings that can be redistributed.

Ambulance Cover

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update

on ambulance cover from 6:00pm to 8:00am in the Limavady area. (AQO 403/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Limavady area is covered predominantly from Limavady Ambulance Station, although it needs to be borne in mind that NIAS deploys its resources dynamically and will deploy the nearest available appropriate resource to attend a call.

There are two shifts at the Limavady Ambulance Station – from 8.00am to 8.00pm; and from 8.00pm to 8.00am and 1 A&E vehicle per shift. This level of cover has not changed in several years.

Health Service Vacancies

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline what measures he is taking to ensure that all Health Service vacancies are filled. (AQO 400/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Recruitment and retention issues are a matter for individual Health and Social Care Trusts. Trusts advertise vacancies regularly and there is a single on-line point of advertisement for all HSC jobs. The Department, in conjunction with the Trusts, promotes health service careers generally through recruitment fairs and via the Departmental and Trust websites.

Developing Better Services Model

Mr Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the number of beds to be provided at the new Enniskillen hospital; and to confirm that the services to be delivered will be as set down in the Developing Better Services model. (AQO 478/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The new Enniskillen hospital will provide 312 beds. I can also confirm that the new hospital will provide a range of acute services including inpatient surgery, critical care services, acute medicine and maternity services as outlined in the Developing Better Services model.

Lagan Valley's Obstetric-Led Maternity Ward

Mr Poots asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation has taken place with the Ministry of Defence on the proposed closure of Lagan Valley's obstetric-led maternity ward. (AQO 416/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: No consultation has taken place directly with the Ministry of Defence as no final decision on the future of the obstetric-led maternity ward at Lagan Valley Hospital has been taken.

The proposals to transfer consultant-led inpatient maternity services from the hospital are one of a range of proposals submitted by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to achieve 3% efficiency targets per annum across the Comprehensive Spending Review period in line with Executive agreement. I will not be making a decision on the Trust's proposals for the future of maternity services at Lagan Valley Hospital until the implications for staff, patients and the wider health system are clearly established.

Clostridium Difficile

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress is being made in controlling clostridium difficile. (AQO 477/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Until 31 March 2008 mandatory surveillance for *C. difficile* in Northern Ireland covered patients aged 65 and over, and since 1 April 2008 has covered all patients over 2 years of age. The two most recent quarterly monitoring reports for Northern Ireland published by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre [CDSC(NI)] show decreases in *C. difficile* inpatient episodes in two successive quarters.

C. difficile hospital inpatient episodes, NI			
	Q4, 2007	Q1, 2008	Q2, 2008
Cases	297	288	250

This is a decrease of 15.8% in the second quarter of 2008 compared with quarter 4 in 2007.

Progress has been achieved through a range of measures, some of which I announced on 25 January. These include: implementation of Changing the Culture and the Ward Sisters' Charter; performance management of the infection control targets that I set in September 2007; use of the leaflet for visitors that I published at that time; unannounced hygiene inspections by RQIA, of which 5 have now been completed and published; the regional hand hygiene campaign which I launched in June; implementation by Trusts of recommendations from the RQIA's interim report of the independent review of the *C. difficile* outbreak; Cleaner Hospital Team reviews, action plans and support; prudent antibiotic prescribing and the appointment of antimicrobial pharmacists in the Trusts.

Specifically in relation to the *C. difficile* outbreak in Northern Trust, the figures below, showing patient episodes in Northern Trust hospitals during the first nine months of 2008, demonstrate that the Trust has achieved a substantial reduction in cases during this period.

Throughout the course of the outbreak the Northern Trust consistently applied a three-pronged approach: of rigorous antibiotic management, infection control procedures and an enhancement of environmental cleaning.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept
46	29	40	39	24	22	19	11	14

Figures provided by NHSCT and refer to all patients, not just patients over 65.

The Northern Trust declared the outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* infection over as of 31 August 2008. The decision to declare the outbreak over was taken for two main reasons: the sustained reduction in the number of new cases of *C. difficile* in Trust hospitals and the fact that there was no evidence of recent transmission within the hospital.

Minor Ailments Service

Mrs McGill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he has taken to ensure that the Minor Ailments Scheme is being rolled out. (AQO 466/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I can confirm that an enhanced Minor Ailment Scheme was rolled out on 1 August 2008, which increased the number of therapies available to patients within this service from

2 to 8. Despite extensive discussions, it has not been possible to agree the terms of the enhanced service with the Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee (PCC) which represents community pharmacists in Northern Ireland. The PCC advised their members not to take part in the enhanced service and as a result the majority of pharmacists withdrew this service from patients.

I met with PCC recently and offered them my personal assurance of a review of the scheme including the remuneration model, after six months' operation. The service remains open for those pharmacists not currently providing it and I would encourage them to do this and ensure patients have access to this worthwhile scheme.

Board of Mental Health and Learning Disability

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on the work of the Board of Mental Health and Learning Disability. (AQO 469/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Board for Mental Health and Learning Disability has recently submitted to me its first annual report charting their work progress over the last year, expressing their views and providing advice on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford Review. This report will be made available on the Board's website at: www.bmhldni.gov.uk/ in the near future.

Speech and Language Therapy

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans there are to increase the number of speech and language therapists to meet the demand by stroke survivors for speech and language therapy. (AQO 490/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Recognising the need to improve services for stroke sufferers, in June this year I announced a range of proposals, and allocated an additional £14m over the next three years, to improve the outcome for stroke survivors.

These proposals include access for stroke patients to appropriate rehabilitation, including enhanced availability of speech and language therapy.

A regional Group has been established to bring forward a detailed implementation plan, in liaison with Boards and Trusts, for all of the proposals to the timescales outlined. In implementing the proposals it will be for Boards and Trusts to decide on the specific numbers of speech and language therapist required to meet the needs of their own populations.

Minor Ailments Service

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that the Minor Ailment Service has not been withdrawn. (AQO 481/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I can confirm that the Minor Ailment Scheme has not been withdrawn and that the service remains open for those pharmacists not currently providing it and I would encourage them to do this and ensure patients have access to this worthwhile scheme.

The enhanced scheme was rolled out on 1 August 2008 increasing the number of therapies available to patients within this service from 2 to 8. Unfortunately, despite extensive discussions, it has not been possible to agree the terms of the enhanced service with the Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee (PCC) which represents community pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

The PCC advised their members not to take part in the enhanced service and as a result the majority of pharmacists withdrew this service from patients. I met with PCC recently and offered them my personal assurance of a review of the scheme, including the remuneration model, after it has been in operation for six months.

Diabetes Services Framework

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to introduce a diabetes services framework in the 2009 round of service framework announcements. (AQO 474/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department is currently developing the first tranche of service frameworks. These are: cardiovascular health and wellbeing; respiratory health and wellbeing; cancer prevention, treatment and care; mental health and wellbeing; and, learning disability. Earlier this year, I agreed that work should commence this year on the development of two further service frameworks for Children's Health and Wellbeing and Older People's Health and Wellbeing.

It is anticipated that further areas for service framework development will be taken forward from 2009/10. These will be selected from the remaining priorities identified and evaluated by the Department. These include diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions, physical disability and sensory impairment, and sexual health.

