
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 21 November 2008

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

NSMC and BIC Meetings

Mr Newton asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the next NSMC and BIC meeting will take place in plenary. (AQW 2031/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The next British-Irish Council Summit is scheduled to take place in Wales on 20 February 2009.

It is planned to hold the next Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in advance of the February 2009 BIC Summit. No specific date has been agreed.

Programme for Government

Mr McQuillan asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many people attended each of the public meetings on the Equality Impact Assessment at a strategic level of the Programme for Government. (AQW 2129/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: On 29 January 2008, the Executive launched a 12-week public consultation exercise on the draft Equality Impact Assessment carried out at a strategic level on the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy. To facilitate direct engagement with interested parties and members of the public, officials held five public consultation seminars across Northern Ireland. Attendance at those events ranged from 2 to 25 as follows:

Date	Venue	Attendance
19/02/08	Spires Conference Centre, Belfast	11
28/02/08	Guildhall, Derry / Londonderry	25
04/03/08	Omagh Community House, Omagh	7
06/03/08	Newry Arts Centre, Newry	16
11/03/08	Clinton Centre, Enniskillen	2

Officials also attended on request a number of consultation meetings organised at local community level or by section 75 representative bodies as follows:

BELB Youth Worker Staff, Belfast	13/03/08
Millennium Centre, Loughiel	04/04/08
Limavady Community Forum, Dungiven	08/04/08
East Belfast Community Development Association	10/04/08

Disability Action, Belfast	17/04/08
Council Offices, Dungannon	18/04/08
Intercomm Centre, Antrim Road, Belfast	21/04/08
Hillyard House, Castlewellan	22/04/08

Attendance at those events also varied considerably from approximately 6 to in excess of 30. In addition, meetings were held on request with the following bodies both during and following the consultation process:

Equality Coalition, Belfast	09/04/08
Oakleaf Rural Community Network, Magherafelt	17/04/08
Rural Community Network, Cookstown	28/04/08
Equality Commission, Belfast	09/06/08
Homestart, Belfast	26/06/08

Gender Equality

Mr McKay asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what the Department is doing to promote gender equality. (AQW 2228/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Department's commitment to tackling gender inequality is outlined in the Programme for Government. It commits the Executive to progress the work of Departments in mainstreaming gender equality into policies, strategies and activities; or to promote gender specific measures to tackle identified gender inequalities.

To take this work forward, a Gender Advisory Panel has been established, ensuring that the views of key stakeholders will help inform policy initiatives and action plans.

Action plans to promote equality for women and men have been commissioned and received from all departments. They are currently being co-ordinated to provide a refreshed strategy to present to the Executive in early 2009.

Freedom of Information Applications

Mr Weir asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many freedom of information applications it has received since devolution. (AQO 1068/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: During the 18-month period from May 2007 to October this year, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has received a total of 239 requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

This represents a considerable increase in the number of requests received previously.

By comparison, prior to devolution, OFMDFM Department received a total of 217 requests for the 28-month period from the introduction of this legislation in January 2005, to April 2007.

Current Economic Crisis

Mr Ross asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when it will consider a package to deal with the current economic crisis. (AQO 1089/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have hosted a series of 'Cost of Living' meetings with the Banking, Construction, Business, Energy and Voluntary and Community sectors, as well as the Utility Regulator and Trade Unions, to gather information on the impact of the present difficult financial situation on local social and economic interests. These meetings have proved to be useful in providing a forum for each sector to give us

their view on where the most pressing difficulties exist and to discuss how we can best protect local interests in the current adverse economic conditions.

We hope to put a consolidated paper to the Executive shortly which will identify the areas for priority action and the potential for remedial action.

Investment for Children and Young People

Mrs Hanna asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans the junior Ministers have to investigate the policies of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly in relation to investment for children and young people, including the associated outcomes and benefits. (AQO 1174/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: As we continue to develop policies in relation to children and young people, the Junior Ministers constantly reference the relevant work of other jurisdictions. They are keen to learn from best practice which we can build upon to ensure our children and young people can enjoy a safe and secure childhood.

To this end, our officials from the Children and Young People's Unit have also been engaging with their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland to exchange information on policy and practice.

We have also agreed to join a four Nations network which comprises officials from here, Scotland, England and Wales and which will meet quarterly to discuss the concluding observations of the UN Committee and other issues relating to children and young people.

Newly Appointed Champions for Children and Young People

Mr Burns asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the role of the newly appointed champions for children and young people; and if the children and young people's unit will be able to financially support their recommendations. (AQO 1152/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Following agreement from the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People, the first meeting of the 'Champions for Children and Young People' took place on 5 August 2008. The key role of this group is to provide support to, liaise with, inform and advise the Ministerial Sub-Committee and its associated cross-departmental sub-groups.

It will be for the most appropriate department with policy responsibility for an issue to fund any agreed proposals.

However, much of the work of the champions is likely to relate to medium-term proposals and any recommendations that are agreed will be considered in the context of the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Children and Young People's Unit within OFMDFM does not deliver services to children and young people, but will continue to provide support to the Champions for Children and Young People as they progress their work.

Gender Advisory Panel

Ms J McCann asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Gender Advisory Panel; and how the Gender Equality Strategy is being implemented. (AQO 1150/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Our commitment to tackling gender inequality is outlined in our Programme for Government. It commits the Executive to progress the work of Departments in mainstreaming gender equality into policies, strategies and activities; and to promote gender specific measures to tackle identified gender inequalities.

To help take this work forward, a Gender Advisory Panel has been established, ensuring that the views of key stakeholders will inform policy initiatives and action plans.

The Gender Advisory Panel met in May 2008. Since then, Junior Ministers have maintained an awareness of issues and concerns through various meetings and events involving representative organisations.

In order to implement the Gender Strategy, action plans to promote equality for women and men have been commissioned and received from all departments. Once completed, finalised plans will be discussed with the OFMDFM Committee before being submitted for Executive approval.

Child Poverty

Ms Lo asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the impact of the current economic downturn on levels of child poverty and on the Executive's ability to meet its targets for the reduction of child poverty. (AQO 1166/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The economic downturn will undoubtedly have an adverse impact on living standards in general and that includes the living standards of households with children.

It is not possible at this juncture to assess precisely what those impacts will be in terms of the Executive meeting its very challenging commitments to reducing child poverty. However, work is in progress which will examine how the purchasing power of different households has changed as a result of recent increases in retail prices. This work is due to report in early January 2009.

We are concerned about the potential impact of the economic downturn and this is an issue which will be considered closely by the Ministerial Sub-Committee for Children and Young People.

Policy Formulation Issues

Mr McNarry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the contacts it has had with Departments on policy formulation issues, during the period when the Executive has failed to meet. (AQO 1086/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Contacts between the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and all other Departments, on both policy formulation and general issues, continue. All Ministers continue to fulfil their responsibilities within their own Departments, and inter-departmental consultation at both Ministerial and official levels, including on draft Executive papers, is ongoing. Ministers may seek decisions on urgent issues through the Urgent Procedure as set out in paragraph 2.14 of the Ministerial Code.

Children and Young People Projects

Mr A Maginness asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the Children and Young People projects which have either closed or are at risk of closure due to inadequate funding. (AQO 1159/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Children's Fund was administered by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and supported 89 cross-cutting projects. This initial funding was intended to be for two years only and one of the funding criteria was that projects should be time bound or sustainable by the end of the two years. Funding was due to end in March 2008 but, after intervention by the Junior Ministers, letters were issued to all 89 projects confirming that additional resources would be provided for one year to enable them to source alternative funding streams beyond March 2009.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has informed us that he has commissioned a review of all of the 57 Children's Fund projects which he considers to have a health and social care focus. The outcome of this review will be used to determine which of those projects he will continue to fund beyond March 2009. The remaining 32 projects have been encouraged to seek alternative funding, and we understand that several have already succeeded.

In relation to the after schools projects, Junior Ministers are continuing to hold discussions on this issue and hope to be in a position to provide further information soon.

Investment Strategy

Mr G Robinson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what implications recent court decisions will have on the delivery of the Investment Strategy. (AQO 1085/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The procurement of the Integrated Supply Team framework agreement to design and build projects across the wider government office and specialist building estate (excludes roads, water, health, transport, schools and housing) was challenged by an unsuccessful contractor in the High Court. Such litigation is not in the long-term interests of the construction industry or Government and the Department of Finance and Personnel's legal advisors are considering the court judgment in detail.

In the interim, in order to minimise the impact of the judgement, Central Procurement Directorate has already been preparing to take forward the procurement of Investment Strategy projects on an individual basis. Given the circumstances there is a possibility of a delay on a number of projects some of which might be extended by 3 months.

Maze Site

Mr Lunn asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the development of the Maze site; and if alternative proposals have been considered that would fulfil the conditions attached to gifting of the site. (AQO 1164/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: As we outlined in our answer to AQO 638/09, the extensive programme to demolish buildings and structures at Maze/Long Kesh will be completed within this calendar year. A first phase of substantial remediation work to remove contamination at part of the site is also nearing completion. We hope to embark on a second phase shortly to include capping two landfill areas and removing diesel oil spillages from soil and ground water. Both the demolition and remediation works are essential in preparing the site for any future redevelopment.

We have not at this point considered regeneration projects for the Maze/Long Kesh other than those contained within the Masterplan published in 2006.

Current Economic Crisis

Mr Spratt asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what meetings it has held to inform its Ministers of the present economic difficulties. (AQO 1120/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have hosted a series of 'Cost of Living' meetings with the Banking, Construction, Business, Energy, and Voluntary and Community sectors, as well as the Utility Regulator and Trade Unions, to gather information on the impact of the present difficult financial situation on local social and economic interests.

These meetings have proved to be useful in providing a forum for each sector to give us its view on where the most pressing difficulties exist and to discuss how we can best protect local interests in current adverse economic conditions.

Civic Forum

Mr Bresland asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline, as part of the consultation on the Civic Forum, what representations were made in relation to an online, interactive relationship with civic society. (AQO 1066/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The consultation phase of the review of the Civic Forum commenced on 29 May 2008 and ran until the end of August 2008. Of the 60 written submissions received, five referred to the use of the internet or email to disseminate information on the work of the Forum, to improve communications between Forum members, or as a means of interaction between the Forum and other bodies representative of civic society. None of the written submissions suggested an online, interactive relationship between Government and civic society.

In addition to the written consultation process, the review team held meetings with former members of the Civic Forum, nominating bodies and academics. One academic described innovative approaches to citizen participation and referred the review team to an article on on-line citizenship which he had jointly authored.

The review team was also approached by a local businessman who advocated consideration of a web-based process similar to that used for gathering the views of citizens on legislation in the American state of Idaho.

Youth Debate

Mr Doherty asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assessment it has made of the engagement with young people in the Youth Debate held in Parliament Buildings on 23 October 2008.

(AQO 1114/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Junior Ministers held the Youth debate as part of their commitment to hearing the voice of young people. They wanted to listen to the views of young people and provide an opportunity for them to be active participants and have their opinions heard on an issue relevant to them. The theme of the debate was anti-social behaviour.

All MLAs were invited to nominate participants between the ages of 11 and 17 to take part and a total of 52 young people were put forward. The debate was attended by approximately 140 young people covering a wide cross section of the community, including young people coming from youth groups and youth councils, young people from the traveller community, young people in care, young people in contact with the juvenile justice system and young people with disabilities.

In terms of engagement, the event was very successful with active participation by all the young people in the workshops held on the morning of the debate. Fifteen young people were nominated to speak in the Chamber to outline the key issues discussed in their groups and they presented their points extremely well.

The number of additional young people wishing to speak at the end also highlighted the commitment and desire by the young people to engage in the process and put forward their opinions.

The Junior Ministers undertook to feed these points back to the Ministerial Sub-Committee, in particular the cross-departmental sub-group considering vulnerable young people to ensure the points made help inform future work.

The Junior Ministers will also continue to look at other ways of engaging with children and young people to ensure their views are sought and taken into account.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Department Projects

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the successful projects her Department has completed in the North Antrim constituency, since she came into office. (AQW 2081/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The following table details the successful projects since May 2007:-

Name of Project	Description of Project
Successful projects completed by Forest Service	
Harvesting of trees	47,000 m ³ harvested, with associated replanting and maintenance actions.
Conservation	Assistance with Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on restoration work to Breen Oakwood ponds Special Area of Conservation.
Squirrel preservation	Facilitated Red Squirrel preservation using feeders and crop manipulation jointly with the Glens Red Squirrel Group.
Deer management	Establishment of deer lawns in Ballycastle and ongoing monitoring of population levels.

Name of Project	Description of Project
Boundary drain cleaning	250 metres of boundary drains cleaned.
Successful projects completed by Animal Welfare	
Bluetongue eradication	Bluetongue was detected in animals imported to a North Antrim farm in February 2008. The Minister took prompt and decisive action: the animals concerned (and in-contacts) were culled, restrictions were imposed, and additional testing was carried out. This action was successful in stopping the Bluetongue becoming established here.
Successful projects completed by Rivers Agency	
Ballymoney Ring Road Drain	Drainage infrastructure (pipelaying and river channel works) project constructed by Rivers Agency's Coleraine Area Office, Direct Labour Organisation to facilitate drainage from development of approximately 10 hectares of land in Ballymoney; Project completed in December 2007.
Successful projects completed by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)	
Further and Higher Education Programmes	Further Education and Higher Education programmes provided for those wishing to pursue a career in the agri-food industry and delivered at the CAFRE Campuses of Greenmount, Loughry and Enniskillen. Courses are open to application to those who meet the required entry criteria from across the North.
Industry training programme	Training courses for those working in the agri-food industry, which are delivered locally across the North or at the CAFRE Campuses of Greenmount, Enniskillen and Loughry.
Knowledge and Technology Transfer programme	This programme aims to equip those in the agri-food industry with the knowledge, skills and experience to adopt appropriate technologies and systems within their businesses. CAFRE Technologists and Development Advisers work with the industry to encourage the adoption of the technology or system within their businesses. This is achieved through training courses, normally delivered throughout the North, Demonstration events on the College Farm/local farms or Food Processing Units and through mentoring.
Benchmarking programme	This programme involves the collection of physical and financial data from farmers and growers, the analysis of this data by CAFRE Business Technologists and comparison with similar farm businesses. Through this programme the strengths and weaknesses of farm business performance can be identified and actions to improve performance implemented. This programme is available to farmers and growers across the North.
Successful projects completed under the Rural Development Programme	
Business Development Support for North Antrim Leader	As part of the Leader support which North Antrim will offer, Business Development Support will be offered to successful applicants. It will ensure a coherent and innovative approach is adopted by the project promoters.
The Irish Sheep Dog (Phase 2)	The project focuses on expanding the sheepdog enterprise on a small farm.
ER&M E-commerce Business	Assistance to ER&M for the appointment of a Marketing Consultant to complement the work through existing markets and launch the business fully into new markets.
Glenovation	This project is to provide Glenovation with a technology related developer who will be based in Ballycastle providing Internet programming services mainly to international clients.
Gracehill Farm Foods	To develop three food products and establish a small food processing unit that will manufacture quality black and white puddings and haggis.
Rankin Engraving	The addition of a new laser engraver to enable Rankin Engraving and Graphics to offer a greater portfolio of services to the wider rural community in which it serves, as well as across all of N. Ireland.
Beachview Cottages (Extension)	Extension to accommodation facilities.
Steel Shed Company	The purchase of the necessary plant equipment, such as, concrete moulds, vibrating table, handling equipment, jigs, cutting/welding equipment and associated tools for the manufacture of both concrete sectional and steel buildings.
CM Recycling	Purchase of an industrial shredding machine for the recycling of green waste which will allow them to supply local authorities, agriculture industry, plant nursery and equestrian centres as their product portfolio expands.
A Step Further	J & S Stairs relocation and expansion project.

Name of Project	Description of Project
MJ Doherty Building & Joinery Contractors	Funding for MJ Doherty Building & Joinery Contractors to purchase machinery for the manufacture of bespoke pieces of furniture.
Lismoyle Engineering Co Ltd	Purchase of specialist machinery to assist in manufacturing high specification stainless steel fittings and railings for leisure boats.
Bespoke Jewellery Manufacturing	Purchase of specialist equipment which will help improve the product range and manufacturing techniques.
GMC Engineering – Metal Fabrication Equipment	Acquisition of additional operational resources in order to compete effectively, and provide a long term sustainable business for the rural area, in which the company resides.
Nirox IT	Investment in IT infrastructure to support the businesses current growth and secure the employment of existing staff and help the company expand to meet demand.
McCurdy specialist engineering	To improve the efficiency and profitability of the business by bringing in house a key production method, namely the metalworking of specialist decorative scrolls.
North Antrim Leader (NAL) Business Capital Support Programme	NAL will put in place a micro business development programme which will address an identified need for small business support in the North Antrim area. The programme will aim to stimulate economic growth through the provision of targeted capital assistance.
PBS Office Provision	Renovation of an old farm building to provide a purpose built call centre and office facility to allow PBS Office Provision's current operation to expand, creating flexible, local employment in a rural area.
MJF Sailpower Coaching	To establish a sail coaching facility in Cushendall serving all of Ireland, aimed at the established sailor wishing to improve and participate more fully in the sport of sail racing.
Tourism car parking at Fairhead	The provision of secure off road car parking for climbers and walkers who visit the Fairhead cliffs.
Woolcraft	To identify options for wool and sheep products, look at product development and marketing of these new products. This project will also aim to raise the profile of wool production.
Biker Tourism	This is a pilot initiative aimed at encouraging small businesses to tap into the biker tourism sector and to provide facilities for these bikers through co-operation by accommodation providers.
Reducing Risks/Cutting Costs (North Antrim Leader+)	This self implementation project focuses on the barriers to growth for small businesses. The project will look at ways of reducing insurance costs and implementing Health & Safety practices.
Artisan food producers country market	To develop and market artisan food producers by developing markets for selling.
Enterprise Networking Europe	This project will involve partners initially in Finland and France with Polish and Estonian partners joining shortly. All the participating groups work with small enterprises and have identified a need to diversify their markets and learn from their experience with similar enterprises in other EU states.
Myra & Robert Gault	Modernising of refrigeration in shop.
Celtic Crafts	Installation of shop windows and painting to exterior of shop.
Ballyvoy Service Station	Re-establishment of a business shop.
Strand one: Rural Service Centre Hubs Programme	Rural Service Centre Hubs Programme, Development Support and associated financial Technical Assistance.

Single Farm Payments

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of Single Farm Payments to be issued have been paid out; and when all payments will be completed. (AQW 2128/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: European Council legislation permits the payment of 2008 Single Farm Payments to start in December 2008. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will publish a payment schedule before the end of November setting out its payment targets.

Woodland Preservation Order

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has considered introducing a Woodland Preservation Order, as suggested by some Non-Government Organisations. (AQW 2134/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: On 19 June 2008, the Executive Committee agreed that a new Forestry Bill could be drafted to replace the Forestry Act (NI) 1953. The Forestry Bill will contain a provision to regulate the felling and regeneration of woodlands by means of a licence. Formal, detailed instructions will be issued to the Office of the Legislative Counsel shortly.

It is anticipated that the Bill will be ready for introduction to the Assembly in March/April 2009, most likely after the Easter recess.