Magherafelt District Council Area

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to address the shortage of supported living places for vulnerable adults in the Magherafelt District Council area. (AQW 1334/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The responsibility for operational matters in the provision of services in the Magherafelt District Council area rests with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (the Northern Trust). The Northern Trust has advised that it is currently working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the

voluntary sector to address current and future supported living needs across all programmes of care.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Translink Metro Bus Service

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans Translink has to expand Metro bus services in the Mallusk area, including services to Hollybrook, Mayfield, Alderly and Aylesbury; and to confirm the start date of any new services. (AQW 185/09)

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I have been informed by Translink that to provide Metro bus services to these areas would require the bus to travel through Mayfield. Translink has advised that, following public meetings in January 2008, Mayfield residents made it known that the presence of any bus service was unacceptable to them. As a consequence Translink has no plans to introduce new services to these areas.

Water Supply in the School Lane Area

Mr Armstrong asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the adequacy of the water supply in the School Lane area, Coalisland, particularly in relation to the water pressure; and if he is satisfied that it is sufficient should the Fire and Rescue Service be called to attend an emergency in the area. (AQW 628/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that a comprehensive zonal study of the distribution system has been carried out for the School Lane area and that pressures have been found to be slightly less than the 15 metres head (22psi) standard of service as stated in Northern Ireland Water's Customer Charter. This would result in a small number of customers experiencing a slight drop in pressure during periods when there are excessive demands on the system. Remedial works have been identified and are being actioned to improve operating pressures and to ensure that NIW fully meets customer demands and regulatory standards.

Regarding Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service requirements and the capacity of the distribution system, NIW is satisfied that there are sufficient fire hydrants within 250 metres of School Lane on 6" diameter watermains to meet all requirements.

Bi-Lingual Road Signs

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any legislative change to enable the authorisation of a limited range of bi-lingual road signs would be subject to (i) a vote of the Executive; and (ii) a vote of the Assembly. (AQW 674/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that under the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, its power to prescribe or authorise traffic signs extends to the prescription or authorisation of bilingual signs. The general approach of the legislation is that traffic signs shall be prescribed in regulations.

Any such regulations would be brought to the attention of the Executive and would be subject to the negative resolution procedure in the Assembly.

Unreported Damage to Road Culverts

Mr O'Loan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of unreported damage to road culverts by Northern Ireland Water and its contractors; and what steps he is taking to ensure this action will cease, in light of its contribution to flooding incidents. (AQW 695/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that they are aware of a small number of locations where road culverts have been damaged by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and its contractors.

I would advise that Utility providers have a statutory right to open roads for the purpose of installing and maintaining their equipment. While Roads Service has no control over the number of these works, it has powers to regulate them under the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. Under this legislation statutory undertakers must notify Roads Service of works on roads and footpaths.

I have been advised by NIW that, in the unlikely event that one of its contractors damages a road culvert, the damage is reported to Roads Service. NIW then repair the damage to the standard required by Roads Service.

I can also advise that the Utility Providers have agreed a protocol for the management of underground services.

20 mph Speed Limit Zone

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to introduce 20 mph

speed limit zones in the East Antrim constituency.
(AQW 714/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: There are currently no plans to introduce any 20mph speed limit zones in the East Antrim constituency.

With regard to AQW 715/09, my Department's Roads Service is aware of a number of requests for 20 mph zones in the East Antrim constituency. However, such requests are not recorded separately, therefore specific details on the numbers received, or from whom, are not readily available.

As regards AQW 716/09, Roads Service encourages and supports 20mph zones in situations where there is a risk to vulnerable road users. However, there is no plan to generally reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph. 20mph zones are an extension of traffic calming schemes. Roads Service receives many requests for traffic calming schemes to reduce speed in residential areas and, as demand greatly exceeds the capacity to supply these measures, priorities must be established. All requests are assessed as objectively as possible using criteria including; speed and volume of traffic, collision history and general road characteristics. Decisions can then be taken on the basis of need and resources.

Implementation of a traffic calming scheme is subject to the successful completion of residents' consultation and the legislative process. If objections are received to a Roads Service proposal to traffic calm a particular road, it may not be possible to implement the scheme.

You may be aware that Roads Service is currently piloting variable speed limit schemes at two schools. Roads Service will continue to monitor and assess these pilots to determine their effectiveness in reducing traffic speeds at schools, before consideration is given to introducing a more widespread programme.

20 mph Speed Limit Zone

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has been lobbied to introduce 20 mph zones in the East Antrim constituency. (AQW 715/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: There are currently no plans to introduce any 20mph speed limit zones in the East Antrim constituency.

With regard to AQW 715/09, my Department's Roads Service is aware of a number of requests for 20 mph zones in the East Antrim constituency. However, such requests are not recorded separately, therefore specific details on the numbers received, or from whom, are not readily available.

As regards AQW 716/09, Roads Service encourages and supports 20mph zones in situations where there is

a risk to vulnerable road users. However, there is no plan to generally reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph. 20mph zones are an extension of traffic calming schemes. Roads Service receives many requests for traffic calming schemes to reduce speed in residential areas and, as demand greatly exceeds the capacity to supply these measures, priorities must be established. All requests are assessed as objectively as possible using criteria including; speed and volume of traffic, collision history and general road characteristics. Decisions can then be taken on the basis of need and resources.

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You may be aware that Roads Service is currently piloting variable speed limit schemes at two schools. Roads Service will continue to monitor and assess these pilots to determine their effectiveness in reducing traffic speeds at schools, before consideration is given to introducing a more widespread programme.

20 mph Speed Limit Zone

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what criteria must be met for the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit zone. (AQW 716/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: There are currently no plans to introduce any 20mph speed limit zones in the East Antrim constituency.

With regard to AQW 715/09, my Department's Roads Service is aware of a number of requests for 20 mph zones in the East Antrim constituency. However, such requests are not recorded separately, therefore specific details on the numbers received, or from whom, are not readily available.

As regards AQW 716/09, Roads Service encourages and supports 20mph zones in situations where there is a risk to vulnerable road users. However, there is no plan to generally reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph. 20mph zones are an extension of traffic calming schemes. Roads Service receives many requests for traffic calming schemes to reduce speed in residential areas and, as demand greatly exceeds the capacity to supply these measures, priorities must be established. All requests are assessed as objectively as possible using criteria including; speed and volume of traffic, collision history and general road characteristics. Decisions can then be taken on the basis of need and resources.

Implementation of a traffic calming scheme is subject to the successful completion of residents' consultation and the legislative process. If objections

are received to a Roads Service proposal to traffic calm a particular road, it may not be possible to implement the scheme.

You may be aware that Roads Service is currently piloting variable speed limit schemes at two schools. Roads Service will continue to monitor and assess these pilots to determine their effectiveness in reducing traffic speeds at schools, before consideration is given to introducing a more widespread programme.

Bus Lanes

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to allowing (i) public and private taxis carrying paying passengers; and (ii) private cars with 2 or more passengers, to use bus lanes. (AQW 736/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Taxi-Bus type services (taxis with blue plates) and Belfast Public Hire Taxis (taxis with yellow plates) have been permitted to use certain bus lanes in Belfast since 2002. The other types of licensed taxi, Private Hire (taxis with green plates) and Public Hire Outside Belfast (taxis with white plates) are not permitted to use bus lanes.

Roads Service is currently undertaking a review of the operation of bus lanes. The primary focus of this review is to consider whether Private Hire Taxis should be permitted to use bus lanes. This review should be completed in the near future.

Roads Service has no plans to consider allowing private cars with two or more passengers to use bus lanes. I understand that similar schemes are being piloted in Great Britain, on both urban and rural roads, and Roads Service will continue to monitor any developments relating to this issue.

Money Returned to the Department of Finance

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money his Department returned to the Department of Finance and Personnel on 31 March 2008. (AQW 740/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I can confirm that the Department for Regional Development did not return any money to the Department of Finance and Personnel on 31 March 2008.

Disabled Drivers

Mr Bresland asked the Minister for Regional Development how many blue badges have been issued to disabled drivers, broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 743/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not maintain information on Blue Badges by Parliamentary Constituency. However, I can advise that, as at the 30 September 2008, the total number of valid Blue Badges issued in the North was 93,460.

Road Schemes

Mr Bresland asked the Minister for Regional Development what road schemes are planned for the period 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2010 in the West Tyrone constituency. (AQW 783/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The information you request can be found in my Department's Roads Service Spring and Autumn Reports to Omagh and Strabane District Councils. The Spring reports can be accessed from the Roads Service internet site at the following web address:

www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm

Roads Service is currently compiling their Autumn Reports to Omagh and Strabane District Councils. I have asked the Divisional Roads Manager, Mr Pat Doherty, to forward you a copy of these Reports in November.

20 mph Speed Limit Zone

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to introducing 20 mph speed limit zones in residential areas that have problems with speeding drivers, but do not qualify for traffic calming measures. (AQW 786/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service encourages and supports 20 mph zones in situations where there is a risk to vulnerable road users. However, I have currently no plans to generally reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph. Experience shows that 20 mph zones in residential areas are ineffective without also implementing traffic calming measures.

The provision of traffic calming schemes is dependent upon resources. Roads Service receives many requests for traffic calming schemes to help reduce speed in residential areas and, as demand greatly exceeds the capacity to supply these measures, priorities must be

established. All requests are assessed objectively using criteria which consider factors such as, speed, volume of traffic, collision history and general road characteristics.

Department's Multi-Lingual Website

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what research was conducted to determine a need for a non-English section for visitors to his Department's website. (AQW 879/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department is committed to making information about its services as accessible as possible. The development of a multi-lingual section on the Department's website was undertaken as part of a review of the Department's Guide to Making Information Accessible and a review of compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

In developing the site, my officials looked at best practice in website provision across Departments and consulted with Equality Forum representatives and organisations which have a particular interest in indigenous or ethnic minority language issues.

Ulsterbus

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development what criteria are applied by Ulsterbus when deciding whether to extend a bus service; and what steps Ulsterbus takes to obtain relevant information to apply such criteria in any given case. (AQW 883/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Translink has advised me that Ulsterbus gathers information and considers the following:

- potential demand;
- route suitability including any physical constraints and potential hazards;
- assessment of need including any minimum service level criteria specified in Government plans;
- economic viability including the possibility of subsidy;
- availability of drivers and vehicles; and
- licensing issues.

The steps taken to obtain relevant information will vary in individual cases and may depend on the circumstances in which interest in the extension of a service has arisen.

Department's Multi-Lingual Website

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development for the cost to design and launch his Department's multi-lingual website. (AQW 884/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The Department's multi-lingual website was designed in house using existing staff resources. The total cost was £2804, comprising £2383 for translation of the information and £421 incurred on the launch of the site.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide details of the neighbourhood renewal posts and services that his Department will fund from March 2009. (AQW 888/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department participates in Neighbourhood Renewal primarily through the delivery of services such as street lighting, traffic calming measures, and local bus services. When a Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership asks for a particular scheme to be carried out, my Department may agree to contribute to its costs. This funding falls within Roads Service's normal programmed expenditure.

My Department however, currently has no plans to fund neighbourhood renewal posts

Level Crossing at William St, Lurgan

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has made an assessment of the costs associated with providing an underpass or an overpass to overcome the problems caused to town centre development by the level crossing at William St, Lurgan. (AQW 895/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a study was carried out, in September 2007, to assess the William Street crossing in Lurgan.

The report considered a number of engineering options including an overpass, an underpass and a tunnel. The cost of the options ranged from approximately £20 million to £250 million.

None of the options performed well under economic appraisal and all had significant environmental consequences for the William Street/Lough Road area of Lurgan.

Security Against Flooding

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he has taken to improve the security of the urban centre of Portadown against flooding. (AQW 896/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is responsible for storm drains that are dedicated to collect water run off from the surfaces of the public roads and discharge it into suitable outlets.

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has the responsibility for storm and foul sewage systems, that deal with discharges from roofs, driveways etc, including many combined systems that also take road drainage. Rivers Agency is responsible for watercourses and rivers.

The severe flooding on Saturday 16 August 2008 was caused by the extreme levels of persistent rainfall that affected many areas in the North. I am advised that the roads within the urban centre of Portadown were not particularly adversely affected. The only urban centre location in Portadown, where Roads Service encountered significant flooding, was within the confines of the Marley Street car park. This car park drains into the River Bann, and the unusual flooding of that day was directly linked to the flood levels of the river. This particular instance of flooding had no direct effect on private property, or on traffic flow within the Portadown area. Consequently, there are no plans to carry out any preventative works at this location.

I have been advised by NIW, that it is not aware of any flooding problems associated with the sewerage system in Portadown town centre. The heavy persistent rainfall of 16 August resulted in the design capacity of the drainage network being exceeded in many areas and, in some places, it was totally overwhelmed. It is widely accepted that no sewerage system could have coped with rainfall of this intensity.

NIW acknowledges that the sewerage infrastructure in many areas is in need of upgrading to meet the increasingly stringent environmental standards and to ensure that the capacity is adequate for future development. It is therefore undertaking a major programme of Drainage Area Studies across the North, to identify any improvements needed, and it is committed to the implementation of any recommendations. Also, any recommendations arising from the Study will be subject to detailed agreement with the Environment Agency. Improvements recommended by the Study will be included in NIW's Capital Investment Programme, subject to available funding.

Craigavon City Centre Development

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment he has made of the impact of Craigavon City centre development on the town centres of Lurgan and Portadown. (AQW 897/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have not made any assessment of the impact of Craigavon City centre development on the town centres of Lurgan and Portadown. The Regional Development Strategy provides an overarching strategic planning framework and it is for the Department of the Environment to interpret this framework locally through planning policies and development plans.

Speed Restriction

Mr Paisley Jnr asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to introduce a 20 mph speed restriction on the Limentary Road, Kells, where the Kells and Connor Primary School is located. (AQW 909/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service currently has no plans to introduce any 20mph speed limit zones on the Limentary Road, Kells, in the vicinity of Kells and Connor Primary School.