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the Farm Nutrient Management scheme, how many applications have (i) started with the possibility of completion by the 31 December 2008 deadline; (ii) started with no possibility of completion by the deadline; (iii) been approved, have yet to start but are intended to start; and (iv) been approved, have yet to start and will not be started, detailing the reasons for not starting; and when the last approval was granted. (AQW 2137/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) Figures obtained from a recent Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS) telephone survey would indicate that, in addition to 204 applicants who have their works completed but who have not yet submitted their claims, a further 1086 (612 who had notified the Department that they are at interim inspection level and 474 of the 950 who had started work at the time of survey) have started and are likely to have their work completed by 31 December 2008. However, we cannot be definite on all these being completed by 31 December 2008.
- (ii) We estimate that 476 applicants who have started their works are less likely to have all their works completed by 31 December 2008 although some of these may complete.
- (iii) 375 applicants with approvals indicated that they intended starting their works and some of these could complete depending on the storage being built.
- (iv) 140 applicants indicated that they did not intend starting works. We do not have specific reasons why applicants made that decision. A further 73 applicants are undecided as to whether or not they will proceed with their works. A small number of approvals continue to issue as farmers come back with the required information.

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) what provision her Department has made for those not meeting the 31 December 2008 Farm Nutrient Management scheme deadline; (ii) when applicants will be informed of these provisions; (iii) how and when her Department determined the 'reasonable costs'; and (iv) if these 'reasonable costs' are being monitored and revised. (AQW 2159/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) The closure procedures for the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS) include provisions for those who will be unable to fully complete works by 31 December 2008.

In individual cases, where works have been delayed beyond 31 December 2008 due to exceptional circumstances, grant will be considered on works up to 2 March 2009. A minimum level of work must be completed by 31 December 2008. Evidence of exceptional circumstances must be provided and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

- (ii) On 17 November 2008 comprehensive details of scheme closure procedures were sent to all applicants who have yet to submit a claim.
- (iii) The Department's Chartered Quantity Surveyor calculated maximum reasonable costs for a range of items available for funding under the scheme. These reasonable costs were determined in October 2005.

As the scheme progressed, additional items were assessed using the same process and added to the reasonable cost list.

- (iv) The reasonable costs are not being revised as the Department has no budget provision for inflationary increases within the scheme.

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the Farm Nutrient Management scheme, how many applications have been (i) approved and completed; (ii) approved, completed and paid; and (iii) approved, completed but not paid. (AQW 2170/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) A total of 4287 approvals have been issued under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS). Of these, 4203 are still live, as 84 applicants cancelled after receiving their approvals. At 27 October 2008, 1848 applicants have completed and submitted their claims for payment. The results of a telephone survey carried out during the period 29 October to 4 November 2008 indicate that a further 204 applicants had completed their works but had not yet submitted their claims.
- (ii) 1848 applicants had completed their works and submitted their claims. Of these, 1521 have received their full payment and 108 have received a part payment. The remaining claims are currently being processed for payment.
- (iii) 219 applicants have been approved, completed their works and submitted their but are yet to receive payment.

Farm Nutrient Management Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the uptake of the Farm Nutrient Management scheme. (AQW 2238/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A total of 4287 approvals have been issued under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (FNMS). Of these, 4203 remain live, as 84 applicants cancelled after receiving their approvals. On the basis of a recent survey, we expect 3138 applicants to have their works completed by 31 December 2008 and that a further 495 have the possibility of completing work by then. In addition we expect that another 365 will have work well progressed by then.

At 27 October we have received 1848 claims for payment of which 1521 have received their full payment and 108 have received a part payment amounting to £48.7m.

Small Rural Businesses

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many meetings she has had with the Minister of the Environment on assistance for small rural businesses. (AQW 2252/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since assuming office in May last year I have had one relevant meeting, a bilateral discussion with the then Minister of the Environment, Arlene Foster, held on 3 December 2007.

The subject matter centred on the next steps in the Review of Public Administration and the clustering of local councils to assist in the delivery of Axes 3 and 4 of the NI Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, which together will account for some £100 million over the programme period.

Three measures in Axis 3 have the potential to benefit small rural businesses directly: diversification into non-agricultural activities (3.1); business creation and development (3.2); and the encouragement of tourism activities (3.3).

In addition, officials from my Department have liaised with colleagues in the Department of the Environment regarding legislation to enable councils to implement these measures and where, I am pleased to report, work is now almost complete.

Animal Cruelty Offences

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1700/09, how many people have (i) been convicted of animal cruelty offences; and (ii) received the maximum available sentence, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2257/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department's findings on the number of people convicted of animal cruelty offences and the number of people who have received the maximum available sentence in the last five years is detailed in the following table:

Year	No Of Welfare Convictions	Maximum Disqualification	Maximum Fine	Maximum Imprisonment
2003/2004	9	1	-	-
2004/2005	4	-	-	-
2005/2006	10	-	-	-
2006/2007	8	-	-	1
2007/2008	18	-	-	1
Total	49	1	-	2

Strategic Flood Maps Project

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the costs of the Strategic Flood Maps project, broken down by (i) research fees; (ii) consultancy fees; (iii) secretariat fees; (iv) promotion and marketing fees; and (v) upkeep of the website. (AQW 2276/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The estimated costs of the Strategic Flood Map Project broken down as requested are as follows:

- (i) Research Fees – Nil.
- (ii) Consultancy fees – £288k
- (iii) Secretariat fees – Nil
- (iv) Promotion and marketing fees – £29k
- (v) Upkeep of the website - £14.5k maintenance and contingency arrangements.

EU December Fisheries Council

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the priorities for this year's EU December Fisheries Council. (AQW 2410/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My main priority is to ensure that fishing opportunities for prawns in the Irish Sea are maintained at current levels. Due to a number of concerns about the stock assessment approach which affects all prawn fisheries in the Irish Sea, Celtic Sea, West of Scotland and the North Sea the Commission has proposed TACs linked with recent landings. For the Irish Sea the Commission has proposed a cut of 15%. A reduction of this size would have a significant impact on our prawn fleet.

I will be arguing strongly that the stock continues to be sustainably fished at current effort levels in Area VIIa where most of the local fleet operates. I will oppose the "use it or lose it" approach suggested by the ICES advice which is the consequence of fishing patterns in other parts of Area VII.

I will be resisting further cuts in Cod TAC on the basis that will simply result in more discards and will have no practical effect in reducing cod mortality. I am pleased to see the Commission has proposed an increase in the Haddock TAC for Area VIIa of 15% – this was one of the issues I raised with Commissioner Borg when I met him in July.

I will be pressing for an increase in the Herring TAC where again there the science indicates that the Irish Sea stock is in a healthy state. For other stocks I hope to achieve a rollover of TACs set for 2008.

It is already clear that this Council is going to be a difficult one and in general the picture is gloomy. There are a great many issues to address and it will take hard negotiations just to preserve existing fishing opportunities

Flood Management

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the Rivers Agency and Forestry Service work together to maximise the use of forestry in flood management. (AQW 2411/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: At the present time Forest Service assists Rivers Agency with the provision of strategic locations for storage of emergency flood response materials such as sandbags. It is intended to further explore this arrangement to see if any other opportunities for enhanced cooperation during flood emergencies exist. Both Forest Service and Rivers Agency have visited natural flood management demonstration sites in Scotland and have taken part this year in a seminar on managing flood risks in changing climates.

As part of longer term flood risk management strategy, Forest Service, in liaison with Rivers Agency, will consider any contribution to be made from appropriate afforestation, using existing forestry funding mechanisms to encourage creation of new woodland in relation to flood management.

Health Check Negotiations

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to simplify the current Health Check negotiations. (AQO 1112/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Simplification is a theme which I am pursuing very strongly during the Health Check negotiations. The Commission's proposals will bring some simplification through the abolition of set-aside and a reduction in the number of types of entitlements, as well as removing some cross-compliance measures which are not relevant to farmers. However, I am of the view that we can go further and, in particular, reduce the administration associated with the Single Farm Payment Scheme.

With this in mind, my Department has been working closely with regions in Britain and we have together submitted a package of simplification proposals to the EU Council of Ministers. I should point out that my Department has been instrumental in determining the content of the simplification package that has been put forward. While the suggestions in this paper have received strong support from Member States, unfortunately it will be very difficult to achieve progress due to opposition from the Commission. Nevertheless, we will be making every effort on this issue during the final negotiations this week and pushing the Commission very hard.

Marine Tourism

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to promote marine tourism in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. (AQO 1183/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As the member will be aware, the Department supports the operation of the Loughs Agency, whose functions include the development of marine tourism in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.

The Loughs Agency has engaged with relevant stakeholders in seeking to advance the development of marine tourism and regularly convenes tourism sub-committees of its advisory forum in each of the two catchments (Carlingford and Foyle).

The Loughs Agency's Marine Tourism Development Strategy was approved by the North South Ministerial Council at its meeting in Aquaculture and Marine Sectoral Format on 21 November 2007. The Loughs Agency has submitted an application to Special European Union Programmes Body, seeking €4 million of Interreg IV funds in order to implement this strategy. The outcome of this application process is awaited. If successful, this funding will permit the Agency to deliver strategic projects that will accelerate the development of the marine tourism potential of the Foyle and Carlingford regions. Further funding opportunities are also being pursued.

In 2008 the Agency delivered funds to a number of marine tourism projects through its financial assistance policy. Projects supported included efforts to facilitate access to watersports, facilities for sea anglers, boating events and eco-tourism.

A call for applications to the financial assistance policy for the 2009 period is currently open and will seek applications under a number of themes, including: marinas, moorings or launch facilities for water based leisure; navigation aids to support water based leisure and tourism; access for disabled boat users; water safety improvement, including display of information; and marine eco tourism.

Poultry Industry

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to assist the poultry industry to meet European Union requirements under the Nitrates and Groundwater Directives.

(AQO 1073/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: To assist the industry to comply with the Nitrates Directive comprehensive guidance was issued to all farmers in 2007. In addition, the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise delivered a series of training workshops and information events for farmers across the north, to support the guidance.

The storage of poultry litter in field heaps before its beneficial use as an organic fertiliser is allowed by the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations until the end of 2008. A joint government and industry working group is currently reviewing the environmental impact of this practice. It will shortly be making recommendations on options for storing and managing poultry litter post 2008.

Farming and Rural Communities

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effects on farming and rural communities of the Executive not meeting.

(AQO 1131/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am not aware of any immediate effects on the farming and rural communities. I continue to discharge my responsibilities as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Executive business may be dealt with by an 'urgent procedure' process.

The North South Ministerial Council meeting in Agriculture Sectoral format which was scheduled for Friday 19 September and the Aquaculture & Marine Sectoral Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 12 November 2008 could not take place due to the postponement of Executive meetings.

There are no other areas of my Department's business that have been affected by the postponement of Executive meetings.

Milk Production

Mr Poots asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to re-introduce export refunds to aid milk production.

(AQO 1146/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I share the industry's concern about the current weak markets for milk powders and the sharp drop in prices at the October United Dairy Farmers' milk auction. I, therefore, took the opportunity to highlight to Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for DEFRA, the dependence of our dairy industry on milk powders and to ask him to support the re-introduction of export refunds. I also plan to meet with dairy industry representatives within the next few weeks to discuss the issue.

Rural Development Fund Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will announce the Rural Development Fund scheme.

(AQO 1109/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The European Commission approved our EU Rural Development Programme in July 2007 and I announced the approval later that month. The fund is worth in excess of some £500 million.

Since then a number of schemes contained within the RDP have opened with the remainder due to open early next year.

With specific reference to diversification opportunities, a number of measures exist.

Axis 3 provides direct assistance for on farm diversification amounting to around £20 million for the period up until 2013. Currently Councils are receiving animation money to establish locally based strategies with Local Action Groups. Some of these strategies will have a diversification focus and in some areas, funding assistance could be available early in 2009.

Under Axis 1, other measures that provide assistance include, Focus Farms where those thinking of diversifying can visit a Focus Farm and learn at first hand from the experiences of other farmers. In addition the Farm Family Options Measure will assist farmers by providing “mentoring” support and, where applicable, funds for skills training. Once again, both measures should be open for application early next year.

Black Dot Disease

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the threat of black dot disease to potato crops. (AQO 1133/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Agronomic and scientific advice indicates that potato crops in the North of Ireland are at a low risk from the surface blemishing Black Dot disease. In addition, the severe wet weather of August should not have significantly increased the risk of crops becoming infected with this disease.

Slurry Tanks

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the proposed timetable for the payment of grant aid in relation to slurry tanks that have been constructed, inspected and passed for payment. (AQO 1163/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The timetable for payment of grant aid under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme is set by the EU. The scheme closes on 31 December 2008 and all payments must be made by 31 December 2009.

On submitting their claim after work has been fully completed, an applicant can request full payment which is subject to a pre payment inspection. In such cases we endeavour to make the payment within 12 weeks of the date of receipt of a valid claim. Alternatively, the applicant can seek a part payment which, provided all of the information has been received, will be paid within 4 weeks of receipt of the claim. The balance of grant will be paid once an on-farm inspection has confirmed that the work has been completed to the required specification.

Health Check Negotiations

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Common Agricultural Policy Health Check negotiations at the October Council in Luxembourg. (AQO 1111/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The meeting of the EU Agricultural Council in Luxembourg saw a series of tri-lateral meetings between the Presidency, the Commission and each Member State to discuss the main outstanding issues on the CAP Health Check negotiations. It is expected that a political agreement will be reached by EU Member States at the November meeting due to commence on 18 November.

I am hopeful that the eventual agreement, while not a fundamental reform, will bring benefits to local farmers. For example, we should see the abolition of set-aside and a reduction in the number of types of Single Farm Payment entitlements, both of which would be welcome simplifications. I also expect that we will achieve a satisfactory outcome on modulation, one that will leave overall modulation rates unchanged for most farmers in the North while avoiding disruption to our existing rural development programme. It is anticipated that more

payments will be decoupled from production, which will move the EU closer to our position of full decoupling and remove competitive distortions. I am also hopeful that we will achieve the means to a soft landing for the dairy industry in the run up to the abolition of milk quotas in 2015.

DARD Direct Proposals

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how she intends to take forward the DARD Direct proposals. (AQO 1123/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A report detailing findings and recommendations from the Equality Impact Assessment consultation, which includes a proposal to progress a 12 office model rather than a 10 office model, has been forwarded to the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee and the staff union (NIPSA) for their views. The revised proposal has also been resubmitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel for their views. This is a requirement of the Green Book on economic appraisal which requires the Department to consult with the Department of Finance and Personnel to ensure that any proposed changes do not alter their view of the project. After I have considered these responses, I will announce my decision on the number and location of DARD Direct offices.

Following this, my Department will liaise with the Department of Finance and Personnel to identify alternative premises where required and initiate the procurement process for upgrading existing premises that can be adapted to meet the DARD Direct office specification.

In the meantime DARD staff in 5 offices are already adopting the DARD management processes to ensure that the improvement in the quality of service delivery can be experienced by farmers and farm families at the earliest opportunity in the roll out of DARD Direct.

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Irish Language

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail what his Department has done to promote the Irish Language, since he came into office. (AQW 2067/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): Since my appointment as Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure on 9 June 2008 I have progressed work within my department on a regional language strategy to meet the needs of both Irish and Ulster Scots. I expect to present a paper to the Executive on this matter in due course.

On 4 July 2008 I attended a North South Ministerial Council, North/South Language Sectoral format meeting at which the Foras na Gaeilge 2008 budget and Business Plan and Corporate Plan for 2008-2010 were approved. At the meeting Ministers approved the transfer of the staff, functions and funding of Colmcille to Foras na Gaeilge and Bórd na Gáidhlig to take forward its aims and objectives.

I have also met various Irish Language lobby groups including, representatives from POBAL and Sinn Fein, to discuss Irish language issues.

Following on from the £12million funding which the Department provided under Direct Rule to establish the Irish Language Broadcast Fund, (ILBF); in July 2008 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Shaun Woodward, announced additional funding of £6million to the ILBF for the remaining two years of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Northern Ireland Events Company

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what the proposed winding up date is for the Northern Ireland Events Company. (AQW 2368/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Investigations carried out by KPMG, on behalf of the Department, into how the financial deficit at the Northern Ireland Events Company arose were completed in April 2008. The former Minister made a statement to the Assembly on 3rd June 2008 on the findings of KPMG Report.

These investigations have raised serious questions in relation to how the affairs of the Company were conducted. The report into these investigations contains matters of a sensitive legal and financial nature which will be subject to a Company Inspection by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which is appointing inspectors. Formal winding up of the Company will depend on these investigations.

I am unable, at this time, to state when these further investigations will be completed.

2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail his plans of representation to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to ensure that the full name of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be recognised and used by the media and in all promotions, across the United Kingdom, for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games. (AQW 2371/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The British Olympic Association (BOA) is responsible for ensuring that the full name of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be recognised and used by the media and in all promotions across the United Kingdom, for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I recently wrote to Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Minister for Sport at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, requesting him to draw the BOA's attention to the issue and to ask the Association to give consideration to a suitable re-titling in the run up to the London 2012 Games.

Girona Exhibition

Rev Dr Robert Coulter asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he would consider transferring the Girona exhibition, formerly displayed in the Ulster Museum, to a purpose-built site in North Antrim, close to where the wreck was found. (AQO 1075/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: One of my Department's goals is to enable the widest possible audience to experience and appreciate our cultural assets along with the development and delivery of quality cultural products and services.

In respect if the Girona collection, over many years this has been one of the Ulster Museum most prominent displays. When the refurbished Ulster Museum opens in the summer of 2009 the Girona collection will feature prominently as a permanent display in the new state of the art National Museum.

National Museums Northern Ireland are totally committed to increasing access to and engagement with their collections and also increasing opportunities for learning and partnership. To this end National Museums Northern Ireland runs an active loans programme and will give serious consideration to requests for loans on an individual basis.

Delayed Legislation

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what legislation from his Department has been delayed by the failure of the Executive to meet since June 2008. (AQO 1205/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am sure that I speak for the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland when I say how disappointing it is that the Executive has not met for almost six months, particularly given the current economic climate.

Members will be aware that my Department recently completed a major piece of legislation which will enable the establishment of a new Library Authority to deliver a public library service for Northern Ireland.

While I do not have any legislative proposals which have been delayed due to the Executive not meeting since June 2008, Members are asked to note that I have published a consultation exercise seeking views on proposals

to bring existing rules and charges up to date which will take into account new procedures and technological achievements in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

In addition to this, over the coming months, my Department will be preparing subordinate legislation arising from the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. This Order introduces a mandatory safety certification scheme, similar to that in Great Britain, in relation to the designation of sports grounds and sports stands requiring a safety certificate from their local authority.

There are also a number of matters which I would hope to take forward to the Executive in the near future. These include resolving the outstanding stadium issue which is one of my priorities, launching my 10 year Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation and the NI Executive composite response to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Events Strategy

Mrs Hanna asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the formulation of an events strategy. (AQO 1175/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Both I, and my colleague responsible for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, recognise the contribution that events and festivals can make towards the achievement of a range of Executive objectives. A diverse range of events are organised across Northern Ireland and it is important that we deliver appropriate support structures to strategically develop Northern Ireland as a destination of choice for major events.

Officials within both Departments have been working to advance the proposed transfer of events funding to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board effective 1st April 2009. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is committed to working with stakeholders to develop an Events Strategy for Northern Ireland which will place the funding and support for events within a strategic framework for development.

Executive Meetings

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what Departmental matters, including North-South and East-West issues, have been held up as a result of the failure of the Executive to meet. (AQO 1188/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am sure that I speak for the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland when I say how disappointing it is that the Executive has not met for almost six months, particularly given the current economic climate.

Members will be aware that my Department recently completed a major piece of legislation which will enable the establishment of a new Library Authority to deliver a public library service for Northern Ireland.

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There are also a number of matters which I would hope to take forward to the Executive in the near future. These include resolving the outstanding stadium issue which is one of my priorities, launching my 10 year Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation and the NI Executive composite response to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Loyalist Marching Bands

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will (i) ensure the continued support for the funding streams to Loyalist Marching Bands; and (ii) consider bringing forward the decision making process to allow these bands to make full use of the funding available. (AQO 1082/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The arms length body with responsibility for arts funding is the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

- (i) The Arts Council of Northern Ireland currently provides funding to marching bands through two funding streams; the “Musical Instruments for Bands” fund and the lottery funded “Awards for All” programme.

Under these programmes, the Arts Council has made 121 awards over the last three years. As a result over £500,000 has been awarded to marching bands.

Both streams will continue to receive grant applications for the foreseeable future. However, the Awards for All Programme will be replaced by the Arts Council Small Grants Programme from 16 December 2008 to which a range of groups, including marching bands, may apply.

- (ii) The Arts Council has recognised the difficulties caused by the timing of the Musical Instruments for Bands funding process and intends to bring the process forward next year by 2 months.

Irish Language

Mr McFarland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions his Department has had with officials in Great Britain in relation to an Irish Language Act. (AQO 1204/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department had a number of informal contacts, in late 2006, with officials in the Welsh Assembly, Welsh Language Board, and the then Scottish Executive in relation to the proposed Irish Language Act. The primary purpose of the contact was to obtain information on the running costs of their language schemes. Departmental officials also liaised with officials in the Northern Ireland Office, both in London and Belfast, during the period of Direct Rule.

Cultural Events

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions he has had with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment on a joined up approach to the development and growth of local cultural events, to promote them as both a celebration and as tourist attractions. (AQO 1206/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am sure my Ministerial colleague in the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, appreciates the contribution that cultural events make towards the achievement of a range of Executive objectives.

Officials from my Department have already met with their counterparts in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to contribute to the development of a new strategy for tourism. The purpose of this strategy is to identify Departmental initiatives and work programmes which can increase overseas visitors to Northern Ireland and visitor spend.

In addition to this, officials from my Department, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment and the Tourist Board are also working in partnership to progress the proposed transfer of the Events function by April 2009. This will enable the Tourist Board to more effectively support organisers to develop their events to showcase our unique selling points and promote the best of what Northern Ireland has to offer at home and abroad.

2012 Olympics

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the impact of the failure of the Executive to meet on Northern Ireland’s involvement in the 2012 Olympics. (AQO 1208/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The failure of the Executive to meet has had no impact at this stage on the delivery of the Northern Ireland Strategy for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. However, failure of the Executive to meet over the longer term may impact on the successful delivery of the

Northern Ireland Strategy due to the cross-cutting nature over other Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments and their respective public bodies.

Ulster-Scots and Irish Language

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action his Department is taking to achieve equality in funding between Ulster-Scots and Irish language organisations. (AQO 1182/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since 2000 the funding awarded by my Department to the Irish language is in the region of £40.5m. In the same period Ulster Scots heritage, culture and language has been awarded in the region of £12.9m.

On 28 June 2005 the then Minister David Hanson announced £12m for an independent Ulster-Scots Academy. This element is not included in the above headline figures as to date only £1.05m has been allocated leaving a balance of £10.95m to be awarded.

My Department is now working closely with the Ulster-Scots community to identify their priorities and the framework the community will require to develop and enhance its heritage, culture and language.

I am committed to ensuring that Irish and Ulster-Scots are given equal recognition and respect and I will give the direction and leadership required to make that happen.

World Rally Championship

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if the level of public funding being allocated to Rally Ireland in support of the 2009 World Rally Championship (WRC) Rally will be affected by the recent media speculation that the WRC launch at Stormont is in jeopardy. (AQO 1202/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The organisers of Rally Ireland, WRC Promotions Ltd, have advised my Department that the Launch of the World Rally Championship will not now take place at Stormont. However the Ceremonial Start of the Rally on the 29th January 2009 will take place in Enniskillen as planned.

I am particularly pleased that a region west of the Bann is to benefit from this prestigious rally championship. Just as last year at Stormont, the location will be a big attraction for international broadcasters and provide spectacular TV pictures to audiences all over the world. Hopefully that TV coverage will in turn produce lasting benefits to the area, particularly in terms of tourism."

My Department has committed £950k to support the WRC Launch and Rally Ireland. The Letter of Offer, agreed with WRC Promotions Ltd, contains provisions for my Department to revise the budget where there have been material changes to the event specification.

EDUCATION

Education Issues

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) educationalists; (ii) interest groups; (iii) individuals; and (iv) political parties, with whom she has consulted on education issues, in the North Antrim constituency, since taking up office. (AQW 1985/09)

The Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Liostaítear sa tábla thíos (i) na hoideachasóirí; (ii) na grúpaí agus na daoine leasmhara; agus (iii) na páirtithe polaitíochta, a ndeachaigh mé i gcomhairle leo maidir le ceisteanna oideachais i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thuaidh, ó chuaigh mé i mbun oifige.

The attached table lists the (i) educationalists; (ii) interest groups and individuals; and (iii) political parties, with whom I have consulted on education issues in the North Antrim constituency, since taking up office.

Date of Contact	Name	Event/Meeting
	Educationalists	
17/10/07	Naiscoil Chain Rí Uladh Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	St Louis Pre School Group Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	Kenbaan psg & Earlystart psg Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	Dunfane School Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	St Brigids PS Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	St Colmcilles PS Ballymena	Visit
17/10/07	St John Boscos PS Ballymena	Visit
24/10/07	Leaney PS Ballymoney	Visit
24/10/07	Bunscoil An Chaistil Ballycastle	Visit
25/06/08	Our Lady of Lourdes Ballymoney	Visit
	Interest Groups and Individuals	
17/12/07	Chief Executive/ELB's	Meeting
30/01/08	NEELB Accountability Review	Meeting
19/06/08	Ballymena Learning Event	Schools Community Relation Event
14/10/08	Ballymena Post Primary Principals	Dinner
17/10/08	ELB's/ Annual Conference	Conference
31/07/07,10/10/07,15/11/07, 16/01/08, 09/04/08, 25/06/08,17/09/08	RPA Chairpersons Forum	Meetings on RPA
14/05/07	ELB Chairs	Meeting
15/05/07	ELB/Chief Executives	Meeting
21/06/07	ELB/Chief Executives	Meeting
12/10/07	Assoc. ELB's	Conference
	POLITICAL PARTIES	
14/10/08	Daithi McKay MLA	Meeting
08/11/07	Daithi McKay MLA	Meeting

School Equipment

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education why schools (i) have been prevented from purchasing photocopiers; and (ii) are allowed to enter into 5 year contracts with business equipment suppliers, as opposed to the 3 year contracts that were previously used. (AQW 2046/09)

The Minister of Education: As public bodies, the Education and Library Boards (Boards) adhere to public procurement policy adopted by the Executive in May 2002 and procurement policy guidelines as issued by the Procurement Board, including the obligation to comply with any relevant EU or other international procurement rules.

In accordance with procurement policy outlined above, the Boards are required to publicly tender for the supply of all goods and services. In this context, the Boards have operated a joint Board contract for the supply of photocopiers, awarded in compliance with EU legislation. The current contract offers a range of machines from four different suppliers available to purchase or rent over either three or five year contract.

Cuirtear mionsonraí an chonartha ar fáil do scoileanna le húsáid nuair a bhíonn gá acu le fótachóipeáláí. Mar a tharlaíonn i gcás gach caiteachais phoiblí, glacfar an cinneadh chun conradh trí bliana nó cúig bliana a dhéanamh, bunaithe ar cé acu soláthraí agus fad conartha a thugann an luach is fearr ar airgead.

The details of the contract are made available to schools to use when they have a need for a photocopier. As with all public spending the decision to enter into a three or five year contract will be taken on the basis of which supplier and contract duration offers best value for money.

Irish Colleges

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education (i) what contact her Department has had with the Republic of Ireland Government on its plans to cut the annual teaching grant for Irish colleges; and (ii) what effect this will have on the students attending the Gaeltacht. (AQW 2068/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní raibh aon teagmháil ag mo Roinn le hionadaithe sa Rialtas i ndeisceart na hÉireann i dtaca leis an cheist seo.

My Department has had no contact with counterparts in the South of Ireland on this matter. It is not yet known what effect, if any, this will have on students undertaking study visits to the Gaeltacht. I will however be meeting my counterpart Batt O'Keefe in the near future and will certainly raise your concerns.

Training for Teachers

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail her Department's policy on the delivery of continuing professional development training for teachers, to enable them to effectively support children with speech, language and communication needs. (AQW 2125/09)

The Minister of Education: The provision of continuing professional development for teachers is the responsibility of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) through their respective Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS). All ELBs undertake, on an annual basis, a needs analysis of the training required by schools in the forthcoming academic year. School principals are responsible for determining the training needs of their teachers and they can avail of the wide range of courses on all aspects of special educational needs offered by Boards.

Bionn rochtain ar fhorbairt leanúnach ghairmiúil acu siúd atá ag iarraidh díriú ar réimsí mar riachtanais cainte, teanga agus cumarsáide tríd na ELBanna.

Continuing professional development for those wishing to focus on areas such as speech, language and communication needs is, therefore, accessed through the ELBs.

Funding for Special Educational Needs

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of her Department's spending budget on training staff dealing with children who have speech, language or communication needs. (AQW 2127/09)

The Minister of Education: The bulk of funding for special educational needs, including language and communication needs, is not earmarked to the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the deployment of the funding is determined by them as part of their annual decisions about the allocation of their block grant.

In recognition of the importance of speech and language in a child's development the Department of Education since 2001, has however been supporting an innovative project in all ELB areas to train teachers and classroom assistants to identify children with speech and language difficulties at an early stage. This is being implemented by collaboration between the ELBs and the relevant Health Trusts and to date approximately £5m has been allocated to the ELBs for this purpose.

Evaluation has shown marked improvement not only in the skills of the teachers, but also in the understanding of the needs of these teachers by speech and language therapists. The children have shown a marked improvement in receptive language, phonological language and expressive language skills, together with improved listening and social skills in group situations.

Teachers Pay

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education why teachers with Teaching and Learning responsibilities are paid less than their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom. (AQW 2131/09)

The Minister of Education: Déantar idirbheartaíochtaí ar luach saothair agus ar théarmaí agus coinníolacha seirbhíse do mhúinteoirí i scoileanna deontaschúnta i dtuaisceart na hÉireann tríd an Choiste um Thuarastail agus um Choinníolacha Seirbhíse Mhúinteoirí (TNC), ar a mbíonn ionadaithe d'fhostóirí múinteoirí, de cheardchumainn múinteoirí agus den Roinn.

Negotiations on the remuneration and terms and conditions of service of teachers in grant-aided schools in the north of Ireland are conducted via the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee (TNC), which is representative of the teacher employers, teacher unions and the Department. In 2006 a system of higher value Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments was introduced in England and Wales to replace existing Management Allowances. Recognising that, in the absence of additional resources, the introduction of TLRs here would result in a reduction in the number of teachers holding an allowance, the TNC decided to introduce an alternative system of lower value Teaching Allowances in order to protect the salaries of existing allowance holders.

This decision was consistent with established practice in local negotiations. While teachers' pay scales have the same values here as in England and Wales, there are some grades and allowances which TNC has decided not to adopt and some which have been adopted only after adjustment to the local context.

Home Start

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education what amount of funding is Sure-Start committing to Home Start in the next two financial years commencing April 2009. (AQW 2145/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá sé le tuiscint faoi láthair gurbh iad na méideanna molta cistithe do Home Start, mar a sholáthraítear tríd an chlár Sure Start, ná £282,625 sa bhliain 2009/10 agus £289,549 sa bhliain 2010/11.

Current indications are that the proposed amount of funding for Home Start, delivered through the Sure Start programme, amounts to £282,625 in 2009/10 and £289,549 in 2010/11.

Training for Teachers of Children with Epilepsy

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education what training is provided to teachers of children who suffer from epilepsy. (AQW 2148/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) dom gurb iad na hLontaobhais Sheirbhísí Sláinte agus Sóisialta a sholáthraíonn oiliúint do mhúinteoirí a bhíonn ag teagasc páistí a bhfuil titimeas orthu.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that training for teachers of children with epilepsy is provided by Health and Social Services Trusts. In a special school for example where a number of children may have been diagnosed with epilepsy, training can be arranged for groups of staff whereas in mainstream schools the training may be provided to individual teachers and classroom assistants. I have also been assured that training provided will always be in line with a pupil's healthcare plan and be subject to on-going review.

In addition an inter-departmental working group, established between the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services and Public Safety published guidance entitled "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs" in early 2008. This guidance was issued to all schools in the summer term of the 2007/08 academic year. On foot of this, the Department of Education has provided funding to the ELBs to provide training to principals of all schools over the course of the 2008-2009 academic year in meeting the needs of all pupils with medical needs including those with a diagnosis of epilepsy.

Derryboye Primary School

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the provision of a new car park at Derryboye Primary School. (AQW 2166/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt dom gur lorg an Bord tairiscintí ar an obair ag Derryboye Primary School ar 7 Samhain agus is é an dáta fillte do thairiscintí ná 19 Samhain.

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board that the Board sought tenders for the work at Derryboye Primary School on 7 November and the tender return date is 19 November. The contract will be awarded after the subsequent Commissioners meeting on 26 November and the work should be carried out shortly thereafter.

Donaghadee High School

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education if all the pupils affected by the closure of Donaghadee High School will get free public transport to any new school they attend, in the Bangor or Newtownards area. (AQW 2191/09)

The Minister of Education: Druidfear Donaghadee High School ar 31ú Lúnasa 2009.

Donaghadee High School is due to close on 31st August 2009. Following this closure pupils currently enrolled at the school or those who had previously bypassed Donaghadee High School as their nearest suitable school to attend another school, can reapply for transport assistance and will be reassessed in accordance with Department of Education Circular 1996/41. Transport is normally provided where a pupil enrolls at a school which is more than three miles distance from their home and they have either been unsuccessful in gaining a place at all the suitable secondary schools within that three mile limit or where no such suitable school exists.

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education to set out her Department's plans to decentralise Departmental employment and operations of its agencies to locations outside Belfast and Bangor. (AQW 2200/09)

The Minister of Education: Níl aon phleananna ann faoi láthair. Tá na poist san earnáil oideachais scaipthe go forleathan ar fud an tuaiscirt cheana féin, agus táthar ag dréim leis go gcuirfidh bunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna leis an "lorg" dáilte seo.

There are no current plans. Jobs in education are already widely dispersed across the north, and it is anticipated that the creation of the Education and Skills Authority will build on this distributed "footprint". It is envisaged that ESA will have a relatively small headquarters and other main functions situated at a range of locations, making use of existing accommodation. Decisions on these issues will be a matter for the Executive in due course, in line with its general policy on the location of public sector jobs, in line with equality, and taking account of any recommendations in the Bain report agreed by the Executive.

Academy Primary School in Saintfield

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1973/09, what action she has taken to assess the capital scheme that has been proposed for Academy Primary School in Saintfield. (AQW 2204/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an Roinn ag déanamh measúnaithe ar thogra Academy Primary School, ag úsáid an eolais atá ar fáil faoi staid agus oiriúnacht an fhoirgnimh agus ag úsáid eolais ar fhoráil oideachais sa cheantar agus ar an éileamh réamh-mheasta do dhaltáí.

The department is assessing the proposal for Academy Primary School utilising available information about the condition and suitability of the building as well as information on the provision in the area and projected pupil demand. This information is necessary to establish the need for a scheme, and to inform work for an economic appraisal. Once the assessment is completed the department will be in touch with the Board on the next steps.

Suspension or Expulsion of Children

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) number; and (ii) reasons, for the suspension or expulsion of children, five years or younger from any educational institution, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2221/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh leagtha amach sa tábla seo a leanas:

The information requested is set out in the following table:

NO. OF SUSPENSIONS¹ AMONG PUPILS AGED 5 YEARS OR YOUNGER², 2002/03-2006/07

Reason for suspension	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Substance abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Bullying of a pupil	0	*	0	0	*
Verbal abuse of a pupil	0	0	*	0	0
Physical attack on a pupil	*	5	15	6	*
Disruptive Behaviour in class	25	*	*	*	5
Persistent Infringement of school rules	*	*	0	0	0
Significant damage to property	0	0	0	0	0
Stealing	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal abuse of staff	*	*	0	*	*
Physical attack on staff	7	6	9	8	16
Total	41	21	27	17	25

Notes:

1. The figures are based on the number of suspensions rather than the number of pupils suspended. Number of pupils is likely to be lower.
 2. Pupil age as at 1 July.
- * denotes figure less than 5.

One pupil in Key Stage 1 was expelled in the 2004/05 school year. We have no record of any child in Key Stage 1 being expelled prior to, or since then. Due to data protection and confidentiality, it would be inappropriate for me to provide any further details with regard to that case.

Donaghadee High School

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education if she would consider using Donaghadee High School as a centre for employment skills training. (AQW 2239/09)

The Minister of Education: Nuair a dhruidfear Donaghadee High School déanfaidh Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt breithniú ar mhalairt úsáide na scoile sa chéad dul síos.

Once Donaghadee High School closes it will be a matter for the South Eastern Education and Library Board to consider alternative usage of the school in the first instance.

A range of employment and skills training is already available in North Down and Strangford. Provision offered under the auspices of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is contracted out to providers, who are responsible for sourcing their own premises. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the South Eastern Regional College to identify which premises in a given location might be suitable for use as an 'outreach' centre for community based education. The College delivers a range of vocational and non-vocational part-time courses throughout the area.

Playboard After Schools Activities

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to fund Playboard after schools activities. (AQW 2240/09)

The Minister of Education: Aistríodh freagracht as beartas ar Luathbhlianta chuig mo Roinn i mí na Samhna 2006 ach is é DHSSPS atá fós freagrach as beartas agus as maoiniú maidir le tionscadail iarscoile a riarann Playboard.

Early Years policy transferred to my Department in November 2006 however policy and funding for the after school projects administered by Playboard remained with DHSSPS. I have no plans to fund Playboard after schools activities.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1707/09, if there is no agreement on post primary transfer, to confirm that guidance issued to schools in the Dickson Plan for Education area would be legally binding. (AQW 2259/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an seasamh i leith scoileanna laistigh de limistéar an Dickson Plan mar an gcéanna leis an seasamh i leith gach scoile eile.

The position pertaining to schools within the Dickson Plan area is the same as that for all other schools.

For schools to have to “have regard to” the Department’s guidance means that they cannot disregard it. It means that the guidance is an important document for them to consider in developing their admissions criteria and in performing their role within the admissions process.

If a Board of Governors does not comply with its duty to “have regard to” guidance issued by the Department under Article 16B of the Education Order 1997 (as amended by Article 30 of the Education Order 2006), the Department can consider issuing a direction under Article 101 of the 1986 Order directing them to do so.

If a Board of Governors does comply with its duty to “have regard to” this guidance then it will be lawful for that Board of Governors to use admissions criteria not otherwise prohibited in law.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education, in the event of no agreement on post primary transfer, if guidance issued to schools in the Dickson Plan for Education area, or the requirement of schools to ‘have regard’ to those guidelines, would legally prevent these schools from operating transfer criteria with an academic element. (AQW 2260/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an seasamh i leith scoileanna laistigh de limistéar an Dickson Plan mar an gcéanna leis an seasamh i leith gach scoile eile.

The position pertaining to schools within the Dickson Plan area is the same as that for all other schools.

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If a Board of Governors does comply with its duty to “have regard to” this guidance then it will be lawful for that Board of Governors to use admissions criteria not otherwise prohibited in law.

Bullying of Pupils

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Education to detail the work done by her Department in the last year to combat bullying of pupils (i) travelling to and from school; and (ii) attending school. (AQW 2313/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá bulaíocht inár seomraí ranga agus inár sochaí doghlaclachta. Ní féidir leis an Roinn an mhórchéist seo a réiteach léi féin, agus tá sí ag obair i gcomhar le heagraíochtaí reachtúla agus deonacha trína ballraíocht den Fhóram áitiúil Frith-Bhulaíochta agus trí mhaoiniú a thabhairt dó.