You may be aware that Roads Service is currently piloting variable speed limit schemes at two schools. Roads Service will continue to monitor and assess these pilots, to determine their effectiveness in reducing traffic speeds at schools, before consideration is given to introducing a more widespread programme.

I have asked Roads Service officials to assess Kells and Connor School under existing programmes that deal with speed management outside schools, to determine if there are other measures that could be introduced to address safety concerns.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development why Northern Ireland Water employees were not offered the option of putting their pension money into a plan of their own choice. (AQW 911/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the current Pensions Options Exercise for its employees, which relates to pension benefits accrued in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) up to 31 March 2007, is managed by Civil Service Pensions based on advice from the Government Actuary's Department. NIW had no control over the options available to employees under this exercise.

However, employees who are members of the Northern Ireland Water Pension Scheme, which was established on 1 April 2007, can opt out of the Scheme at any time by applying for a transfer to an alternative money purchase arrangement.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost that will be incurred by Northern Ireland Water as a result of the recently announced redundancies. (AQW 912/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that in order to achieve the efficiency targets agreed with my Department and published in its Strategic Business Plan, it will reduce staff numbers during the 2008/09 financial year by 304. However, as a result of normal staff turnover it is likely that the actual number of staff affected will only be around 200 and every effort will be made to achieve the reductions by voluntary means.

A provision of £19 million is included in NIW financial operating plan for 2008/09 to cover the cost of the reductions, but actual costs are difficult to predict as they will depend on a number of factors relative to each employee including length of service and pensionable salary.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if the redundancies announced by Northern Ireland Water will include staff at all levels, including senior management. (AQW 913/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it has not yet announced any redundancies at any level and it is important to stress that the staffing levels referred to in its recently published Annual Report are not new reductions but are related to targets originally detailed in the Strategic Business Plan published in 2007.

The current proposal for staff reductions will not include staff at all levels. In accordance with new business operating models, and in agreements reached with trade union representatives, voluntary release schemes will only be open to staff notified of being "at-risk" in impacted functions/directorates. These are primarily in middle management/supervisory and operative grades. A senior management level restructuring was implemented prior to the formation of NIW and the staff affected were facilitated through redeployment or release schemes in accordance with compensation mechanisms within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the uncertainty over the security of employment for Northern Ireland Water employees, why staff are being asked to make decisions about pension schemes. (AQW 914/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the current Pensions Options Exercise for its employees, which relates to pension benefits accrued in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) (PCSPS) up to 31 March 2007, is managed by Civil Service Pensions based on advice from the Government Actuary's Department. NIW had no control over the options available to employees under this exercise.

Following the formation of NIW in April 2007, all employees automatically became members of the Northern Ireland Water Pension Scheme (NIWPS). This pension scheme was established as a 'mirror image' to the PCSPS. As part of the bulk transfer arrangements between PCSPS and NIW, staff have a "one-off" option to exercise in that they either leave their past pensionable service with PCSPS (NI) and start afresh with Northern Ireland Water's Pension Scheme, or transfer their past pensionable service to the NIWPS. This decision has no impact on security of employment.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Regional Development if he plans to decentralise any Northern Ireland Water jobs from Belfast. (AQW 942/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that, as part of its drive to improve efficiency and reduce employee numbers, it has no immediate plans to decentralise any substantive number of jobs from Belfast. The Company has however advised that the Board will take account of the findings of the recently published Bain Report on the "Location of Public Sector Jobs", in coming to a final decision on the location of its new headquarters.

Flooding of the Westlink Underpass

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how, when and where the sludge from the flooding of the Westlink underpass on Saturday 16 August 2008 was disposed. (AQW 943/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the silt and sediment, deposited in Broadway underpass during

the flooding on 16 August 2008, was initially removed by the contractor for the M1/Westlink Scheme, HMC, and stockpiled in a designated area on site. This material was allowed to dry out before transportation off site to a licensed landfill site at Black Mountain.

Prevention of Future Flooding

Mr Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to ensure that areas that suffered as a result of the recent flooding will have measures put in place to prevent future flooding. (AQW 976/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Responsibility for drainage infrastructure is shared between my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, through Rivers Agency, Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water (NIW), the three main drainage organisations. I understand that you asked Minister Gildernew the same question. This answer, therefore, relates to actions by my Department.

The procedures for liaison and co-ordination of emergency response between the three drainage organisations are set out in Best Practice Guidelines. There is also a shared Flooding Hotspot list, which identifies those areas at greatest risk of flooding and the lead drainage organisation for each location. These organisations also take the lead in the development and implementation of measures to reduce the likelihood of future flooding, at these hotspots. There are also hotspot lists held by each of the drainage organisations, and they have their own programmes for dealing with these, on a priority basis.

In the case of Roads Service, the problems encountered at flooding locations are not always easy to resolve, as the solution may be prohibitively expensive, or not immediately obvious. Even with the most careful and thorough planning, gullies, road drains and watercourses can be simply overwhelmed by a deluge of rain falling within a short period of time.

NIW has advised of its major programme of Drainage Area Studies being undertaken to identify the infrastructure improvements required to increase capacity and improve environmental standards. Improvements recommended by the studies will be included in NIW's Capital Investment Programme, subject to available funding. However, in advance of any such sewer improvements, reviews have been carried out at the locations where out-of-sewer flooding occurred, to confirm that the sewerage networks in those areas are operating at full capacity. NIW has advised that any measures identified that will reduce the risk of further out-of-sewer flooding in these areas, through remedial maintenance work, will be implemented.

Properties at risk of flooding due to the hydraulic incapacity of the sewerage system are being included in NIW's Sewer Flooding Register and the information incorporated into the company's Capital Investment Programme for future improvement work, subject to competing priorities and available funding.

Bus Shelters

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to give the number of bus shelters in the Foyle constituency that have advertising facilities; and (ii) to outline any protocols relating to products which can be advertised in them. (AQW 1011/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, within the Foyle Constituency area, 42 bus shelters have advertising facilities.

Generally, any advertising approved by the Advertising Standards Authority is permitted on bus shelters with the exception of advertisements:

- promoting a union or political party;
- of a religious or racial nature;
- of a sexual nature or promoting contraception; and
- advertising tobacco products.

In addition, major drinks companies operate a voluntary ban on advertising in close proximity to schools, including advertising on bus shelters.

Car Clubs

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures the Roads Service is taking to promote car clubs. (AQW 1028/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Car clubs are an effective tool in the campaign to reduce congestion and improve air quality. My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is proposing to pilot the concept in Belfast, by setting aside up to three on-street city centre parking spaces for Car Clubs, and also seeking expressions of interest from Car Club operators. However, the provision of on-street Car Club parking spaces requires a Traffic Regulation Order to be made, and therefore it could take up to one year before the project is up and running.

Speed Limits Around Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on plans to introduce 20 mph speed limits around schools in the North Down constituency. (AQW 1033/09)

The Minister for Regional Development:

My Department's Roads Service encourages and supports 20 mph zones in situations where there is a risk to vulnerable road users, including in the vicinity of schools. However, I have currently no plans to generally reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph. Experience shows that 20 mph zones in residential areas are ineffective without also implementing traffic calming measures.