Bullying is unacceptable in our classrooms and in our society. The Department cannot solve this issue alone, and therefore continues to work in close partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations through its membership and funding of the local Anti-Bullying Forum. It is also a member of the British and Irish Anti-Bullying Forum and I had the pleasure of attending its meeting in September this year.

The local Anti-Bullying Forum plans and co-ordinates Anti-Bullying Week each year, in partnership with schools and a wide range of other agencies, to raise awareness of bullying and the effects on children and young people. This year, Anti-Bullying Week took place from 17th – 21st November and I am delighted that Translink provided support by advertising anti-bullying messages at rail and bus stations. I hope this support and partnership will continue over the coming year.

Pupil behaviour is a matter for schools. All grant-aided schools are required, by law, to have measures in place to promote good pupil behaviour as part of their discipline policy. The Department has issued guidance to schools on this; however, it is for each school to decide, taking account of its own ethos and circumstances, what behaviours and situations will be covered by its discipline policy.

When developing a policy, a school community must decide on its position in respect of pupil behaviour off site and out of school hours, for example while travelling to and from school. The school's position should be clearly set out in the discipline policy and the entire school community, including pupils, parents and staff, should be fully aware of it and its implications.

Young People with Mental Health Problems

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Education to detail the provisions available to provide education programmes that contribute to addressing mental health problems affecting young people. (AQW 2324/09)

The Minister of Education: Faoi reactaíocht oideachais speisialta déantar soláthar oideachais speisialta a oiriúnú do riachtanais indibhidiúla gach páiste. Sa chás go n-éiríonn riachtanais oideachas speisialta an pháiste as fadhb sláinte meabhrach, diríonn scoileanna agus Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ar na riachtanais sin tríd an ghnáthchreat um riachtanais speisialta oideachais.

Under special education legislation all special educational provision is matched to the individual needs of each child. Where a child's special educational needs arises as a result of a mental health problem, schools and Education and Library Boards meet those needs through the normal special educational needs framework. All Boards operate outreach support services for pupils in mainstream schools who may have a range of difficulties such as behavioural problems.

The Department of Education (DE) and the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) are developing, in partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, a new purpose-built Regional Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Centre, which will include a Learning Resource Centre, on the Forster Green site in Belfast. This will bring together the Adolescent Psychiatric Unit and the Child and Family Centre and the aim of the new regional centre will be to ensure that provision made for children and young people will be the most appropriate support from both health and education services.

In response to a 2004 report of the Education and Training Inspectorate, DE and SEELB produced a new flexible educational model, to replace the provision in the former Lindsay School on the Forster Green Site, for in-patients of the Adolescent Psychiatric Unit and the Child and Family Centre who have significant medical, social, emotional and behavioural needs. In 2007/08 DE earmarked funding of £268k to the SEELB for this new model, which commenced in September 2007 and which will continue to be delivered in the purpose built Regional Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Centre when it opens. This earmarked allocation rose to £ 444k in the 2008/09 financial year. As an interim measure, DE also allocated an additional £55k in 2006/07 for the smooth transition of the education provision for adolescents with mental ill health when the Adolescent Psychiatry Unit moved from College Gardens, Belfast, to Knockbracken Healthcare Park.

To contribute to the promotion of pupils' emotional health and wellbeing, counselling support, independent of the school, has also been available from September 2007 to all post primary schools which wish to use it.

All post primary schools can access a minimum amount of counselling support which meets best practice standards in terms of counsellor qualifications and professional supervision. Young people are able to self refer to this service or may be referred by the school or a parent.

Schools report that the availability of the counselling service has been a major boost to their capacity to support young people during difficult and vulnerable periods in their lives.

Schools in Lagan Valley

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education to detail for all schools in the Lagan Valley constituency (i) the work that needs to be undertaken; (ii) the date for this work; and (iii) potential costs, to replace asbestos structures. (AQW 2328/09)

The Minister of Education: The Southern and the South Eastern Education and Library Boards, which have responsibility for the maintenance of controlled and maintained schools in the Lagan Valley constituency, have advised that they do not have plans to remove asbestos structures in schools. Any asbestos containing materials are being managed in situ. The potential cost of removal works in the constituency is estimated at £169K.

Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated schools in the Lagan Valley constituency have also advised that they do not have plans to remove asbestos structures.

Nuair nach meastar baint na haispeiste a bheith riachtanach, bíonn Boird agus údaráis eile scoile freagrach as an aispeist a bhainistiú ar bhealach sábháilte.

Where it is not considered necessary to remove asbestos, Boards and other school authorities are responsible for managing it safely.

Rathmore Primary School

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans there are for a new build for Rathmore Primary School in Bangor. (AQW 2355/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt nach bhfuil aon phleananna ann faoi láthair foirgneamh nua a thógáil do Rathmore Primary School.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that there are currently no plans for a new build for Rathmore Primary School.

School Closures and Amalgamations

Mr Poots asked the Minister of Education how many schools have been (i) closed; and (ii) amalgamated, over the last 5 years, broken down by sector. (AQW 2363/09)

The Minister of Education: A total of 41 schools closed in the 5-year period 2003/04 – 2007/08 and 13 amalgamations have taken place involving 2 or more schools. The information, by sector, is as follows:

Controlled (including controlled integrated) – 31 closures and 6 amalgamations involving a total of 13 schools.

Catholic maintained – 9 closures and 7 amalgamations involving 14 schools.

Irish-medium – 1 closure

Ní raibh aon druidim scoile ná cónascadh scoile ann i rith na tréimhse seo in earnáil na scoileanna deonacha gramadaí nó in earnáil na scoileanna imeasctha faoi chothabháil stáit.

There have been no closures or amalgamations during this period in the voluntary grammar or grant-maintained integrated sectors.

Pre-School Provision

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Education to detail the pre-school provision available to parents in the (i) Loughgall; and (ii) Annaghmore, areas of Co Armagh. (AQW 2375/09)

The Minister of Education: There are 29 funded pre-school places in the Electoral Ward area of Loughgall. Of these 29 places, 18 are in the voluntary/private sector and 11 in reception classes in statutory primary schools.

Áirítear air seo Eanach Mór, atá suite i limistéar thoghbharda Loch gCál.

This includes Annaghmore, which lies within the Loughgall electoral ward area.

Special Educational Needs Schools

Miss McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to permit special educational needs schools to apply for specialist schools status. (AQW 2429/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá mo Roinn ag obair le roinnt Scoileanna Speisialta a léirigh suim i stádas Scoile Speisialta roimhe seo.

My Department has been working with a number of Special Schools who have previously expressed an interest in Specialist School status. A Specialist Schools Group comprising representatives from these schools has been commissioned to explore how the Special sector can be included in the programme here.

The group will produce a report in January 2009 with recommendations for a specific SEN model to be developed for next cohort.

Class Size Limit

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education the number of (i) Key Stage One and (ii) Key Stage Two classes, that exceed her Department's recommended class size limit, broken down by each Education and Library Board. (AQW 2448/09)

The Minister of Education: Is í an teorainn mhéide atá molta do ranganna a bhaineann le Eochairchéim 1 ná 30 dálda. Níl aon teorainn mhéide molta do ranganna a bhaineann le Eochairchéim 2.

The recommended class size limit for Key Stage One is 30 pupils. There is no set recommended limit for Key Stage Two.

NUMBER OF KEY STAGE ONE CLASSES WITH MORE THAN 30 PUPILS, BY EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD – 2007/08

ELB	No. of classes
BELB	13
WELB	21
NEELB	29
SEELB	26
SELB	26
Total	115

Source: Annual school census

Note:

1. Key Stage One includes primary years 1 – 4.
2. Classes may be composite or non-composite.
3. Composite classes with pupils in Key stage 1 and 2 have not been included.

Pupil to Teacher Ratio

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the pupil to teacher ratio in (i) controlled primary, (ii) maintained primary, (iii) integrated primary and (iv) irish medium primary schools. (AQW 2449/09)

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

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PRIMARY¹ PUPIL: TEACHER RATIOS, 2007/08

Sector	PTR
Controlled primary ²	20.7
Maintained primary ³	20.9
Integrated primary ⁴	20.0
Irish Medium primary	16.9

1. Primary includes preparatory departments of grammar schools.
2. Controlled primary includes all controlled primary schools except one controlled Irish medium school.
3. Maintained primary includes all Catholic maintained schools except one maintained Irish medium school.
4. Integrated primary includes both controlled integrated and grant maintained integrated.

Education and Skills Authority

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the names and positions of all those appointed to the Education and Skills Authority (ESA); (ii) the date on which they were respectively appointed ; (iii) the salary each was awarded on their appointment; (iv) the amount of money that has been ring fenced for the payment of redundancies for administrative personnel when the ESA takes over the responsibilities of the Education and Library Boards; (v) the date on which the ESA will assume the responsibilities of the Education and Library Boards; and (vi) the total amount paid in salaries to ESA staff to date. (AQW 2494/09)

The Minister of Education: Níl an ESA bunaithe sa dlí go fóill agus is é an t-aon cheapaí ná Gavin Boyd mar Phríomhfheidhmeannach (Ainmnithe), a ceapadh ar 1 Feabhra 2007 le tuarastal de £145,000 - £150,000. Go dtí seo, is é an méid iomlán a caitheadh ar thuarastail na mball foirne san ESA ná £262,500 (comhlán).

ESA has not yet been established in law and the only appointee is Gavin Boyd as Chief Executive (Designate), appointed on 1 February 2007 on a salary of £145,000 - £150,000. To date, the total amount paid in salaries to ESA staff is £262,500 (gross).

To facilitate the change process, around £50 million has been earmarked and it is expected that the bulk of these funds will be used for voluntary severance. The precise amount spent on voluntary severance will depend on the number of staff expressing an interest.

It is intended that ESA will be established from 1 January 2010, although this is subject to the legislative timeframe.

Oversubscribed Schools

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) nursery; (ii) primary; and (iii) post-primary schools, that are oversubscribed in the East Antrim constituency, in the academic year 2008-09. (AQW 2497/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt gurb iad seo a leanas (i) na náiscoilleana; (ii) na bunscilleana; agus (iii) na hiarbhunscilleana, a bhfuil suibscríobh iomarcach orthu i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thoir, sa bhliain acadúil 2008-09:

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board that the (i) nursery; (ii) primary; and (iii) post primary schools, that are over subscribed in the East Antrim constituency, in the academic year 2008-09 are as follows:

(i) Nursery
Acorn Integrated Nursery Unit
Oakfield Nursery Unit
Silverstream Nursery Unit
Sunnylands Nursery School
Victoria Nursery Unit
Whitehead Nursery Unit
Linn Nursery Unit
St Anthony's Nursery School
Ashgrove Nursery School
Ballyhenry Nursery School
Earlview Nursery Unit
Monkstown Nursery School
Mossgrove Nursery Unit
Mossley Nursery School
Rathcoole Nursery Unit
St James Nursery Unit
Whitehouse Nursery Unit
(ii) Primary
Woodburn Primary School
Eden Primary School
Greenisland Primary School
Whiteabbey Primary School
St Macnissi's Primary School
(iii) Post- Primary
Ulidia Integrated College
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Larne Grammar School
Belfast High School
St Macnissi's College*

* St Macnissi's College was oversubscribed with grade D applicants however the College applied to the Department for, and was granted, special permission not to admit applicants that had attained a grade D in the Transfer Tests. This procedure is permitted under article 14(3) of the 1997 Education Order.

Department Performance Review Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Education how many staff in her Department did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in the last full reporting year. (AQW 2519/09)

The Minister of Education: I rith na bliana iomláine tuarascála is déanaí (2007/08), ní bhfuair aon bhall foirne marc míshásúil sa thuarascáil bhliantúil a bhí aige nó aici.

During the last full reporting year (2007/08) no staff received an unacceptable mark in their annual report.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Graduates from Universities

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1579/09, to detail the total number of graduates from universities in Northern Ireland, and (ii) the percentage of this total that are still paying off student loans, since the academic year 1998/99. (AQW 2141/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey):

- (i) The total number of Northern Ireland domiciled students who have graduated from 1998/99 to 2005/06 (latest year for which repayment data is available) is 128,695.
- (ii) The percentage of this total with outstanding loans to be repaid is 55%.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the reasons for his Department's reduced requirement of £1.8 million in capital for the South Eastern Regional College. (AQW 2152/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The South Eastern Regional College's capital project has a budget of £18.5m. The expenditure profile was split evenly over financial years 08/09 and 09/10. A requirement for a business case addendum and a delay in obtaining planning permission has resulted in significant slippage to the project programme. This has pushed back the spending profile resulting in this year's anticipated spend not being met and hence the reduced requirement in financial year 08/09.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many apprentices at the South Eastern Regional College have lost their place with employers, over the last academic year. (AQW 2162/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Data collected by the Department in relation to apprentices who have lost their place with employers is included in a broader "early leaver" destination category.

During the year September 2007 to August 2008, 67 apprentices were recorded by the South Eastern Regional College as being an "early leaver" in either of the categories "destination unknown" or "unemployed".

Recreational Courses in Colleges of Further Education

Mr Bresland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the current position in relation to offering concessionary fees to pensioners seeking to participate in recreational courses in Colleges of Further Education. (AQW 2182/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Prior to the introduction of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (S.R No 261), on 1 October 2006, it was common practice for Further Education colleges to offer age-based concessionary fees to learners, including senior citizens. However, following the introduction of the Regulations, colleges are no longer able to offer concessionary fees automatically to individuals, including older people, on the basis of age alone.

Colleges continue to offer fee concessions to individuals on a means tested basis – for example, to those in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (Income based), Guaranteed Pension Credit, learners holding an income based NHS Exemption Certificate, those in receipt of Rates Relief or learners on a low income.

However, as incorporated bodies, Further Education colleges are responsible for setting their own fees. It is, therefore, for each individual college to set any fee charges, including concessionary fees, for its full curriculum offer, including recreational courses.

Apprentices

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans he has to alleviate the financial hardship experienced by apprentices who receive neither the basic minimum wage nor a training allowance.

(AQW 2194/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Apprentices must be in waged employment and therefore do not receive a training allowance. Apprentices under the age of 19 years are exempted from the National Minimum Wage regulations. If they begin an apprenticeship at the age of 19 years they are also exempt for the first year.

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) is currently consulting on a review of low pay, including apprenticeships. I have provided information to the LPC as part of this work. Their report is expected in February 2009.

When this report is received I will consider its findings and will then decide how best to proceed on this issue. Should the exemptions under the National Minimum Wage Regulations remain, then one possible action is to consider a minimum wage rate as a condition of the funding for apprenticeship training.

Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of adults without basic literacy and numeracy skills; (ii) the percentage this represents of the total adult population; (iii) the number of adults presently enrolled in essential skills courses to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills; and (iv) the steps he intends to take to encourage more adults to enrol in essential skills courses. (AQW 2203/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning:

(i) and (ii)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) showed that, in 1996, around 24% of the working age population of Northern Ireland (just over 250,000 people based on 1996 estimates of working age population) were operating at the lowest levels of prose literacy. This distribution was similar on the document and quantitative scales. The quantitative scale is used as a proxy measure to assess numeracy. The OECD is currently commissioning an update to the IALS and the Department is actively considering participation in this assessment.

(iii) Over the academic year 2007/08, the provisional data indicates there were 11,635 adults enrolled in Essential Skills courses to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills.

(iv) A challenging new PSA target to support 42,000 adult learners to achieve an Essential Skills qualification, including 4,000 learners in the Essential Skill of ICT, by March 2011 has been set. An objective of the Essential Skills Strategy over the next three years will be to target the most disadvantaged people and to secure greater employer engagement. This will be achieved through working closely with Further Education colleges and their extensive network of out centres, to reach those adults most in need in local communities. In the workplace, there will be increased collaboration with Sector Skills Councils and support for Union Learning Fund projects to help raise the essential skills levels of the current workforce.

A new bespoke NI promotional campaign has been launched which encourages adults to 'get the know how' and presents Essential Skills as the way to get more out of life, either at home or at work.

Further Education Colleges

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people of pensionable age registered for courses at Further Education colleges in each of the last 3 years, broken down by the constituency in which each college is located. (AQW 2205/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: This information has been placed in the library.

Higher Education Courses

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) to detail the number of people aged 60 and over who applied for further and higher education courses, in each of the last three years; and (ii) if there has

been a downturn in the enrolment in further and higher education courses by people aged 60 and over, since the withdrawal of the concessionary fee. (AQW 2347/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department does not capture information on the number of people who apply for further and higher education courses. Regarding (i), the figures provided below detail the number of people aged 60 and over (see Note 1) who enrolled on further and higher education courses in Further Education colleges from 2004/05 to 2006/07, the latest period for which validated full-year data are available.

Academic year	Student Numbers
2004/05	18,615
2005/06	17,564
2006/07	15,419

Data Source: Further Education Statistical Record

Regarding (ii), concessionary fees have not been withdrawn. However, the introduction of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (S.R No. 261) in October 2006 has meant that FE colleges are no longer able to offer fees concessions to learners, including to those over 60, on the basis of age alone. FE colleges do continue to offer fee concessions to learners based on a range of means test criteria, for example those in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (income based) and Guaranteed Pension Credit, and those holding an income based NHS Exemption Certificate. Latterly, FE colleges have added to their means test criteria those in receipt of Rates Relief. The Department does not currently have validated full-year data for the academic years following the introduction of the Age Regulations.

Note: (1) Age is at 1st July at the beginning of the relevant academic year.

Apprentices

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to assist apprentices in finding suitable employment in light of the current downturn in the construction industry; and if he will consider extending the training allowance to apprentices who are unable to find suitable paid employment. (AQW 2353/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has evidence of a total of 420 apprentices at the six FE Colleges having been made redundant, with about 300 of these people working in construction training.

In light of these figures, I made a statement on 11th November 2008 to the Assembly in respect of contingency arrangements that the Department will be introducing to allow apprentices who have been made redundant to continue with their training. These arrangements will be introduced initially for apprentices in the areas of construction, motor vehicle industry, and engineering, where the need for such arrangements is greatest.

I have enclosed a hard copy of my statement for your reference.

Emigration of Individuals with High Technical Skills

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is not a large emigration of individuals with high technical skills or knowledge, seeking to work outside Northern Ireland, due to the lack of opportunity, economic uncertainty and political instability. (AQW 2365/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Through its Research Agenda, the Department appointed Dr Bob Osbourne of the University of Ulster and Dr Tony Gallagher of Queen's University, to undertake a study to identify the factors associated with the decision making processes of school pupils in relation to seeking entry to Higher Education. The outcome of their research; "After School: Attitudes & Perceptions of Northern Ireland School Leavers Towards Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment" was published in June 2008.

The report states that 'the accumulation of evidence of this report is that the contemporary situation suggests that determined leavers (those who choose to study outside Northern Ireland) are a more significant group than the reluctant leavers' (those who would prefer to study in Northern Ireland), with the expansion of places at undergraduate level since 2000 helping to reduce the flow of those who feel forced to leave. The suggestion of

the report is that the evidence points towards the bulk of those who leave Northern Ireland are those who want to leave, regardless of what opportunities exist in Northern Ireland at present.

The Department for Employment and Learning has no control over those graduates who then make the decision to leave Northern Ireland to seek work. However the 'C'Mon Over' Campaign strives to highlight the opportunities that are available here in Northern Ireland working with employers to promote Northern Ireland as an attractive place to live and work.

University Courses

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department is taking to assure parents and students that university courses are offering value for money. (AQW 2377/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Some courses, by their nature, require more contact hours than others. It is a matter for the universities themselves to decide how many contact hours are required and the costs involved in delivering those courses.

It is a requirement of their funding agreement with my Department that Northern Ireland universities, through their Governing Bodies, deliver value for money from public funds. Their management of resources in achieving this is monitored, on behalf of the Department, by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

My Department also has robust quality assurance arrangements in place for the delivery of higher education. The role of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to ensure, through its institutional audit process, that Northern Ireland's universities continue to deliver and improve upon the current level of high quality provision.

In addition, the National Student Survey (NSS) gives final-year students in all UK universities the opportunity to provide comprehensive feedback on the quality of their courses. All four Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland take part in the survey. Feedback obtained from the NSS on the quality of the courses provided by universities and colleges is published on the Unistats website.

In terms of employability and student debt, findings from the NI Labour Force Survey (April - June 2008) show that the average gross weekly earnings of graduates (£519) working in NI exceeded that of non-graduates (£288) by approximately 80%. On average graduates in NI can earn approximately £12,000 per year more than non-graduates.

In addition, the working age employment rate of graduates working in NI (89%) was considerably higher than that of non-graduates (66%).

Young Apprentices and Graduated Students

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what procedures his Department has put in place to ensure young professional apprentices and recently graduated students, in the areas of construction engineering, architectural technology and quantity surveying, are retained in Northern Ireland. (AQW 2458/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: At the end of their periods training and/or study young people are free to remain in Northern Ireland or work and/or study elsewhere. The task of Northern Ireland businesses is to make it clear to potential employees that there are interesting, worthwhile and well paid jobs in Northern Ireland should they chose to remain or return here.

This may be done individually or jointly through their Sector Skills Councils. ConstructionSkills, the relevant SSC, undertakes an extensive range of initiatives that promote the attractiveness of the sector as a career choice and offer opportunities to develop those who take up a career in the sector.

This is complemented by the Department's 'C'Mon Over' campaign which has raised the awareness of employment opportunities in Northern Ireland through the use of Facebook, on-line advertising and a presence at graduate fairs in Scotland, the North of England and Dublin. The majority of those people who were surveyed expressed an interest in the job opportunities available in Northern Ireland and included people originally from Northern Ireland.

Aspects of the campaign target those people who are in their final year of university, who are currently studying outside Northern Ireland, others target those people with more experience who are currently living and working outside Northern Ireland and may include former apprentices.

Ulster Carpets

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assistance his Department will provide to the 35 staff at Ulster Carpets who are being made redundant. (AQW 2570/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department in liaison with Invest NI has contacted Ulster Carpet Mills Ltd. and has offered assistance to those who receive redundancy notices to find alternative employment. The Department, in partnership with the Social Security Agency and other organisations, will be available to provide information and advice on employment opportunities, job search, training and education options including early entry to the Steps to Work Programme, careers guidance and benefits. This assistance will be provided on-site if required.

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of first class or business class flights taken by Invest NI staff and Board Members, in each year for which its accounts have been audited, broken down by (i) date, departure and destination of each one-way journey; (ii) the identity of the official travelling; and (iii) the cost incurred on each occasion. (AQW 2006/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The relevant period covers six years' audited accounts, the last year being 2007/08.

Overseas travel is part and parcel of Invest NI's normal operating costs, particularly given its remit to attract inward investment and promote overseas trade. While the information requested is contained within Invest NI's accounting records, a major exercise would be required to extract, analyse and review a large number of transactions.

The depth and detail of the information requested is not immediately accessible and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. However, Invest NI will extract the relevant information for its Board members and Senior Management team only for the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08. I will write to the Member when the information is available, and ensure that a copy of the letter is placed in the Assembly Library.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and its Non Departmental Public Bodies, fully adhere to the code of conduct on business travel as defined within the Northern Ireland Civil Service Staff Handbook. This states that, with regard to air fares, reimbursement will only be made in circumstances where a clear business need has been demonstrated in order to justify First or Business Class travel.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to breakdown by (i) jobs promoted; and (ii) assistance offered by Invest NI, or its predecessors the IDB and LEDU, for (a) foreign investment; and (b) other investment, annually between 1997 and 2008, as a ratio per head of the combined unemployed and economically inactive population, in each parliamentary constituency. (AQW 2007/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: It is not possible to answer the question in its entirety because the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey does not provide accurate estimates of the number of persons unemployed and economically inactive at Parliamentary Constituency Area level. This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However comprehensive information is available for 2001 when figures for the unemployed and economically inactive are available from the Census of Population. (See Table 1 overleaf)

In addition, the following tables (tables 2-4) show figures for (i)a, (ii)a and (ii)b from Invest NI and the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits (the claimant count is the closest approximation available to the unemployed element of the request). The Claimant Count information has been given as annual averages for each of the years from 1997/98 to 2007/08 for each Parliamentary Constituency. Job promotion statistics are not available from Invest NI's locally-owned client base for this time period as requested in (i)b.

The following points should also be noted:

- (a) Areas such as Parliamentary Constituencies are not self-contained labour markets and, as such, an Invest NI project assisted in a particular location has the potential to create benefits across a much wider area;
- (b) Assistance patterns are demand-led by businesses wishing to improve their competitiveness and gain a larger share of international markets, Invest NI therefore has limited scope for 'directing' investment to specific geographic areas; and
- (c) Job creation in itself is not the prime focus of Invest NI activity, which is to contribute to improving manufacturing and private services productivity to make the Northern Ireland economy more competitive and generate wealth and prosperity for all, in line with the Programme for Government.

TABLE 1

Parliamentary Constituency Area	Unemployed and Economically Inactive from Census 2001
Belfast East	14,432
Belfast North	21,931
Belfast South	20,917
Belfast West	26,074
East Antrim	14,839
East Londonderry	19,327
Fermanagh South Tyrone	19,334
Foyle	28,641
Lagan Valley	16,449
Mid Ulster	19,287
Newry & Armagh	23,556
North Antrim	19,097
North Down	14,580
South Antrim	16,743
South Down	20,879
Strangford	16,599
Upper Bann	20,497
West Tyrone	20,935
NI Total	354,117

TABLE 2

I (A) INVEST NI FDI JOBS PROMOTED BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA (PCA) - 1997/98 - 2007/08

PCA	FDI Jobs Promoted and Claimant Count Unemployed									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Jobs4 CC6	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	Jobs CC	
Belfast East	419	2,774	1,149	2,497	1,310	2,004	40	1,808	142	1,603
Belfast North	569	4,042	250	3,768	289	3,291	1,476	2,889	675	2,683

PCA	FDI Jobs Promoted and Claimant Count Unemployed									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Jobs4 CC6		Jobs CC		Jobs CC		Jobs CC		Jobs CC	
Belfast South	1,571	3,709	988	3,032	1,920	2,598	595	2,162	45	2,030
Belfast West	153	5,533	75	5,299	314	4,906	250	4,395	215	4,041
East Antrim	200	2,716	221	2,510	591	2,242	2,363	2,017	76	1,949
East Londonderry	62	3,591	77	3,304	123	2,818	26	2,405		2,282
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	22	3,657		3,374	236	2,707	20	2,324	108	2,241
Foyle	1,225	5,922	158	5,653	960	4,807	357	4,472	520	4,476
Lagan Valley	0	1,980	512	1,869	32	1,427		1,165	40	1,131
Mid Ulster	75	3,047		2,733		1,986		1,485		1,296
Newry & Armagh		4,407		4,079		3,305	300	2,573		2,418
North Antrim	244	3,157		3,037		2,602	12	2,120	0	1,960
North Down	51	2,179		2,062	358	1,858		1,672	18	1,474
South Antrim	130	2,180	86	2,060	226	1,782		1,474	316	1,436
South Down	75	3,424	275	3,124		2,604		2,151	134	1,997
Strangford	100	2,314	14	2,030	80	1,832	0	1,674	15	1,445
Upper Bann	310	2,556	202	2,405	145	2,085	37	1,877	72	1,811
West Tyrone		3,968	155	3,784		3,052	30	2,713	150	2,624

PCA	FDI Jobs Promoted and Claimant Count Unemployed									
	2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Jobs CC		Jobs CC		Jobs CC		Jobs CC		Jobs CC	
Belfast East		1,511	0	1,654	410	1,282	232	1,084	624	1,028
Belfast North		2,515	163	2,406	27	2,131	46	2,211	44	2,186
Belfast South	216	1,952	649	1,897	1,379	1,551	675	1,474	987	1,378
Belfast West	35	3,746	72	3,347	750	3,171	120	3,064		3,081
East Antrim	100	2,022	67	1,820	112	1,666	190	1,465		1,375
East Londonderry		1,993	24	1,989	0	1,878	0	1,744		1,538
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	350	2,094	202	1,948	0	1,575	11	1,365	441	1,295
Foyle	93	3,814	486	3,757	40	3,492	361	3,418	754	3,298
Lagan Valley		1,067		1,004	16	918	71	921		935
Mid Ulster	32	1,093	0	967	166	853	40	890		814
Newry & Armagh	75	2,193		2,045		1,807	1,002	1,504	304	1,379
North Antrim		1,681	0	1,503	23	1,365		1,396		1,389
North Down	41	1,329	200	1,367	140	1,123		1,060	233	1,003
South Antrim	5	1,511	0	1,351	319	1,055	67	1,102		1,084
South Down		1,900		1,752		1,505	127	1,401		1,273
Strangford	70	1,343	5	1,525	19	1,359		1,232	20	1,134
Upper Bann	16	1,644	110	1,581	13	1,285	49	1,254	0	1,282
West Tyrone	0	2,371	175	2,312	53	1,992	109	1,958	44	1,839

PCA	FDI Jobs Promoted and Claimant Count Unemployed		
	2007/08		Total
	Jobs CC		Jobs
Belfast East	226	872	4,552
Belfast North		1,870	3,539
Belfast South	283	1,292	9,308
Belfast West	142	2,806	2,126
East Antrim	235	1,139	4,155
East Londonderry	561	1,343	873
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	120	1,112	1,510
Foyle	865	2,812	5,819
Lagan Valley		831	671
Mid Ulster	84	700	397
Newry & Armagh	59	1,307	1,740
North Antrim	0	1,194	279
North Down	63	880	1,104
South Antrim		912	1,149
South Down		1,136	611
Strangford		956	323
Upper Bann	5	1,175	959
West Tyrone	95	1,621	811

1. Table totals may not add due to rounding.
2. Figures include both first-time inward investments and reinvestments by existing externally-owned clients.
3. FDI Assistance refers to inward investment by overseas owned clients, including GB owned clients.
4. Jobs promoted refers to the number of jobs expected to be created by the projects.
5. 2002/03 – 2007/08 refers to Invest NI. 1997/98 – 2001/02 refers to IDB & LEDU.
6. Annual average claimant count from 1st April to 31st March

TABLE 3

PCA	FDI Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Assist3 CC5		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC	
Belfast East	22.74	2,774	5.91	2,497	15.14	2,004	0.22	1,808	4.56	1,603
Belfast North	4.46	4,042	2.49	3,768	1.91	3,291	10.39	2,889	4.21	2,683
Belfast South	9.24	3,709	6.36	3,032	21.41	2,598	3.34	2,162	0.2	2,030
Belfast West	2.15	5,533	0.7	5,299	6.33	4,906	1.41	4,395	4.54	4,041
East Antrim	7.08	2,716	1.18	2,510	4.27	2,242	20.38	2,017	0.98	1,949
East Londonderry	0.83	3,591	2.93	3,304	9.5	2,818	7.25	2,405	0	2,282
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	0.62	3,657	0	3,374	6.05	2,707	0.14	2,324	2.3	2,241
Foyle	51.68	5,922	3.12	5,653	4.54	4,807	2.13	4,472	3.71	4,476
Lagan Valley	1.87	1,980	4.2	1,869	0.28	1,427	0	1,165	0.35	1,131

PCA	FDI Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Assist3 CC5		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC	
Mid Ulster	0.75	3,047	0	2,733	0	1,986	0	1,485	0	1,296
Newry & Armagh	0	4,407	0	4,079	0	3,305	2.25	2,573	0	2,418
North Antrim	5.1	3,157	0	3,037	0	2,602	0.23	2,120	1	1,960
North Down	0.87	2,179	0	2,062	2.35	1,858	0	1,672	0.07	1,474
South Antrim	0.85	2,180	4.6	2,060	2.59	1,782	0	1,474	4.78	1,436
South Down	0.99	3,424	1.65	3,124	0	2,604	0	2,151	4.75	1,997
Strangford	1.48	2,314	2.17	2,030	0.8	1,832	0.77	1,674	0.09	1,445
Upper Bann	4.15	2,556	1.1	2,405	1.9	2,085	0.37	1,877	3.01	1,811
West Tyrone	0	3,968	4.42	3,784	0	3,052	0.36	2,713	3.5	2,624

PCA	FDI Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)									
	2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC	
Belfast East	0	1,511	8.8	1,654	8.29	1,282	1.69	1,084	11.1	1,028
Belfast North	0	2,515	1.26	2,406	0.17	2,131	2.6	2,211	0.16	2,186
Belfast South	1.2	1,952	7.81	1,897	9.19	1,551	8.1	1,474	9.46	1,378
Belfast West	0.4	3,746	3.58	3,347	6.45	3,171	0.07	3,064	0	3,081
East Antrim	1.56	2,022	0.2	1,820	1.07	1,666	11.66	1,465	0	1,375
East Londonderry	0	1,993	0.17	1,989	0.01	1,878	7.74	1,744	0	1,538
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	2.1	2,094	1.44	1,948	0.71	1,575	0.66	1,365	4.86	1,295
Foyle	10.3	3,814	3.84	3,757	2.5	3,492	19.12	3,418	6.28	3,298
Lagan Valley	0	1,067	0	1,004	0.14	918	6.95	921	0	935
Mid Ulster	0.13	1,093	0.01	967	3.81	853	0.21	890	0	814
Newry & Armagh	0.42	2,193	0	2,045	0	1,807	6.42	1,504	2.14	1,379
North Antrim	0	1,681	2.72	1,503	2	1,365	0	1,396	0	1,389
North Down	0.22	1,329	0.62	1,367	0.99	1,123	0	1,060	0.93	1,003
South Antrim	0	1,511	0.03	1,351	3.78	1,055	2.14	1,102	0	1,084
South Down	0	1,900	0	1,752	0	1,505	3.04	1,401	0	1,273
Strangford	0.43	1,343	0.01	1,525	0.09	1,359	0	1,232	0.9	1,134
Upper Bann	8.99	1,644	1.8	1,581	6.05	1,285	0.14	1,254	0.03	1,282
West Tyrone	2.35	2,371	1.23	2,312	1.17	1,992	0.91	1,958	0.33	1,839

PCA	2007/08		Total
	Assist CC		INI
Belfast East	12.22	872	90.66
Belfast North	0.00	1,870	27.64
Belfast South	3.22	1,292	79.51

PCA	2007/08		Total
	Assist CC		INI
Belfast West	1.10	2,806	26.72
East Antrim	1.53	1,139	49.91
East Londonderry	4.03	1,343	32.46
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	0.62	1,112	19.48
Foyle	8.78	2,812	115.98
Lagan Valley	0.00	831	13.78
Mid Ulster	0.45	700	5.35
Newry & Armagh	1.14	1,307	12.36
North Antrim	2.55	1,194	13.60
North Down	0.75	880	6.81
South Antrim	0.00	912	18.77
South Down	0.00	1,136	10.42
Strangford	0.00	956	6.74
Upper Bann	0.03	1,175	27.57
West Tyrone	1.22	1,621	15.49

Notes:

1. Table totals may not add due to rounding.
2. Figures include both first-time inward investments and reinvestments by existing externally-owned clients.
3. FDI Assistance refers to inward investment by overseas owned clients, including GB owned clients.
4. 2002/03 – 2007/08 refers to Invest NI. 1997/98 – 2001/02 refers to IDB & LEDU and does not include assistance offered by IRTU.
5. Annual average claimant count from 1st April to 31st March

TABLE 4**II (B) OTHER (NON-FDI) INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA (PCA) - 1997/98 - 2007/08**

PCA	Other (Non-FDI) Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Assist4 CC5		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC	
Belfast East	6.66	2,774	1.65	2,497	0.71	2,004	1.38	1,808	1.2	1,603
Belfast North	3.5	4,042	0.65	3,768	2.47	3,291	1.35	2,889	0.24	2,683
Belfast South	0.62	3,709	2.77	3,032	1.75	2,598	5.15	2,162	7.27	2,030
Belfast West	6.16	5,533	0.47	5,299	0.83	4,906	1.61	4,395	0.44	4,041
East Antrim	3.23	2,716	3.28	2,510	0.61	2,242	0.93	2,017	0.65	1,949
East Londonderry	0.8	3,591	0.8	3,304	0.73	2,818	0.99	2,405	2.01	2,282
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	15.95	3,657	9.22	3,374	4.41	2,707	2.93	2,324	2.36	2,241
Foyle	1.6	5,922	2.62	5,653	3.21	4,807	9.22	4,472	1.52	4,476
Lagan Valley	2.38	1,980	1.87	1,869	1.38	1,427	1.51	1,165	1.04	1,131
Mid Ulster	2.82	3,047	3.64	2,733	2.36	1,986	3.27	1,485	3.6	1,296
Newry & Armagh	1.87	4,407	2.05	4,079	2.02	3,305	2.1	2,573	2.46	2,418
North Antrim	2.94	3,157	1.22	3,037	1.64	2,602	2.46	2,120	1.27	1,960

PCA	Other (Non-FDI) Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)									
	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00		2000/01		2001/02	
	Assist4 CC5		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC		Assist CC	
North Down	2.1	2,179	0.38	2,062	1.03	1,858	0.78	1,672	0.89	1,474
South Antrim	2.06	2,180	1.37	2,060	2.63	1,782	4.65	1,474	2.26	1,436
South Down	2.88	3,424	0.94	3,124	1.73	2,604	1.23	2,151	1.42	1,997
Strangford	1.27	2,314	0.71	2,030	1.43	1,832	2.18	1,674	1.44	1,445
Upper Bann	5.06	2,556	9.44	2,405	2.33	2,085	1.79	1,877	2.05	1,811
West Tyrone	2.37	3,968	1.61	3,784	1.16	3,052	1.44	2,713	0.85	2,624

PCA	Other (non-fdi) assistance offered (£m) and claimant count unemployed (persons)									
	2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Assist cc		Assist cc		Assist cc		Assist cc		Assist cc	
Belfast East	2.1	1,511	6.98	1,654	9.07	1,282	6.99	1,084	9.48	1,028
Belfast North	7.57	2,515	3.23	2,406	2.83	2,131	2.43	2,211	1.11	2,186
Belfast South	14.75	1,952	18.18	1,897	12.05	1,551	6.93	1,474	6.42	1,378
Belfast West	3.75	3,746	4.51	3,347	2.08	3,171	2.05	3,064	1.49	3,081
East Antrim	4.69	2,022	3.7	1,820	5.28	1,666	3.04	1,465	9.59	1,375
East Londonderry	4.17	1,993	5.35	1,989	2.13	1,878	2.91	1,744	1.71	1,538
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	3.27	2,094	2.9	1,948	4.04	1,575	2.1	1,365	2.8	1,295
Foyle	4.11	3,814	3.76	3,757	3.16	3,492	7.9	3,418	2.31	3,298
Lagan Valley	1.46	1,067	1.7	1,004	3.55	918	2.7	921	3.85	935
Mid Ulster	4.28	1,093	5.61	967	4.66	853	3.12	890	3.16	814
Newry & Armagh	5.84	2,193	2.13	2,045	2.8	1,807	1.03	1,504	2.44	1,379
North Antrim	2.39	1,681	2.54	1,503	6.25	1,365	0.85	1,396	3.96	1,389
North Down	1.12	1,329	4.43	1,367	2.41	1,123	0.85	1,060	0.47	1,003
South Antrim	22.88	1,511	4.51	1,351	3.22	1,055	1.9	1,102	0.72	1,084
South Down	2.44	1,900	1.24	1,752	4.59	1,505	1.71	1,401	1.08	1,273
Strangford	1.72	1,343	1.63	1,525	1.14	1,359	2.93	1,232	0.7	1,134
Upper Bann	7.64	1,644	5.2	1,581	13.31	1,285	8.69	1,254	5.57	1,282
West Tyrone	2.44	2,371	6.09	2,312	1.65	1,992	1.42	1,958	1.38	1,839

PCA	Other (Non-FDI) Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)		
	2007/08		Total
	Assist CC		INI
Belfast East	9.77	872	56
Belfast North	1.71	1,870	26.6
Belfast South	10.65	1,292	86.55
Belfast West	1.73	2,806	25.12
East Antrim	3.73	1,139	38.72
East Londonderry	2.23	1,343	23.81

PCA	Other (Non-FDI) Assistance Offered (£m) and Claimant Count Unemployed (persons)		
	2007/08		Total
	Assist CC		INI
Ferm. & S. Tyrone	8.98	1,112	58.96
Foyle	2.48	2,812	41.89
Lagan Valley	2.21	831	23.64
Mid Ulster	6.48	700	43
Newry & Armagh	5.68	1,307	30.42
North Antrim	1.61	1,194	27.12
North Down	1.8	880	16.25
South Antrim	3.79	912	49.99
South Down	1.83	1,136	21.09
Strangford	1.19	956	16.33
Upper Bann	3.78	1,175	64.86
West Tyrone	3.21	1,621	23.61

Notes:

1. Table Totals May Not Add Due To Rounding.
2. 2002/03 – 2007/08 Refers To Invest Ni. 1997/98 – 2001/02 Refers To Idb & Ledu And Does Not Include Assistance Offered By Irtu.
3. An Additional £67m Of Assistance Was Offered By Irtu Between 1997/98 And 2001/02 For Which This Level Of Detail Is Not Available.
4. Assist Refers To Other (Non-Fdi) Invest Ni Assistance Offered
5. Annual Average Claimant Count From 1st April To 31st March

Coach-Parking Facilities

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the commitment to tourism within the Programme for Government, and Derry City Council's commitment to ensure that visitor numbers increase to 203,000 per annum by 2009, what steps her Department is taking to provide adequate and secure coach-parking facilities in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 2010/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The provision of adequate and secure coach parking facilitates, is not the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) role is to facilitate discussion with local councils enabling:

- Identification of any perceived or actual problems when these are brought to NITB's attention by a stakeholder;
- Working with stakeholders to resolve identified concerns.