You may be aware that Roads Service is currently piloting variable speed limit schemes at two schools. Roads Service will continue to monitor and assess these pilots to determine their effectiveness in reducing traffic speeds at schools, before consideration is given to introducing a more widespread programme.

Parking Enforcement

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of parking tickets issued by NCP each month, since taking over responsibility for parking enforcement; and (ii) the amount of revenue generated as a result, broken down by constituency. (AQW 1045/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department became responsible for parking enforcement at the end of October 2006. Since then, the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued each month is as follows:

	2006	2007	2008
January	-	13,021	10,830
February	-	11,564	11,921
March	-	12,716	11,535
April	-	12,617	12,030
May	-	13,691	12,293
June	-	14,632	11,083
July	-	14,219	10,504
August	-	15,549	11,025
September	-	14,437	11,684
October	-	15,143	-
November	8,590	13,925	-
December	12,548	12,021	-

PCN revenue figures are not compiled by constituency or geographical area, so I am unable to give you the information as requested. The amount of PCN revenue received by Roads Service for each financial year is as follows:

	£Million
2006/07	1.63
2007/08	4.47
2008/09 (to end Sept 08)	1.65

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development what estimate has been made of the cost of providing secondary treatment for effluent from the combined Whitehead, Ballycarry, and Ballystrudder areas. (AQW 1048/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that proposals for improving the treatment of wastewater from Whitehead, Ballycarry and Ballystrudder have been considered and that the preferred solution involves a single treatment facility and a sea outfall. The proposal will remove Ballycarry and Ballystrudder waste water discharges from Larne Lough and Whitehead's discharge from the mouth of Belfast Lough.

Northern Ireland Water has made provision in the proposal that will accommodate secondary treatment in the future if this becomes necessary due to population growth or a change in legislation. To provide secondary treatment at this stage is estimated to cost an additional £5,200k, which would increase the projected cost to £15,280k.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development what estimate has been made of the cost of Northern Ireland Water's proposal to combine flows of waste water and sewage from Whitehead, Ballystrudder and Ballycarry, for discharge into the sea, via a new marine outfall at Cloghfin Bay, Islandmagee. (AQW 1049/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that proposals for the solution to the issues of inappropriate treatment of wastewater from Whitehead, Ballycarry and Ballystrudder have been considered and that the solution involves transfer of flows, screening and a sea outfall. This solution has been modelled and it has been demonstrated that the outfall will give dilution and dispersion in the Irish Sea to an extent which is acceptable to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. The proposals will remove the Ballycarry and Ballystrudder waste water discharges from Larne Lough and Whitehead's unscreened discharge from the mouth of Belfast Lough.

Provision will be made to accommodate secondary treatment in the future if this becomes necessary due to population growth or a change in legislation.

The cost of the proposals is currently estimated to be £10,080k.

Number of Page Views for DRD Website

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how many page views his Department's website received on average each month, for the last 12 months. (AQW 1076/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Over the past 12 months my Department's website has received the following page views;

Page Views	
October 2007	87,753
November 2007	92,023
December 2007	42,796
January 2008	62,549
February 2008	64,070
March 2008	63,458
April 2008	66,545
May 2008	42,021
June 2008	82,259
July 2008	64,616
August 2008	75,744
September 2008	72,386

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what action is being taken by Northern Ireland Water to prevent discharge of chemicals and pollutants from the water system onto the beach at Ballywater Road, in Millisle. (AQW 1086/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that since January this year wastewater from Millisle has been pumped via a new wastewater pumping station to the North Down/Ards Wastewater Treatment Works in Donaghadee. This replaced the former arrangement which involved a retention tank discharging directly to sea, with minimum treatment, through a short outfall pipe.

The pumping station incorporates an overflow which, with the consent of the Department of the

Environment, permits the discharge of dilute storm water during periods of prolonged heavy rainfall.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to improve water and sewerage facilities at Drumfad Road in Millisle. (AQW 1087/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the water mains on Drumfad Road were replaced earlier this year with work completed in March. There are no plans at present to replace the sewer on the Drumfad Road as it is performing satisfactorily.

Sewage

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how many incidents of (i) blocked sewers; (ii) fractured sewers; and (iii) sewage overflows, have been reported in the Ballynahinch district over the past 5 years. (AQW 1093/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the information requested is not held in a format that is readily accessible and a manual exercise will be required to extract it. Northern Ireland Water's Director of Operations, Phil Barker will write to you direct with the information when the exercise has been completed.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many times Northern Ireland Water hired local contractors; and (ii) the work they carried out in the past 5 years in the Ballynahinch area. (AQW 1094/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the information requested is not held in a format that is readily accessible and a manual exercise will be required to extract it. Northern Ireland Water's Director of Operations, Phil Barker will write to you direct with the information when the exercise has been completed.

Drainage Area Study

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) why the Drainage Area Study for Ballynahinch has not been commissioned; and (ii) when this process can begin. (AQW 1096/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that consultants were commissioned in August 2008 to carry out a Drainage Area Study of the Ballynahinch sewerage network. The first stage of the Study, which involves the acquisition of asset information and the production of a computer model, is scheduled for completion by April 2009 and the second stage, involving the production of a report identifying any upgrading or improvements needed to the network, is scheduled for completion by August 2009.

Section 75 Equality Legislation

Mr Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if the Section 75 equality legislation was given the appropriate consideration; and (ii) was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out when awarding the traffic enforcement contract to NCP.
(AQW 1130/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Section 75 considerations are not applied to the award of a contract, however, my Department gave the appropriate consideration to Section 75 legislation during the development of the policy for Decriminalised Parking Enforcement.

As regards an Equality Impact Assessment, a screening exercise, published in August 2003, concluded that a full Assessment was not required, as the proposed legislation would result only in the transfer of an existing enforcement function from the police to my Department.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Housing Scheme at Church Road, Rasharkin

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development if the proposed housing scheme at Church Road, Rasharkin, will be going ahead in this financial year; and to detail any problems the scheme is facing.
(AQW 646/09)

The Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): This scheme is currently included in the Social Housing Development Programme to start during 2009/10. I am advised that the existing sewerage disposal system does not have the capacity to accommodate further development in Rasharkin at present. However, I understand that NI Water's proposed infrastructure improvement works are due to commence in early 2009.

A planning application has been submitted and Triangle Housing Association (and their Consultants) have met with Planning Service to resolve issues around site layout and car parking provision.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development what preparations her Department has made for the transfer of Neighbourhood Renewal with the Chief Executive of each council; and what discussions her Department has had with each council on this issue.
(AQW 709/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Responsibility for the overall transfer of functions under the Review of Public Administration rests with the Department of Environment. However I have made clear my intention to explore ways relationships with councils can be developed further in the run up to full transfer.

To facilitate this, my Department has been in discussion with a number of councils - Belfast City Council, Derry City Council and a number of regional councils including Armagh and Newry and Mourne, to consider transferring some Neighbourhood Renewal functions in advance of 2011. This will provide valuable learning to support DSD and other Government departments through the transfer process.