NITB, having become aware of a problem regarding lack of secure coach parking throughout Northern Ireland have co-ordinated a series of meetings to ensure this weakness has been brought to the attention of the Councils.

Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau is aware of the lack of coach facilities in their area and has temporary measures in place until a permanent solution can be found. Currently, coaches entering Londonderry may utilise the set down and pick up facilities adjacent to Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau and Derry Tourist Information Centre. In addition secure overnight parking is available in conjunction with Translink at Derry Bus Depot.

Unemployment Benefits

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people currently in receipt of unemployment benefits (i) state their previous job was in the construction industry and related sectors; and (ii) have registered their main skills and usual area of employment as the construction industry and related sectors. (AQW 2035/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) Information held on persons claiming unemployment benefits does not contain details of the claimants previous job and so it is not possible to answer this part of the question.
- (ii) The number of persons claiming unemployment benefits in October 2008, whose usual area of employment was in the construction industry and related sectors was 7,090¹. Information is not held on their main areas of skills.

¹ This includes the following Standard Occupational Classification 2000 codes: 1122 (Managers in construction), 2121 (Civil engineers), 3114 (Building and civil engineering technicians), 5216 (Pipe fitters), 5241 (Electricians, electrical fitters), 53 (Skilled construction and building trades), 8141 (Scaffolders, staggers, riggers), 8142 (Road construction operatives), 8149 (Construction operatives n.e.c.), 8221 (Crane drivers), 8229 (Mobile machine drivers and operatives n.e.c.) and 912 (Elementary construction trades).

Renewable Energy Sector

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) her assessment of the supply chain constraints in the renewable energy sector; and (ii) what strategy her Department is pursuing to overcome such restraints. (AQW 2157/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) Assessment of the supply chain constraints in the renewable energy sector

The Renewable Energy sector is generally understood to comprise a number of principal sub-sectors, solar, wind, marine, waste, hydro and biomass, each with its own particular technology and supply chain characteristics. Invest NI is actively engaged in researching the potential of the sector to contribute to meeting local energy demands and to develop, commercialise and export NI technology and expertise.

Invest NI has commissioned and already published two reports in this area:

- ‘Northern Ireland Renewable Energy Supply Chain’ commissioned from Carbon Trust by Invest NI and published in June 2008; and,
- ‘Wind Energy Supply Chain Opportunities’ commissioned from the Centre for Competitiveness by Invest NI and published in September 2008.

A third, major and overarching report ‘Energy Technology and Service Sector Business-led Collaborative Networks’ commissioned by Invest NI from the Energy Scoping Research Group will be published in December.

The main constraints identified in the Supply Chain reports already published are:

1. Understanding of the Renewables market is not as well developed in NI as in other UK regions.
2. Although NI businesses are active in renewable energy technologies, there is not a strong base across a wide range of technologies due to the size of the region.
3. Renewable energy technologies often require a diversity of knowledge, skills and resources to create and deploy products, something frequently not available within small companies.
4. There is a critical need to bridge the gap between the innovative, intellectual and analytical inputs and the creation of effective, marketable products.
5. Technology consulting expertise needs to be developed along with the publishing of good practice case studies.

- (ii) Strategy to overcome constraints

The renewable energy sector comprises a number of sub-sectors each with its own characteristics and constraints. Invest NI recognises the complexity of the sector and the need to provide a strong evidence base for action. The high level diagnostic / scoping work already carried out provides this base.

The ‘Energy Technology and Service Sector Business-led Collaborative Networks’ report due to be published in December will make several key recommendations for the public, private and academic sectors and will identify key technology areas for sectoral development in NI.

There are a wide range of companies within NI with the potential to participate in the renewable energy challenge. Invest NI Divisions will work with these businesses, in a co-ordinated way, to bring to bear a wide range of knowledge, expertise and perspectives to address supply chain constraints. The innovative

nature of many renewable energy products and services requires both co-ordination and flexibility to deliver solutions.

The limitations of scale and scope affecting small business will be addressed significantly by encouraging the formation of Collaborative Networks involving local businesses, NI universities, who are key players in technology research and development, and key external strategic manufacturing partners. The Invest NI Collaborative Networks programme is being actively used to support this activity.

Where NI businesses cannot themselves create product they can be encouraged to work with prime contractors in developing products. Early entry into markets is essential. Invest NI, in conjunction with DBERR, has already identified considerable supply chain constraints within the current off-shore wind sector and is working with clients with the potential to help satisfy these demands.

Invest NI will support Sectoral Trade Missions and Exhibitions providing key strategic opportunities for NI businesses to research both suppliers and supply chain constraints for larger manufacturers. In September 2008, nine clients travelled with Invest NI to the HUSUM Wind Energy Exhibition in Germany. Further visits are planned to other events such as the Aberdeen Energy Show. External visits will be complemented by local events such as the June 2008 conference in Ballymena attended by local companies and DBERR and intended to encourage local companies to feed into the global wind energy supply chain.

Invest NI will continue to facilitate and host an Energy Research and Technology Transfer Group and a Biomass Group to provide NI companies with best practice cases of sustainable energy technologies and with opportunities to network and explore business opportunities in the field of sustainable energy.

Hotel Projects

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the applications submitted to her Department for hotel projects in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone from (i) 2003-2007; and (ii) 2008 so far. (AQW 2158/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In the period from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2007, Invest NI received three applications for hotel projects in Fermanagh and four applications for hotel projects in Tyrone.

No applications have been received for projects in either Fermanagh or Tyrone in the current year to date.

Due to the commercial sensitivity of applications for assistance, Invest NI does not disclose the details of such applications. Details of any offers of assistance resulting from an application are however published.

Hotel Projects

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the successful applications submitted to her Department for hotel projects in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone from (i) 2003-2007; and (ii) 2008 so far. (AQW 2160/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Applications for hotel projects which resulted in capital offers of assistance from Invest NI in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone are detailed below:

Period	Hotel	Invest NI Assistance Offered
2003 - 2007	Carrybridge Hotel & Marina	£200,000
	Hotel Carlton	£162,631
	Killyhevlin Hotel	£795,000
	Lough Erne Golf Resort	£3,500,000
	Mahon's Hotel	£154,100
2008 to date	Fir Trees Hotel	£147,800
	Manor House Hotel	£203,500

The applications from Carrybridge and from Mahon's Hotel were offered assistance through Invest NI on behalf of IFI. The Carrybridge project did not proceed.

It should be noted also while the offers to Carrybridge; Mahons; and Lough Erne Golf Resort were issued in the period from 2003 to 2007, the applications were received prior to the period.

Construction Jobs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many construction jobs have been lost due to the economic downturn. (AQW 2163/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The number of persons claiming unemployment benefits has been rising since September 2007. The number of claimants of unemployed benefits whose usual occupation was in construction¹ increased by 3,015 from 4,075 in September 2007 to 7,090 in October 2008.

¹ This includes the following Standard Occupational Classification 2000 codes: 1122 (Managers in construction), 2121 (Civil engineers), 3114 (Building and civil engineering technicians), 5216 (Pipe fitters), 5241 (Electricians, electrical fitters), 53 (Skilled construction and building trades), 8141 (Scaffolders, stagers, riggers), 8142 (Road construction operatives), 8149 (Construction operatives n.e.c.), 8221 (Crane drivers), 8229 (Mobile machine drivers and operatives n.e.c.) and 912 (Elementary construction trades).

Northern Ireland Electricity

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to bring Northern Ireland Electricity back into public ownership; and for an estimate of how much this would cost. (AQW 2189/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department currently has no plans to bring Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) back into public ownership, as the cost to the public purse of doing so would be prohibitive.

It is estimated that costs involved could be in the region of £1 billion. This is based on a current assessment of NIE regulatory asset base and an estimate of the value of NIE Supply and NIE Power Procurement.

The ultimate cost of bringing NIE back into public ownership would be dependent upon prevailing market conditions.

Hotel Projects

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of applications for hotel projects (i) submitted to her Department; and (ii) accepted by her Department, in the North Down constituency. (AQW 2265/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In the period from the establishment of Invest NI in April 2002 to date, Invest NI received three applications for hotel projects in the North Down constituency.

Due to the commercial sensitivity of applications for assistance, Invest NI does not disclose the details of such applications. Details of any offers of assistance resulting from an application are however published.

Applications for hotel projects which resulted in capital offers of assistance from Invest NI in the North Down constituency are detailed below:

Hotel	Invest NI Assistance Offered
The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn	£25,411
Clandeboyne Lodge Hotel	£27,821

Company Directors

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the powers of company directors when a company is put into compulsory liquidation. (AQW 2283/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: When a company goes into compulsory liquidation, the director's loose control of the company's assets and their powers as directors will cease, with the exception of a right to appeal against the making of the Winding-Up Order.

Company Directors

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to define the duties and responsibilities of company directors when a company is put into compulsory liquidation. (AQW 2284/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: When a company goes into compulsory liquidation the director's have duties and responsibilities to assist and co-operate fully with the Official Receiver who becomes liquidator when a Winding-Up Order is made.

This will include attending interviews at the Official Receiver's Office and completing a detailed form of questionnaire, handing over all company books, records and business paperwork, providing full details of company assets and liabilities and of anyone else holding assets and trading records.

Failure to provide information and co-operate with the Official Receiver may lead to a director being examined by the Official Receiver at a public examination in Court regarding the affairs of the company. Failure to attend a public examination without good reason could lead to a fine or imprisonment or both.

Invest NI

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount of funding Invest NI has allocated to businesses in each of the last 3 years, broken down by council area. (AQW 2317/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Table 1 below provides the amount of assistance offered by Invest NI to each district council area during the three year period 2005/06 to 2007/08.

It should be noted that areas such as District Councils are not self-contained labour markets. A project assisted in a particular location has the potential to create benefits across a much wider area. Northern Ireland is a relatively small place and evidence indicates that many investments draw their workforce from areas beyond council area boundaries.

Invest NI has limited scope for 'directing' investment to specific geographic areas. Although we are able to influence the location decisions of some inward-investment projects, assistance patterns are demand-led by businesses wishing to improve their competitiveness and gain a larger share of international markets. In the case of established businesses, reinvestment patterns will usually be determined by the existing location of the business.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA (2005/06 – 2007/08)

DCA	2005/06 £m	2006/07 £m	2007/08 £m	Total £m
Antrim	1.21	0.62	3.03	4.87
Ards	2.24	1.36	0.53	4.14
Armagh	0.64	4.06	1.24	5.95
Ballymena	0.67	3.41	3.47	7.55
Ballymoney	0.12	0.41	0.44	0.97
Banbridge	0.53	0.33	0.71	1.58
Belfast	30.27	38.40	35.95	104.62
Carrickfergus	0.57	0.16	0.21	0.95
Castlereagh	0.93	0.46	3.38	4.76
Coleraine	1.04	0.66	5.83	7.52
Cookstown	1.04	1.44	2.53	5.01

DCA	2005/06 £m	2006/07 £m	2007/08 £m	Total £m
Craigavon	8.63	5.55	3.38	17.57
Londonderry	27.03	8.59	11.25	46.87
Down	0.37	0.33	0.87	1.57
Dungannon	2.96	2.45	8.89	14.30
Fermanagh	1.13	6.00	2.74	9.87
Larne	12.63	0.54	3.52	16.69
Limavady	9.61	1.05	0.44	11.10
Lisburn	9.70	4.20	3.56	17.47
Magherafelt	0.96	0.93	2.37	4.27
Moyle	0.06	0.14	0.25	0.45
Newry & Mourne	10.90	1.19	6.35	18.44
Newtownabbey	4.58	9.08	2.58	16.23
North Down	0.85	1.35	2.54	4.74
Omagh	1.98	0.68	3.68	6.34
Strabane	0.34	1.03	0.76	2.12
Total	131.00	94.43	110.51	335.94

Notes:

1. Table totals may not add due to rounding.
2. An additional £10m was offered, for which this level of detail is not available.

Dairy Sector

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance she is giving the milk processing sector to find alternative markets for its products. (AQW 2384/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Northern Ireland dairy sector is an important part of our agri-food industry and I am aware of the current difficulties facing the sector – farmers and processors alike. I will be meeting with representatives from the sector later this week to hear at first hand their concerns on the current situation.

The price of raw milk, which dropped to just over 18p per litre, down from 25p p/l in October 2008; in November 2007 the price was 32p p/l, at last month's United Dairy Farmer's auction, is unfortunately a reflection of the global demand for dairy products. Milk powder prices have collapsed and butter and cheese prices are in decline.

The current situation is due to market forces and the Northern Ireland dairy industry must continue its move from commodity based to value added products – the pace of this move must however be much faster. Where public funding has been required Invest NI has provided financial support for investment projects that has enabled companies to target new markets. This continues to be the case.

Invest NI continues to promote NI dairy processors through the use of its four Food Sector Marketing Advisors in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In addition three companies will be part of a trade mission to the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar from 26 - 30 November 2008. It is likely that at least one company will exhibit at Gulfood09 in Dubai on an Invest NI group stand. Two companies will be part of a trade mission to China from 22 November to 3 December 08. Five companies have recently returned from SIAL which is one of the largest food exhibitions in Europe. One company is currently being assisted to research opportunities in India in preparation for visiting IFE India in December 2008.

Invest NI has a comprehensive range of trade events planned for 2009 which I hope the industry will avail of. This is of course supplemented with a range of support measures for innovation.

Opportunity Omagh Proposal

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration he has given to ensure that the investment, as outlined in the Opportunity Omagh proposal, stays in Omagh. (AQW 2405/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: ‘Opportunity Omagh’ is a potentially substantial private sector proposal which could deliver positive economic returns to Omagh and its wider hinterland. Notwithstanding any planning or other issues which may require to be worked through, all private sector investments are to be welcomed. I would encourage the promoters to continue to engage, as I know they have been doing, with local stakeholders to ensure cohesion, complementarity and maximum benefit to the area.

Ulster Carpets

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance her Department will provide to Ulster Carpets, who have announced a number of redundancies. (AQW 2569/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has a close working relationship with Ulster Carpets, a successful, export-focused, local business. In recent years, the company has benefited from a range of Invest NI support, including Selective Financial Assistance, Research and Development, Trade and Energy Efficiency Programmes. The announcement on 17 November 2008 was the company’s response to economic recession, which has necessitated a cut in production levels for the foreseeable future. Cyclical downturns in demand should not be considered a consequence of a lack of Invest NI support.

Invest NI is working with Ulster Carpets to identify and explore new export markets. The company is currently on an Invest NI Trade Mission to the Middle East, the twentieth such mission in which it has participated during the past ten years. Furthermore, Invest NI will work with the company in providing counselling and advice to those affected by the redundancy announcement.

Invest NI has been in discussions with the company for some time in relation to a potential relocation to a single site in the Portadown area. While the current economic climate may affect the timing of any relocation decision, Invest NI will continue to keep in close contact with management in respect of this potential investment.

ENVIRONMENT

Larne Area Plan

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment when the draft Larne Area Plan will be published. (AQW 2029/09)

The Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): At present it is difficult to provide a definitive date for publication of the draft Antrim, Ballymena and Larne (ABL) Area Plan 2016. As you may be aware, my Department is awaiting the outcome of its appeal of the legal judgement arising from the judicial challenges to the Environmental Reports which accompanied the draft Northern and Magherafelt Area Plans. You may also be aware that the Court of Appeal has now referred a number of matters to the European Court of Justice. My Department is currently considering the implications of this referral for the ABL Plan 2016 and I will ensure you are advised of the outcome of this consideration as soon as it becomes practicable to do so.

Enforcement Action Notices

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many enforcement action notices have been issued by his office in Downpatrick in (i) 2005; (ii) 2006; and (iii) 2007. (AQW 2094/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Downpatrick Divisional Office has issued the following notices:

2005	14
2006	32
2007	20

Enforcement Action Notices

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many enforcement action notices have been finalised by his Department within (i) 6 months; (ii) 12 months; (iii) 24 months; and (iv) over 24 months in (a) 2005; (b) 2006; and (c) 2007; and what steps are being taken to speed up the process. (AQW 2104/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Downpatrick Divisional Office currently holds records of enforcement notices issued from 1999. The Division is taking the term “as finalised” as being those enforcement notices/breach of condition notices which were notices served within the said period.

The Division has served the following notices within:

	2005	2006	2007
6 months	0	1	1
12 months	2	4	1
24 months	2	5	1
Over 24 months	10	22	17
Total	14	32	20

The Downpatrick Division has been reviewing the methods of work within the enforcement section, assuming a more focused approach with regard to how its resources are utilised in each of the four Council areas. In the last six months, this approach has seen the enforcement team halt the rise in the overall number of cases currently live.

Department Enforcement Section

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many staff are employed in his Department’s enforcement section in Downpatrick; and (ii) what steps is he taking to ensure there are sufficient enforcement section staff to handle the demands in a reasonable time. (AQW 2105/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Downpatrick Divisional Office currently has 11 staff employed in the enforcement section, 7 professional staff and 4 administration staff.

The Division has been reviewing the methods of work within the enforcement section, assuming a more focused approach with regard to how its resources are utilised in each of the four Council areas. In the last six months, this approach has seen the enforcement team halt the rise in the overall number of cases currently live.