Funding Allocation

Mr Poots asked the Minister for Social Development what proportion of funding has been allocated to (i) Belfast; (ii) Derry/Londonderry; and (iii) other towns and cities, in (a) 2005-06; (b) 2006-07; and (c) 2007-08.
(AQW 772/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Department does not hold information in the precise categories requested for all its funding areas. However, information is available in relation to certain Urban Regeneration and Housing aspects of departmental expenditure. This is set out in the table below:

	Belfast Amount £m (%)	Derry Amount £m (%)	Regional Towns/ Cities Amount £m (%)	Total Amount £m
2005-2006	176.32 (43%)	29.70 (7%)	200.95 (50%)	406.97
2006-2007	130.13 (35%)	41.04 (11%)	201.42 (54%)	372.59
2007-2008	202.86 (40%)	54.52 (11%)	245.79 (49%)	503.17

Housing Benefit

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for housing benefit there have been for (i) Ards Borough Council; and (ii) Strangford Borough Council, in each of the last three years. (AQW 841/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive records Housing Benefit information by District Office and not by District Council area. The table below gives the information for the District Offices that are closest to the Council areas requested.

District	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Newtownards	4311	4265	4198
Downpatrick	4075	4058	3964

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development the average length of time it takes the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division to process a child maintenance application; and how this compares with figures for the last 3 years. (AQW 842/09)

The Minister for Social Development: In August 2008 the average length of time to process a maintenance application was 120.3 days

March 2008	170.1 days
March 2007	300.3 days
March 2006	280.5 days

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications to the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division were received (i) between 12 to 24 months ago; (ii) between 24 to 36 months ago; (iii) between 36 to 48 months ago; and (iv) more than 48 months ago, and have yet to be cleared. (AQW 862/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The number of applications received by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division and the number of these applications that have yet to be cleared are outlined in the table below:

Period	Applications received	Yet to be cleared
12 to 24 months (Sep 06 to Aug 07)	7324	424
24 to 36 months (Sep 05 to Aug 06)	8335	389
36 to 48 months (Sep 04 to Aug 05)	8311	359
Over 48 months (Pre Aug 04)	12573	824

Supported Living Units

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions she has had with (i) Housing Associations; and (ii) the Housing Executive, in relation to supported living units; and what encouragement she is providing to (a) developers; and (b) applicants. (AQW 867/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The identification of need and inclusion of supported housing schemes in the five year Social Housing Development Programme is an operational matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. There is an agreed nomination arrangement through which individual housing associations are nominated to take the capital project forward. The established Supporting People commissioning structures which includes the Housing Executive, Health and Social Services and the Probation Board, have the opportunity to identify and prioritise the need for additional or new supported housing services. Any of these agencies can bring proposals to the local area Supporting People Partnership for consideration.

Budget Allocations

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to have the underspend of other Departments re-allocated to her Department to fund (i) social housing and (ii) co-ownership housing schemes. (AQW 889/09)

The Minister for Social Development: While decisions on budget allocations are a matter for the Executive, the in-year Monitoring Rounds provide Departments with the opportunity to register pressures and/or easements in their budgetary provision. In addition, Departments themselves can take pro-active management action to reallocate funding between their various programmes. Both avenues have been used to seek to increase funding in these areas, however, final decisions on the handling of pressures and easements rest with the Executive.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications to the Warm Home Scheme submitted in (i) 2007; and (ii) 2008, are still outstanding; and what action she is taking to address these delays. (AQW 891/09)

The Minister for Social Development: 1,279 referrals taken from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2007 are waiting to be surveyed. 969 referrals taken from 1 January 2008 to 30 September 2008 are waiting to be surveyed.

I have been actively targeting the waiting list to ensure that those in greatest need receive assistance first. All those people on the waiting list over 70 years of age have had surveys completed. Applicants with no central heating, solid fuel or Economy 7 heating will be treated as a priority. I have increased my Department's spending on the Warm Homes Scheme to £20 million this year and I will continue to bid for additional resources as part of the in-year monitoring process.

I met recently with the Minister for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Michelle Gildernew, and agreed a £400k contribution from DARD's Rural Poverty and Social Exclusion Fund to the Warm Homes Scheme budget to assist with improvements in energy efficiency in rural homes. The additional resources from DARD will assist around 630 homes which at present cannot be assisted by the Warm Homes Scheme because the cost exceeds the statutory grant limit.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr Paisley Jnr asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of Neighbourhood Renewal expenditure in Ballykeel, Ballymena; and in particular the use of £40,000 to clear overgrown communal space. (AQW 908/09)

The Minister for Social Development: I welcome the significant improvements that have been made in Ballykeel through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

I am also pleased that my Department was able to provide £40,000 of funding through Neighbourhood Renewal for an Environmental Improvement Scheme at Skye Park in Ballykeel. This project was brought forward by the Ballykeel Working Group in 2006 and is designed to allow the enhancement of an area that was being used for fly tipping and anti social behaviour, into an area that could be used as an attractive space for the community, encouraging healthy outdoor activities.

A number of ongoing issues with regard to maintenance of the site are currently being progressed by Ballymena Borough Council.

Housing Associations

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development if there are any watchdogs or government standards that Housing Associations have to abide by. (AQW 937/09)

The Minister for Social Development: All Registered Housing Associations are required to comply with the standards laid down in the Department's Regulatory Framework for Registered Housing Associations and the Housing Association Guide. Compliance against both of these is checked by the Department's Regulation & Inspection Unit on an ongoing basis.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are waiting to be included in the Warm Homes Scheme, broken down by Housing Executive district area. (AQW 954/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available in the format requested. Eaga, who manage the Warm Homes Scheme, collate the information from geographical areas which can be subdivided into postcode areas. The information in the table below shows the number of referrals awaiting survey by postcode area.

The number of referrals relates to applicants who have applied to Warm Homes Plus and are therefore aged 60+. Referrals for those applicants to Warm Homes are under 60 and there is no waiting list for this element of the Scheme.

Warm Homes Scheme – referrals to be surveyed						
Heating	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Total
Approved Applications	564	439	482	310	529	2,324
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	
	BT60	BT45	BT1	BT3	BT2	
	BT61	BT46	BT13	BT4	BT7	
	BT62	BT47	BT14	BT5	BT8	
	BT63	BT48	BT15	BT6	BT9	
	BT64	BT49	BT29	BT16	BT10	
	BT65	BT51	BT36	BT18	BT11	

Warm Homes Scheme – referrals to be surveyed						
Heating	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Total
	BT66	BT52	BT37	BT19	BT12	
	BT67	BT53	BT38	BT20	BT17	
	BT68	BT54	BT39	BT21	BT24	
	BT69	BT55	BT40	BT22	BT25	
	BT70	BT56	BT41	BT23	BT26	
	BT71	BT57	BT42	BT30	BT27	
	BT74	BT81	BT42	BT33	BT28	
	BT75	BT82	BT43		BT31	
	BT76				BT32	
	BT77				BT34	
	BT78				BT35	
	BT79					
	BT80					
	BT92					
	BT93					
	BT94					

Housing Executive Tenants

Mr Butler asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Housing Executive tenants in rent arrears in the (a) Dairyfarm District; and (b) the Lisburn District; and (ii) the amount of arrears owed to the Housing Executive in the (a) Dairyfarm District; and (b) the Lisburn District. (AQW 997/09)

The Minister for Social Development: At 31 August 2008 the number of Housing Executive tenants in arrears and the total amount for Dairyfarm District and Lisburn District are as follows:-

Dairyfarm	481 tenants	£370,711.62
Lisburn	1282 tenants	£457,586.64

Developers' Contributions

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development what progress is being made on the implementation of Article 40 on developers' contributions. (AQW 1059/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Legal responsibility for this matter rests with the Department of the Environment. I recently met with

the Environment Minister to press for the introduction of developers' contributions for social housing. Timing is dependent on progress being made on revisions to Planning Policy Statement 14 which has been with the Executive Committee for approval since June 2008. The Department of the Environment's work on a developers' contribution addendum to Planning Policy Statement 12 will begin after Planning Policy Statement 14 has issued for consultation.