Flood Relief

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department paid out to each council in flood relief as a result of flooding in August 2008. (AQW 2147/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Under the “Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to District Councils – Flooding August 2008”, 1,551 payments of £1,000 have been issued by councils to individual householders. Councils may be reimbursed by the Department for this expenditure and also for any direct or indirect costs associated with the flooding. Of an overall estimate of £2million, £398,735 has been paid to councils to date. Councils’ claims must be forwarded to the Department by 18 November 2008, at which stage figures may be updated.

The details for individual councils are set out in the table below.

CLAIMS REIMBURSED BY THE DEPARTMENT

Council	Payments to householders £1,000 Immediate Payments	£1,000 Immediate Payment £	Direct Costs £	Indirect Costs £	Total Paid to Date £
Antrim	177	157,000			157,000
Ards	5	5,000			5,000
Armagh	8				0
Ballymena	151				0
Ballymoney	11	11,000	210	525	11,735
Banbridge	106	106,000			106,000
Belfast	344				0
Carrickfergus	4				0
Castlereagh	75	71,000			71,000
Coleraine	3				
Cookstown	8	8,000			8,000
Craigavon	126				0
Londonderry	0				0
Down	127				0
Dungannon & S Tyrone	17				0
Fermanagh	1	1,000			1,000
Larne	6				0
Limavady	1				0
Lisburn	157				0
Magherafelt	24	24,000			24,000
Moyle	1				0
Newry & Mourne	45				0
Newtownabbey	131				0
North Down	7				0
Omagh	16	15,000			15,000
Strabane	0				0
Total	1,551	398,000	210	525	398,735

Developer Contributions

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the timescale for finalising the rules for ‘Developer Contributions’.
(AQW 2168/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The area of Developer Contributions is an issue which is of interest to a number of Northern Ireland departments, particularly those with responsibility for infrastructure provision. The forthcoming consultation paper on the reform of the planning system offers a suitable vehicle through which we can initiate debate on the matter. Subject to Executive agreement, I hope to issue the consultation paper before

the end of the year. Decisions in relation to all of the reform proposals will only be taken following analysis of the consultation responses.

Incinerated Chicken Litter

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment if the residue of incinerated chicken litter can be spread on agricultural land. (AQW 2178/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Chicken litter ash is not currently used on agricultural land in Northern Ireland. There is no legislation to prevent its use, but such practice would be dependent on the content of the ash and the way in which it had been burned.

PPS 14

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment when the new PPS 14 will be finalised and published; and when the proposed changes will be put into place. (AQW 2219/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I hope the Executive will consider the Revised draft PPS 14 at the earliest opportunity. If there is no agreement, I will shelve the revised draft and we will live with the existing policies.

This would mean residential development in rural areas continuing to be hampered by restrictive planning policy, and planning policy on farm diversification continuing to lag behind rural development policies.

The revised policy will come into effect immediately upon publication.

Wind Farm Planning Applications

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment how many (i) onshore; and (ii) offshore wind farm planning applications (a) have been approved; and (b) are awaiting a decision, by the Planning Service. (AQW 2253/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Planning Service has approved 33 applications for onshore windfarms and is currently processing 50 applications for onshore windfarms. Off-shore wind development does not fall within the jurisdiction of Planning Service.

Local Councils

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the level of debt of each local council. (AQW 2264/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The level of debt of each district council, which has been extracted from council's 2007/2008 uncertified accounts, is detailed below.

District Council	2007 / 2008 Borrowing repayable on demand or within 12 months £	2007 / 2008 Borrowing repayable within a period in excess of 12 months £	2007 / 2008 Total debt £
Antrim	1,971,355	21,126,047	23,097,402
Ards	638,312	14,455,187	15,093,499
Armagh	879,724	20,753,540	21,633,264
Ballymena	11,513,780	18,795,297	30,309,077
Ballymoney	404,051	9,160,350	9,564,401
Banbridge	762,940	12,365,941	13,128,881
Belfast	9,713	20,865,715	20,875,428

District Council	2007 / 2008 Borrowing repayable on demand or within 12 months £	2007 / 2008 Borrowing repayable within a period in excess of 12 months £	2007 / 2008 Total debt £
Carrickfergus	393,505	13,373,431	13,766,936
Castlereagh	237,997	17,737,682	17,975,679
Coleraine	1,899,632	25,939,577	27,839,209
Cookstown	51,493	1,668,056	1,719,549
Craigavon	1,294,207	6,925,910	8,220,117
Derry	1,095,354	19,966,020	21,061,374
Down	982,175	14,415,109	15,397,284
Dungannon and South Tyrone	143,717	1,887,236	2,030,953
Fermanagh	229,432	2,294,199	2,523,631
Larne	339,189	5,887,735	6,226,924
Limavady	177,134	8,806,286	8,983,420
Lisburn	907,227	20,154,970	21,062,197
Magherafelt	0	0	0
Moyle	295,978	8,309,192	8,605,170
Newry and Mourne	2,059,129	19,720,061	21,779,190
Newtownabbey	1,192,793	27,170,080	28,362,873
North Down	1,085,641	23,360,009	24,445,650
Omagh	514,507	9,886,778	10,401,285
Strabane	53,383	2,467,850	2,521,233
Total	29,132,368	347,492,258	376,624,626

Replies to Assembly Questions

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail when he will provide comprehensive answers to AQWs 1374/09 and 1928/09. (AQW 2288/09)

The Minister of the Environment: As indicated in my answers to AQWs 1374/09 and 1928/09 my officials will write to you with the relevant information as soon as it has been collated and legal advice considered. I would expect this to be within the next two weeks.

Transition Committees

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the amount of grants that will be available to each of the eleven transition committees, under the Review of Public Administration. (AQW 2321/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Local Government Circular 16/08, which provides information on the establishment of Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams, issued to district councils on 28 October 2008. Councils were advised that the Department is developing a funding package and a grant will be allocated to each of the eleven Transition Committees, to help cover expenditure incurred on members' allowances, salaries and support costs. Guidance detailing the package is currently being finalised and it is the Department's intention to issue a further circular to district councils within the next few weeks.

Vehicle Testing Centres

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the current average waiting time for an MOT, for each vehicle testing centre. (AQW 2366/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Detail of the weekly and year to date average waiting time for a vehicle test in the 15 test centres is included in the following table.

AVERAGE WAITING TIME FOR A VEHICLE TEST IN DAYS WEEKLY YEAR TO DATE

Test Centre	2- 8 November 2008	1 April – 8 November 2008
Armagh	9	12
Ballymena	11	17
Belfast	8	15
Coleraine	8	15
Cookstown	10	17
Craigavon	7	13
Downpatrick	8	15
Enniskillen	13	17
Larne	8	15
Lisburn	8	15
Londonderry	13	20
Mallusk	7	13
Newry	9	19
Newtownards	7	17
Omagh	9	15

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Civil Service Jobs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil service jobs in (i) Ards; and (ii) North Down Borough Councils areas, broken down by office location. (AQW 2013/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): The number of staff in post in the two district council areas, broken down by office location, is detailed in the attached table.

District Council	Dept	Building Address			Staff
Ards	DOE	Govt. Office	9 Church Street	Greyabbey BT22 2NQ	3
Ards	DARD	Govt. Office	9 Robert Street	Newtownards BT23 4DN	45
Ards	DSD	Crown Buildings	East Street	Newtownards BT23 3EL	43
Ards	DEL	Govt. Office	9 Conway Square	Newtownards BT23 4DA	18
Ards	DOE	Govt. Office	Jubilee Road	Newtownards BT23 4XP	40
Ards	DRD	Govt. Office	Jubilee Road	Newtownards BT23 4XP	10
Ards	DOE	Scrabo Country Park	203A Scrabo Road	Newtownards BT23 4SJ	6

District Council	Dept	Building Address			Staff
Total Ards					165
North Down	DFP	Crown Bldgs	Hamilton Road	Bangor BT20 4LG	34
North Down	DSD	Crown Bldgs	Hamilton Road	Bangor BT20 4LG	43
North Down	DEL	Govt Office	65 High Street	Bangor BT20 5BE	24
North Down	DE	Rathgael House	43 Balloo Road	Bangor BT19 7PR	566
North Down	DETI	Rathgael House	43 Balloo Road	Bangor BT19 7PR	1
North Down	DFP	Rathgael House	43 Balloo Road	Bangor BT19 7PR	266
North Down	DRD	North Down Section Off	Balloo Road	Bangor BT19 2PG	40
North Down	DRD	72 Balloo Road	Bangor	BT19 7PG	1
North Down	DOE	Crawfordsburn Country Club	Bridge Road South	Helen's Bay BT19 1JT	6
Total North Down					981
Total					1146

Notes

Data source as at 1 January 2008.

Figures do not include those on career break.

Figures include both permanent and casual staff.

Feral Cat Population

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to make a statement on the size of the feral cat population within the Stormont Estate; and what arrangements are in place to ensure the continuing welfare of these animals. (AQW 2034/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel is aware that there is a small feral cat population within the Stormont Estate. It has, at no time, undertaken a survey on numbers and therefore I am unable to give precise figures.

The Department has no arrangements in place to look after the welfare of the feral cats, although officials within the Stormont Estate are aware of a group of current and past civil servants who feed the cats on a regular basis.

Social Housing Developments

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the money available for increased allocations to the Department of Social Development for social housing developments, during the financial years (i) 2009/10; and (ii) 2010/11. (AQW 2169/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The expenditure plans for 2008/09 to 2010/11 as set out in the Budget 2008-11 document were based on the allocation of all the available funding at that time. The total allocations for the Housing Programme in 2009/10 and 2010/11 are £290m and £300m respectively. Of these amounts £172m and £171m respectively relate to social housing development.

Therefore, the scope to make increased allocations to the Department for Social Development for social housing in 2009/10 and 2010/11 will be primarily dependent on the level and timing of reduced requirements declared by NI departments as part of the respective in-year monitoring processes. In the recent 2008/09 September Monitoring Round £15 million was allocated to the Department for Social Development for social housing.

September Monitoring Round Process

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the bids for (i) capital; and (ii) current expenditure submitted by each Department during the September Monitoring Round process. (AQW 2181/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: As part of the In-Year Monitoring process it is normal practice for NI departments to consult with their respective Assembly Committee's as regards the content of their Monitoring Round submissions.

Therefore, the information requested should already be available from Assembly Committee's whilst requests for further detail on Monitoring Round submissions should be referred to specific departments.

As part of the 2008-09 September Monitoring Round the Department of Finance and Personnel identified pressures of £11.1 million in terms of current expenditure and £3.1 million in relation to capital investment.

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to set out his Department's plans to decentralise Departmental employment and operations of its agencies to locations outside Belfast. (AQW 2199/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Professor Sir George Bain's recent report on the location of public sector jobs includes two organisations within the Department of Finance and Personnel – Land and Property Services and the Northern Ireland Civil Service Shared Services – in the pool of candidates for relocation.

The recommendations of this independent review have to be carefully considered by government before decisions on a way forward can be reached. As a first step, I have written to Executive colleagues to gather opinions from Ministers and these, together with the views of the Finance Committee and the Assembly debate on 21 October, will be useful in assessing the degree of consensus on the proposals.

Car Pool Service

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how many vehicles are maintained; (ii) how many drivers are maintained; and (iii) what is the total cost of maintenance for vehicles, in the official car pool service. (AQW 2279/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department currently maintain a fleet of fourteen Skoda Superb cars, two Toyota Prius Hybrid cars and one Volkswagen Caravelle people carrier.

The Department employs twelve drivers who either drive Ministers or provide backup and transport officials.

The normal maintenance cost for the fleet of Skodas for the first three years was included in the purchase price. It is not possible to provide an exact figure for the maintenance cost for the other vehicles involved in the transportation of Ministers and officials as these costs are not monitored separately, from costs associated with other departmental vehicles e.g. courier vans.

However, the total maintenance cost has been estimated at £7K per annum.

Steps 2 Work

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the reasons why (i) evaluation forms for Steps 2 Work tender bids were dated weeks after the date when panels made assessments; (ii) panel members did not take individual and contemporaneous notes of their evaluation of each bid; and (iii) a number of tenderers were offered 'clarification interviews' and others were not. (AQO 1300/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Although evaluation commenced on a particular date none of the evaluations in any of the contract areas could be concluded until clarification on aspects of some tender offers could be obtained from organisations, verification of the statistical evidence in some tender offers needed to be ratified with Departmental records. In line with the recommendation of the Training for Success report the Department for Employment and Learning sought references from colleagues in England regarding the experience of organisations which were tendering for business in Northern Ireland for the first time. The time taken to complete this exercise resulted in a delay in completing the final evaluation scores and comments.

Notes were taken by individuals on the panel to inform a consensus of opinion which was recorded on the evaluation marking frame. The clarification stage of the procurement process is not an opportunity to supply supplementary information to a tender offer and therefore, in accordance with the Invitation to Tender documentation, only those organisations whose tender offers required clarification were requested to attend a clarification interview.

Steps 2 Work

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, further to the recommendation of the Department's Training for Success Report that stated 'agreements in contract bids are supported with formal written documentation', to detail the reasons why Steps 2 Work contracts were awarded where documentation was limited to a 'letter of support'. (AQO 1339/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: In line with the recommendation of the Department for Employment and Learning's report on Training for Success, Central Procurement Directorate only awarded contracts for Steps to Work after satisfactory evidence was presented that agreement had been reached between all parties in accordance with the tender offers submitted.

Number of Hospital Deaths due to MRSA

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many hospital patients have died as a result of MRSA in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2477/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table gives the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland between 2005 and 2007, where MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate and the deceased died in a hospital. As some people are very ill with other conditions and the contribution of MRSA can be uncertain; the figures relate to all deaths regardless of whether MRSA was recorded as the primary or secondary cause of death. The deceased may have contracted MRSA prior to becoming a hospital patient.

TABLE: NUMBER OF DEATHS REGISTERED RELATING TO MRSA WHERE THE DECEASED DIED IN A HOSPITAL, 2005-2007^P

Registration Year	Number of MRSA related deaths in hospital
2005	57
2006	47
2007P	52

P Provisional Data.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Paediatric Tonsillectomies

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if provision will be made for paediatric tonsillectomies in the proposed new acute hospital for the South West in Enniskillen. (AQW 1927/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): It is for Trusts to decide on the location of specific services to best meet the needs of their local populations. However, in this instance I can advise that paediatric tonsillectomies in the Western Trust area are carried out at Altnagelvin Hospital. Plans for the new acute hospital do not currently anticipate paediatric tonsillectomy being carried out there due to the need to support such surgery with full paediatric cover if the service is to meet accepted levels of quality and safety. However, outpatient and day case ENT care will be provided at the new hospital.

Multi Agency Support Teams Schools Initiative

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to advise of the progress of the Multi Agency Support Teams Schools initiative; and (ii) when resources will be available for all schools and children who are in need of additional support. (AQW 1989/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Children and Young People Funding Package, announced in March 2006, provided £4m recurrent to set up 9 early intervention multi-disciplinary support teams to provide a cohesive support service for children and young people in a range of settings.

The multi-disciplinary teams have been established and are taking referrals. Services are being delivered to children based on an assessment of the needs of each child.

That £4m recurrent has now been incorporated into Health and Social Services Boards' normal budgetary baselines with effect from April 2008.

Multi Agency Support Teams Schools Initiative

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide a breakdown by council area of those schools in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area which (i) are participating in the Multi Agencies Support Teams for Schools (MAST) initiative; (ii) have applied to join; and (iii) have not applied. (AQW 1990/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested, broken down by council area, is set out in the table below. Total numbers are:

- (i) 103 schools;
- (ii) At 5 November 2008 an additional 44 have expressed an interest in being involved in this service, and
- (iii) A further 111 have currently not responded to Multi-Agencies Support Teams for Schools.

	ANTRIM	B'MENA	B'MONEY	C'FERGUS	COLERAINE	C'STOWN	LARNE	M'FELT	MOYLE	N'ABBEY
Nursery Schools										
Participating in MASTS	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	4
Have applied since closing date	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not Applied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Primary Schools with a Nursery Unit										
Participating in MASTS	4	6	2	2	2	3	0	1	1	5
Have applied since closing date	0	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	0
Not Applied	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	3	1
Primary Schools										
Participating in MASTS	13	3	4	2	8	7	1	10	6	9
Have applied since closing date	4	7	3	4	3	4	3	3	1	3
Not applied	4	11	12	2	15	10	9	16	7	13

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) in each of the last five years, the funding his Department has given to tackling attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder; and (ii) the proposed budget for tackling this disorder in the next three years. (AQW 1991/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has provided £25k funding to Northern Ireland Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (NI-ADD) Support Centre for each of the last 5 years.

Funding of £25k for the NI-ADD Support Centre will continue in 2009/2010.

Services for children with ADHD are provided by Child & Adolescent Mental Health services. The breakdown of the allocation of funding provided for ADHD is not held and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Northern Ireland Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder Children's Charity

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what financial support he has given to the Northern Ireland Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder Children's Charity, and in particular, to its support centre project. (AQW 1992/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This year the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is providing £25k to the Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder charity for its support centre. Funding will continue in 2009/10 at a similar rate.

Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety where Ambulances used by Altnagelvin Hospital are serviced; and what measures are in place to ensure that (i) value for money is achieved; and (ii) disruption to the service is kept to a minimum. (AQW 1995/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The provision of ambulance services, including servicing of vehicles, is a matter for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS).

NIAS have advised that the Regional Supplies Service of the Central Services Agency procure ambulance vehicle maintenance contracts through a tendering process having regard to various factors, including value for money. Ambulances based at Altnagelvin Area Hospital are serviced at locally based garages; the current contract specifies 10 garages in the NIAS Western Division area, any of which may be used.

With regard to minimising service disruption, the fleet complement takes account of the need for reserve vehicles. The ambulance fleet is managed as a regional resource and ambulances are deployed on an operational basis to provide continuity of cover in the event of the unavailability of any individual ambulance at any particular ambulance station or deployment point.

Family Intervention Team

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) what steps he intends to take to address management deficits in the Family Intervention Team, Enniskillen; (ii) how his proposed plan will address this issue in the future; and (iii) his long term plans for this service. (AQW 1999/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This is an operational matter for the Western Health and Social Care Trust management and I understand that the Trust has already responded to you on this matter.

Pay Bands for Nurses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the pay bands for grade D nurses. (AQW 2022/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From 1 October 2004 Health and Social Care staff with a nurse clinical grading D moved to pay band 5 on the Agenda for Change scales.

Pay Bands for Nurses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the pay bands for grade E nurses. (AQW 2023/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From 1 October 2004 the majority of Health and Social Care staff with a nurse clinical grading E moved to pay band 5 on the Agenda for Change scales. However, those staff that were employed in specialist posts at Grade E moved to the Agenda for Change band 6 grade.

Pay Bands for Nurses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the pay bands for grade F nurses. (AQW 2024/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From 1 October 2004 Health and Social Care staff with a nurse clinical grading F moved to pay band 6 on the Agenda for Change scales.

People Diagnosed with Epilepsy

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with epilepsy, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 2049/09)

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

People with Epilepsy

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what specialist services are available for people with epilepsy. (AQW 2050/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: People suffering from epilepsy have access to care and treatment from an appropriate part of the Health and Social Care sector depending on their individual needs, ranging from primary and community care to general neurology and specialist epilepsy clinics.

Regional neurology services are provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's neurology department. In addition to general neurology and specialist epilepsy clinics, the service provides a pre-conceptual clinic and joint obstetric/epilepsy clinic; and manages the UK & Ireland Epilepsy and Pregnancy Register. Pre-surgical assessments are carried out although, with the exception of vagal nerve stimulation, patients deemed suitable for surgery are referred to centres of excellence in either London or Liverpool.

My Department has also commissioned a review of services for children with severe/intractable epilepsy, and will be seeking to develop services in line with the recommendations from that review.