Redevelopment of the Stanhope Site

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to provide an update on the residents living on the situation involving residents living on Stanhope Street in North Belfast, who are to move into new homes on 12 December 2008, and who are still waiting on the outcome of the vesting of their current homes. (AQW 1245/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The redevelopment of the Stanhope site will be delivered over two phases resulting in 23 new family homes for this community in North Belfast. Phase 1 consists of 10 homes and is due to be completed in December this year. Phase 2 will consist of 13 further new homes and involves the vesting of 7 private homes. The owners of these private homes have expressed an interest in remaining in the community and my Department and the NIHE are currently seeking to identify a solution to accommodate them.

I have asked for a full paper outlining the options, including the financial implications, to be presented to me within the next number of weeks.

Conflict Transformation Initiative

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding the Conflict Transformation Initiative has received from her Department since the Ministerial statement of 16 October 2007. (AQW 1267/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Following a High Court Decision, the Conflict Transformation Initiative has received £382,457.25 from the Department since the Ministerial statement of 16 October 2007.

The Supporting People Budget

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the caps made to the 'Supporting People' budget, what measures she is taking to aid vulnerable people in need of supported housing. (AQO 526/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Supporting People budget has been baselined for the three year period commencing 1 April 2008 at £61 million. This was determined during the Comprehensive Spending Review when spending needs had to be prioritised to meet demand. I decided however not to apply the recommended 3% efficiency saving to this fund.

Since Supporting People was introduced on 1 April 2003, the target to assist 12,000 people to live as independently as possible has been exceeded. It is estimated that there are approximately 23,000 people currently being assisted by this fund.

Baselining the budget does not necessarily freeze individual budgets and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive may make in year bids for additional resources in the usual way.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Social Development what budget her Department has set aside for the transfer of responsibility for neighbourhood renewal to local councils. (AQO 428/09)

The Minister for Social Development: I believe in a strong local government and have delivered a sizeable package of functions for transfer including the operational matters of Neighbourhood Renewal. In principle, the related budget will transfer with this function. However, the overall model for achieving this is still under consideration by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Let me just say that although budgets beyond the current CSR period are unknown it is unthinkable that a block of work should transfer from Central to local government without associated financial and other resources.

I am also happy to look at how Neighbourhood Renewal or some aspects of it can move over to local government ahead of the RPA schedule.

Financial Advice Services

Mr Cobain asked the Minister for Social Development if there has been an increase, since January 2008, in the number of people availing of financial advice services funded by her Department. (AQO 419/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Particular responsibility for Debt Advice rests with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Industry through a contract with the Citizens Advice Bureaux. Figures obtained from that Department show a less than 10% increase

for the first six months of this year for clients seeking advice on financial matters. Benefit uptake is one of the key priorities for the Social Security Agency. Since 2005 a targeted approach has been adopted to increasing benefit uptake which involves working under contract with the independent advice sector to offer vulnerable clients a full comprehensive assessment of all benefit entitlement. To date this has generated an additional £15 million in benefit.

My Department provides funding for Citizens Advice Bureaux, Advice NI, and The Law Centre and funding of £1 million is delivered through the Council network for generalist advice.

Shared Future Agenda

Mr Gallagher asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any initiatives she is taking in her Department to promote a Shared Future.

(AQO 521/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The shared future agenda is at the heart of all my work in the Department for Social Development. It's an agenda that presents challenges, particularly in terms of our segregated social housing stock, but long term it can only complement our core objective of tackling disadvantage and building communities.

When I launched my New Housing Agenda earlier this year, I made it clear that I wanted to provide housing solutions that would start to bring our people together rather than continue to keep them apart. A recent survey found that eight out of ten people wanted to live in mixed communities yet only half felt Government was doing enough to promote this.

Every new build scheme that comes forward onto our Social Housing Development Programme will now be screened to explore its potential for inclusion as a shared future development.

I was also pleased to launch our Shared Neighbourhoods Programme, with our partners the International Fund for Ireland, on 19 August. The programme will be delivered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Supporting and encouraging neighbourhoods where everyone in the community is valued and respected and where diversity is celebrated is fundamental to building lasting peace and a stable society in Northern Ireland and this Programme is a key plank in my New Housing Agenda.

We now have relative peace but we cannot just settle for that. Nor is coexistence and carve up an option either.

We have to build a genuine shared future and start the work now.

Warm Homes Scheme

Ms Purvis asked the Minister for Social Development, following the Northern Ireland Audit Office report and recommendations on the Warm Homes Scheme, when she will publish proposals for consultation on the scheme. (AQO 409/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My officials are currently finalising changes to the Warm Homes Scheme taking account of recent Northern Ireland Audit Office recommendations and a consultation paper will be published in October.

The Warm Homes Scheme has been a huge success and has benefitted approximately 65,000 households in Northern Ireland to date. However it has perhaps now captured most of the “quick wins” and needs to be refocused so that the maximum energy efficiency gains can be achieved going forward – and also that the people most in need of help, get help.

Streetscape Renewal Scheme

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development if the regeneration work in Fountain Lane, Belfast, will be completed by November 2008. (AQO 420/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The streetscape renewal scheme at Fountain Lane, Belfast will be completed by November 2008.

Department Owned Sites

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development to identify the number of sites owned by her Department in Carrickfergus. (AQO 509/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My Department owns two potential development sites in Carrickfergus at North Street and the Maritime Area. The Department is commissioning a Masterplan for Carrickfergus which will include identifying development proposals for these two sites. The Masterplan process is due to commence in November 2008. DSD also owns a number of small strips of land left over from the major marina development and a previous development by DOE. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive also has 11 undeveloped sites within the Carrickfergus area at.

- Dunluskin Site 1
- Dunluskin Site 2
- Oakwood Road
- Glenfield Estate Site 1
- Irish Quarter West
- McKeens Avenue

- Windmill Avenue
- Eden Orbits
- Prince Andrew Way
- Lower Woodburn
- 30 Davy’s Street

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development how the uptake of the warm home scheme in rural areas compares with uptake figure in urban areas. (AQO 405/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Eaga plc, which manages the Warm Homes Scheme on behalf of my Department, markets the scheme across Northern Ireland. It does not monitor grant take up between urban and rural areas. The recent Northern Ireland Audit Office, Value for Money Study, did undertake some limited analysis of grants awarded during January and February 2008. This analysis showed that 15% of grants were awarded to isolated rural households.

Proposed changes to the Warm Homes Scheme, including targeting of resource at hard to heat rural properties, will be subject to public consultation in the Autumn.

Fundraising to Restore the Nomadic

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on fundraising to restore the Nomadic by 2011. (AQO 422/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The SS Nomadic Charitable Trust has set a target of fundraising up to £1 million by the end of October 2008 and a further £4 million by March 2010. I understand that the Trust is on course to secure up to £1 million by the end of October 2008.

Equity-Sharing in the Housing Market

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has to extend equity-sharing in the housing market. (AQO 515/09)

The Minister for Social Development: As part of my New Housing Agenda, I am amending the House Sales Scheme to allow social housing tenants to buy part of their home, on an equity sharing basis, if they cannot afford to buy it all. Consultation on this proposal is ongoing.

It is also my intention to amend the Co-Ownership scheme to allow people to enter it more easily. People

will be able to buy 25% of the value of a property as opposed to the current minimum of 50%. I will also make it easier for people to purchase additional shares in their home by reducing the minimum increment from its current 12.5% to just 5%. These proposed changes will be dependent on satisfactory consultation and should be in place by April 2009.

This year, the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association was given £15 million at the start of the year, four times more than at the same time in the previous year. I am also seeking further funds as part of the ongoing September Monitoring Round.

In September this year I launched the "Own A Home" initiative in Portadown, which brought together in partnership Turkington's, Clanmil and South Ulster Housing Associations and Barclays Bank. This initiative gives first time buyers a real opportunity to get on the housing ladder by taking a part equity share in a house without the burden of a large deposit. I am aware of other developers and Housing Associations who have expressed an interest in this initiative and I very much welcome this.

Site at Churchill Park, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development why the Housing Executive is proposing to sell an area of green open community open space in the Churchill area of Bangor. (AQO 401/09)

The Minister for Social Development: As part of a review of its undeveloped lands, the Housing Executive took the view that this site at Churchill Park, Bangor would be unsuitable for social housing and declared it surplus to requirements. The Housing Executive subsequently tested the market to establish if there was any development interest in the site. As no potential purchasers emerged, the Housing executive has now taken the site off the market.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development the number of applications for the warm homes scheme in the East Derry/Londonderry constituency. (AQO 404/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Since the Warm Homes Scheme began in 2001 there have been 3,087 referrals from the East Derry/Londonderry constituency.

ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Upgrading the IT System

Mr O'Loan asked the Assembly Commission what plans it has to upgrade the IT system for Assembly Members in Parliament Buildings, to address the slow speed of the current system. (AQW 696/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): The Information Systems Office on behalf of the NI Assembly Commission provides a number of IT systems for use by Assembly Members in Parliament Buildings. The performance of each service is carefully monitored. Upgrades to the systems are undertaken regularly to either enhance capabilities or address performance issues.

Over the past 18 months the Commission has authorised the renewal of all desktop PCs and printers used by Members and Secretariat staff, along with an upgrade of the capacity of the underlying network equipment to bring these services up to modern standards.

Reviews of other Information Systems will be undertaken in a planned manner and any significant upgrades will be costed and brought to the Commission for approval. Currently such reviews are planned for the aging TV Distribution system, the NI Assembly website and the speed of Internet access from Parliament Buildings.

Official Report (Hansard) Recording System

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission what plans it has to change the Official Report (Hansard) recording system to enable those attending committee meetings to receive text messages and emails on mobile phones while the proceedings are being recorded. (AQW 698/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): Mobile phone interference with the sound recording in Committee rooms is an issue of which we are aware. In simple terms, the interference is caused by mobile phones being in relatively close proximity to the sound system in each Committee room. The recording equipment used by the Office of the Official Report (Hansard) merely receives a feed from the general sound system, which of course also provides feeds for other users. As such, it is the general sound system that needs to be looked at as opposed to the Hansard recording equipment.

I am happy to inform you, however, that the issue is currently under investigation, and that the Engagement Directorate will bring a paper on the matter to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group once that investigation is complete. It is also worth pointing out that the

Northern Ireland Assembly is not unique with regard to interference of sound systems by mobile devices, and preliminary work suggests that while it might be possible to introduce some measures to reduce the potential for interference, it may be at significant cost for only limited benefits in return.

I have asked the Director of Engagement to ensure that you are kept informed of progress on this matter.

Food Waste

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission what proportion of food supplied for (i) Committee meetings; and (ii) functions at Parliament Buildings, is wasted. (AQW 790/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter):

- (i) Committees generally make two types of food requests for meetings:
1. Basic morning and afternoon refreshments (Tea, coffee & Scones or Biscuits)
 2. Working lunch (finger buffet comprising of various hot and cold items)

Each clerk makes an order that is appropriate to the numbers of their committee. Clerks are mindful of wastage and costs, and from experience only order the precise number they require. Clerks will alter on a weekly basis the required numbers for that particular week.

From our experience the amount of waste for basic refreshments is minimal with a few scones or biscuits left over per meeting.

For working lunches the waste is again negligible as precise numbers for each food item is only ordered to cover the amount of people attending the working lunch.

To offer an exact percentage of each type of waste is difficult but as a guide, the following should be used:

1. Basic morning and afternoon refreshments (5%)
 2. Working lunch (5% - 8%) (Mainly sandwiches)
- (ii) For the purpose of this question, functions cover the following:
1. Formal lunches or evening meal
 2. Buffets (mainly sandwiches and salads)
 3. Basic hospitality (Tea, coffee and biscuits)

Function and events' organisers are meticulous in attempting to make bookings for exact numbers of

guests attending any event. From experience however, some organisers do have difficulty confirming numbers when making a booking. This is primarily due to guests not providing an RSVP. On these occasions, organisers will then make a firm order for a set number of guests.

To offer an exact percentage of each type of waste is again difficult. The following may be regarded as the upper level of waste that might be accepted.

- Formal lunches or dinners (5%)
- Buffets (5%-8%)
- Basic hospitality (2%)

Electricity Consumption

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission what plans it has to install motion sensitive light switches in rooms on the basement level of Parliament Buildings, in order to reduce electricity consumption. (AQW 851/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): I can confirm that energy saving work has already been carried out in the basement of Parliament Buildings. Motion sensor lighting was installed in the Gent's Toilet during the recent summer recess as a trial.

It is estimated that the cost of carrying out this work will be recovered in savings over a three year period – (the payback calculation is based on a current monthly load of 203 kWh, which equates to £217 per annum, installation costs of £450 and an estimated reduction in energy usage of 66%.)

Further to this, an application is to be made to the Central Energy Efficiency Fund for grant assistance for energy saving installations to install sensor lighting in additional toilets throughout the building.

A feasibility study is also ongoing regarding the installation of motion detectors for the lighting in the basement corridors and rooms although initial indications are that the installation costs for this work could prove to be prohibitive.

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