NICE Guidelines

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the level of compliance with NICE guidelines by Health and Social Care Trust organisations. (AQW 2051/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are several different types of NICE guideline. Technology appraisals typically assess new drug therapies for their cost effectiveness. The Health and Social Care service providers are generally expected to put plans in place within three months to facilitate the implementation of these guidelines once endorsed by my Department. NICE clinical guidelines and public health guidelines, on the other hand, are typically advisory good practice documents covering a wide range of issues relating to the management of a disease or medical condition. They are regarded as developmental standards designed to encourage and support moves to better practice that HSC organisations are expected to achieve over time.

There is no information presently available on the general level of compliance with NICE Guidelines. However, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority is responsible for reviewing clinical and social care governance arrangements in individual HSC Trusts against a range of quality standards on a on-going basis. This includes compliance with best practice guidance concerned with safe and effective care produced by NICE.

People with Epilepsy

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available to (i) adults with epilepsy; and (ii) child sufferers of epilepsy, in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 2052/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust that adults suffering from epilepsy in their area are referred to the Trust's neurology service by their GPs and have access to care and treatment from this service and other appropriate parts of the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector depending on their individual needs. The Trust has Epilepsy Specialist Nurses who hold clinics and provide support to patients with epilepsy.

For children with epilepsy, several clinics staffed by consultants with an interest in epilepsy are held each month. When appropriate, referrals are made to the neurology service at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. The Trust is currently recruiting for two part-time paediatric epilepsy nurse specialists.

The Trust also provides access to a consultant psychiatrist and Lakeview Hospital to assist in the assessment and treatment of epilepsy in learning disability. The condition is managed by community nurses for learning disability who have access to the epilepsy nurse specialists and specialist epilepsy services.

Ambulance Response Times

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average ambulance response time, from receiving the call to arrival in rural areas, compared to the average response time in urban areas.

(AQW 2070/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Ambulance services calls are not categorised as rural and urban. The average response times for Category A emergency (life-threatening) calls in each Northern Ireland Ambulance Service operational division for the first quarter of 2008/09 are detailed in the table below.

CATEGORY A EMERGENCY CALLS AVERAGE RESPONSE TIMES (MINUTES)
1 APRIL 2008 – 30 JUNE 2008

Eastern Division (City)	5:57
East Division (Country)	7:31
Northern Division	9:10
Southern Division	8:25
Western Division	8:02

Pay Bands for Nurses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the pay bands for grade G sisters.

(AQW 2075/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From 1 October 2004 the majority of Health and Social Care staff with a nurse clinical grading G moved to pay band 6 on the Agenda for Change scales. However, those staff that were employed as ward managers and theatre managers and those in specialist posts at grade G moved to the Agenda for Change pay band 7.

Clostridium Difficile

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if discharged patients, who have contracted clostridium difficile in hospital, receive any additional care.

(AQW 2076/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Ongoing care following discharge from hospital is normally provided by a patient's general practitioner and other members of the primary care team. Any

specific treatment is tailored to a patient's individual circumstances, the particular condition from which they suffer, its severity and any co-morbidity.

Nursing Jobs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many grade D nursing jobs he plans to cut under his efficiency targets. (AQW 2077/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Efficiency savings are not cuts. The money released is not taken out of the system; it is reinvested back into frontline services to where it is needed most. Each of the Trusts will now consult on a number of their proposals over the next five months. It is only after this consultation process is complete that any decision will be made on how to achieve the efficiencies required for reinvestment.

Nursing Jobs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many grade E nursing jobs he plans to cut under his efficiency targets. (AQW 2078/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer the Member to my earlier answer. (AQW 2077/09)

Nursing Jobs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many grade F nursing jobs he plans to cut under his efficiency targets. (AQW 2079/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer the Member to my earlier answer. (AQW 2077/09)

Hospital Vending Machines

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of a ban on hospital vending machines selling junk food, such as the one being introduced in Wales. (AQW 2082/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Vending machines in HSC hospitals are primarily intended to offer staff and visitors access to snacks and drinks at times when hospital dining facilities are not available and are not designed to replace a healthy balanced diet. However, our hospitals are well placed to show good practice and be exemplary in providing and encouraging healthier food choices to enable the population of Northern Ireland to reduce the risks of developing preventable diseases such as Coronary Heart disease, Stroke and Diabetes. Our hospitals should therefore be exemplar in the promotion of healthy eating for patients; including staff and visitors who would benefit from a healthy balanced diet.

We are therefore looking closely at the decision taken in Wales with a view of determining if a similar position should be adopted in Northern Ireland.

Nursing Jobs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many band 7 ward sister jobs he plans to cut under his efficiency targets. (AQW 2083/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer the Member to my earlier answer. (AQW 2077/09)

Health Complaints Procedure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation there has been on the new health complaints procedure. (AQW 2097/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: “Complaints in the Health and Personal Social Services: A Consultation Paper” was issued for public consultation in November 2006. The closing date for responses was extended to 23 March 2007. A Summary of Responses to the consultation was published in January 2008.

Health Complaints Procedure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken to ensure there is an independent investigation element to the health complaints procedure. (AQW 2098/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The new complaints procedure Complaints in HSC: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning will become effective on 1 April 2009. This single-tier complaints procedure allows for a more robust local resolution of complaints and removes the Independent Review stage presently convened via the relevant HSS Board. The new arrangements recognise that there will be times when attempts at local resolution do not satisfy the complainant and provides for a robust and fully independent review through the NI Ombudsman.

Within the local resolution stage there will also be opportunities to involve independent experts, lay persons and conciliators as appropriate.

Health Complaints Procedure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what role there is in the proposed new health complaints process for complainants. (AQW 2099/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The complainant has a key role in the new complaints process. The arrangements seek to make the process more accessible to all, and one of the new standards specifically addresses the issue of support for complainants and staff.

HSC organisations will routinely request feedback from complainants for the purposes of monitoring the effectiveness of arrangements locally and the new Patient and Client Council will also work closely with any complainants who wish to make use of their services.

Health Complaints Procedure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether complainants have been given a sufficient role in the proposed new health complaints procedure; and whether he intends to review their role. (AQW 2100/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: HSC organisations will routinely request feedback from complainants for the purposes of monitoring the effectiveness of arrangements locally and the new Patient and Client Council will also work closely with any complainants who wish to make use of their services.

The Complaints in Health and Personal Social Services: A Consultation provided the opportunity for all services users and staff to contribute to the design of the new arrangements. The consultation process involved a wide section of the public including, but not limited to, those who had previously expressed concerns about the HPSS Complaints Procedures.

I have no immediate plans to review the role of the complainant in the HSC complaints procedure.

Speech and Language Therapists

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many accredited training courses for parents and education staff have been run by Speech and Language Therapists, in the academic year 2007/08. (AQW 2121/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not held centrally by my Department.

Infection Control

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the emphasis on the use of audit to measure the implementation of policies and procedures relating to infection control, to detail the reasons why 44 audits were missing out of a total of 56, in the current year, for Theatre 1 operating theatre in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. (AQW 2122/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In the Royal Victoria Hospital, Operating Theatre 1 serves neurosurgical ward 4f and is located on level 3. Environmental Cleanliness Audits are carried out on a rotational basis across all operating theatres on level 3, and are conducted on the frequency recommended for a particular risk category of the functional area in line with the Cleanliness Matters Toolkit. According to information provided by the Belfast Trust no audits are missing.

Speech and Language Therapy Task Force

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety who will take the lead in his Department in the implementation of the Speech and Language Therapy Task Force report. (AQW 2123/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's Mental Health and Disability Policy Directorate will lead on the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Health Care Acquired Infections

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department has considered the introduction of hazard analysis and critical control point protocol in auditing cleanliness and targeting health care acquired infections. (AQW 2124/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As hazard analysis and critical control point protocol (HACCPP) is a risk assessment tool used by food production units, including those in all HSC Trusts, to identify and reduce risks throughout the food production process, HSC Trusts have not applied HACCPP to auditing cleanliness and targeting health care associated infections.

Speech and Language Therapy Task Force

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Speech and Language Therapy Task Force Report. (AQW 2126/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I welcomed the completion of the Taskforce's report. Work already undertaken by my Department has helped to move the service in the direction set out in the report. This includes improvements in waiting times for Allied Health Professionals, which have been reduced to less than 26 weeks, and will be further reduced to 13 weeks next year.

Respite Care Beds

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many beds are kept available for respite care in nursing homes. (AQW 2140/09)

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

Respite Care Beds

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the average waiting time is for respite care beds. (AQW 2142/09)

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

Respite Care Beds

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken by his Department to increase provision for respite care beds. (AQW 2143/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total budget secured under the Comprehensive Spending Review for children and adults with disabilities in Northern Ireland is £43m (£24m recurrent) over the next 3 years. This will benefit all people with disabilities and includes the provision of an additional 400 new or enhanced respite care packages over the next three years for people with disability and their families/carers. Additional funding of £60m (£35m recurrent) was also secured over the next three years as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review to deal with the demographic increase in the numbers of older people who will require support in the community. This investment will be targeted at the development of a range of flexible and responsive community care services including respite. My Department is actively encouraging the use of the Direct Payments scheme as a further means of providing social care services as I also believe that this is helpful in giving people flexibility, choice and control over the purchase and delivery of services that support them including respite.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to set up specialist multi-disciplinary clinics for sufferers of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. (AQW 2144/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is the responsibility of the Health and Social Services Boards to plan and allocate resources to meet the needs of their local population, including those with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). In determining their priorities for service development, Boards will take into account local circumstances, the strategic objectives established for the HSC and competing demands and pressures for a wide range of health and social care services generally.

In January 2008 my Department issued a circular endorsing a National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline on the diagnosis and management of ME/CFS in adults and children. I would expect the HSC to take account of the NICE guideline in the future planning and delivery of services to people diagnosed with ME/CFS.

Patients Diagnosed with Cancer

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people diagnosed with cancer in 2008 were not operated on within 21 days of being diagnosed. (AQW 2155/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not routinely recorded. It should also be noted that surgery is not indicated for every diagnosis of cancer.

The current cancer access standards require Trusts to ensure that 98% of patients diagnosed with cancer receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of the decision to treat being taken. The latest validated data is for August 2008 and indicates that 96% of cancer patients have commenced treatment within 31 days of the decision to treat. The Department continues to closely monitor Trust performance in relation to the cancer access standards.

Agency Staff

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the positions that agency staff are having to fill in the Health and Social Care Service. (AQW 2161/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Agency staff are employed across all Terms and Conditions groups in response to immediate pressures affecting service delivery.

Greenhaw Lodge Learning Disability Day Care Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to intervene in the proposal by the Western Health and Social Services Trust to move the Greenhaw Lodge learning disability day care service. (AQW 2177/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Health and Social Care Trust has advised me that the relocation of day care services from the Greenhaw Lodge facility to the Evergreen Centre at Gransha Park is of a temporary nature, designed in order to enable the continuance of the service provided to the 24 people who are on the register at Greenhaw Lodge. The Trust will be identifying a longer term solution to ensure continued safe and effective future services.

Breast Cancer

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures his Department has in place to raise public awareness of breast cancer. (AQW 2183/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Breast Screening Programme is an important public health initiative which has a significant impact on reducing the number of women who die from breast cancer in Northern Ireland each year.

Currently, women aged between 50 and 64 years are routinely invited for breast screening every three years. From March 2009 the programme will be extended to include women up to 70 years of age.

This programme is supported by a suite of information leaflets including one which is sent to all women when they are invited for screening. In addition to this, a Breast awareness leaflet is available through GP surgeries and other health promotion outlets to remind women of the importance of being breast aware.

The Department would encourage any woman who has concerns, signs or symptoms regarding her health, to contact her GP.

Breast Cancer

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures his Department has in place to raise public awareness that breast cancer can also affect men. (AQW 2184/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Breast cancer in men is a rare disease, with an average of 6 cases a year in Northern Ireland. Across the UK, it affects around 300 men a year, compared to nearly 46,000 women.

My Department is working closely with cancer charities to raise awareness of cancer in men, particularly prostate and testicular cancer.

Any man who has concerns regarding his health should consult his GP for advice.

Breast Cancer

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of breast cancer diagnoses in each of the last 5 years have been to men. (AQW 2185/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Cancer Registry publish comprehensive information on cancer incidence and survival. The requested information relating to breast cancer can be accessed online at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/Data/OnlineStatistics/Breast/>

Breast Cancer

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of (i) women; and (ii) men, diagnosed with breast cancer make a full recovery. (AQW 2186/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Cancer Registry publish comprehensive information on cancer incidence and survival. The requested information relating to breast cancer can be accessed online at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/Data/OnlineStatistics/Breast/>

Health Service Staff

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the turnover of Health Service staff over the last three years. (AQW 2188/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In the context of the current Health and Social Care (HSC) system, turnover is taken to relate to all those staff that leave Trusts, Boards or other regional organisations within the HSC family. It does not include staff who move between different parts of the same organisation, even to a new post, but will include those staff who move between organisations. The table below provides overall HSC turnover rates calculated on this basis.

	Percentage Turnover
2005/06	8.1%
2006/07	8.0%
2007/08	9.1%

Source:

Human Resource Management System

Notes:

1. The turnover rate is calculated as the headcount of staff leaving or moving between HSC organisations, expressed as a percentage of staff in post (headcount) at the mid-point of the year in question.
2. In order to make turnover for all years directly comparable, figures for 2005/06 and 2006/07 are based on the current 5 Trust structure even though this only came into being on 1st April 2007.
3. Junior doctors are excluded from the calculation.
4. The turnover rate excludes bank/sessional staff, home helps and staff with a whole-time equivalent less than or equal to 0.03.

Ambulance Cover

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the Ambulance cover that is proposed to be removed in each parliamentary constituency; (ii) how the proposed cuts were decided; and (iii) what consultation there was with those affected by the cuts. (AQW 2196/09)

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

As with all public bodies in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) is committed to meeting the Executive's efficiency target of 3% per annum between 2008/09 and 2010/11. The efficiency savings do not represent cuts in services but efficiencies which will result in service improvements. The Ambulance Service's proposals will see an increase in the number of hours of paramedic cover from 538,000 in 2007/08 to around 600,000 by 2010/11.

NIAS is obliged to ensure that all policies are proofed or have been impact assessed against a wide range of criteria. I understand NIAS plans to publish a consultation document on its Comprehensive Spending Review efficiency savings and investment proposals shortly.

Personality Disorders

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been referred to Great Britain for treatment for personality disorders, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2214/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The figures requested are set out in the table below:

Year	Referrals
2005/06	3
2006/07	6
2007/08	20

Personality Disorders

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to provide facilities for people suffering from personality disorders. (AQW 2215/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A Strategy for developing services for Personality Disorders in line with the recommendations of the Bamford Report will shortly be issued for a stakeholder consultation. The CSR allocation earmarked funding to support this initiative.

Personality Disorders

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much it has cost his Department to send patients to Great Britain for treatment for personality disorders in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2216/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The costs requested are set out in the table below:

Year	Cost
2005/06	£376,996
2006/07	£737,705
2007/08	£1,551,752

Foster Parents

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support is available from his Department for foster parents. (AQW 2229/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Foster Carers receive a wide range support including:

- Foster care allowances based on National Minimum rates.
- Ad hoc payments to meet other costs;
- Access to a 24/7 support help line;
- Training;
- Every Foster Carer is supported by a supervising social worker/ link worker who visits the foster carer on a regular basis. Other professionals can provide specialist help as and when required.

- Support through the ‘fostering achievement’ scheme to funding to provide computers, play equipment, musical instruments, tuition and for young people aged 17+ driving lessons. As part of fostering achievement foster carers can also access for their fostered child intensive tutoring around Easter for young people sitting GCSEs and a special summer scheme for children aged 7-11 focusing on improving numeracy and literacy. As part of this initiative foster carers also have access to advice, training and support to help them in their role as first educators;
- Foster care allowances continuing to be paid for young people who leave care aged 18 but continue to live with them until they are aged 21.

In addition some foster carers are also fee paid and foster carers can also access a range of support which is available to any family which includes children aged under 18.

Foster Parents

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many new foster parents have been required in each of the last 3 years, broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 2230/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of new foster parents required in each of the last 3 years, broken down by parliamentary constituency is not available.

Foster Parents

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of foster parents broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 2232/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of foster parents is not available broken down by parliamentary constituency.

A3 Tesla Scanners

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to install A3 Tesla scanners in hospitals. (AQW 2235/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is the responsibility of individual Trusts to determine and provide diagnostic imaging services and equipment consistent with their hospitals’ service profiles. To date, no Trust has brought forward a proposal for the introduction of 3 Tesla MRI.

While there are currently no 3 Tesla MRI scanners in Northern Ireland, there are a number of such scanners elsewhere in the UK. Patients may be referred to an appropriate UK centre should their clinician be of the opinion that a diagnosis would require the use of a 3 Tesla MRI scanner.

Public Health Agency

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety where the new Public Health Agency will be located. (AQW 2236/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Decisions in regard to the location of the new Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-Being will be the subject of a business case which is currently being prepared and appropriate equality screening.

Public Health Agency

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the costs incurred in the creation of a new Public Health Agency. (AQW 2237/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In quantifying costs to date in the creation of the new Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being it is not possible to accurately disaggregate the

relevant project costs from the overall expenditure on the programme to implement all of the Health and Social Care reforms. However, the Department has identified a total additional cost of approximately £12,200 incurred to date specifically associated with the establishment of the new Agency.

Listeria Outbreak

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if all seven known Listeria cases recently discovered at the Royal Victoria Hospital were on the same ward. (AQW 2244/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Seven cases of Listeriosis were identified in Belfast Trust hospitals during the period May-July 2008. Five of these seven cases were inpatients in the Royal Victoria Hospital and these five patients were in four different wards.

Listeria Outbreak

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the restaurant at the Royal Victoria Hospital was swab sampled as part of the ongoing investigation into the recent Listeria outbreak. (AQW 2245/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As part of this investigation the restaurant in the Royal Victoria Hospital was inspected and appropriate food samples were taken. Environmental swabs were taken in food preparation areas and food samples were obtained.

Health Complaints Procedure

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will he consider instituting an anonymous complaints system in the Health Service to ensure full reporting of patient dissatisfaction on every aspect of their operation. (AQW 2254/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Anonymous complaints are already provided for under the current HPSS Complaints Procedures. While the normal response processes are clearly not possible in such cases, HSC organisations do consider the content of these complaints in order to identify any potential risk to the public or patient safety and, where appropriate, the need to investigate the complaint if it would be in the public interest to do so.

A new HSC Complaints Procedure (HSC Complaints: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning) will come into effect on 1 April 2009 and, as with the current system, will accommodate anonymous complaints. The new arrangements will also allow for third party complainants to bring concerns to a HSC organisation without compromising the identity of the service user. The HSC organisation will consider the matter as fully as possible and reply to the third party as appropriate.

Listeria Outbreak

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the enquiry into the recent Listeria outbreak at the Royal Victoria Hospital is independent. (AQW 2255/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The outbreak control team investigating the recent cluster of cases of Listeria in Belfast Trust hospitals is chaired, on behalf of the Director of Public Health of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, by a Consultant Regional Epidemiologist who is an employee of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, which is independent of the Belfast Trust although located on the Belfast City Hospital site. The Director of Public Health has the statutory responsibility for investigation of outbreaks of foodborne illness in the Board's area. The other members of the team include Environmental Health Officers from Belfast City Council, and Northern Group Environmental Health, representatives from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board and the Food Standards Agency as well as staff from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. I am content that there is a satisfactory level of independence from the Trust in these arrangements.

Day Care Tonsillectomies for Children

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many hospitals carry out day care tonsillectomies for children. (AQW 2332/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Day case paediatric tonsillectomies are carried out at 6 acute hospitals in NI.

New South West Acute Hospital

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department is considering purchasing more land adjacent to Wolf Lodge in Enniskillen, the site of the new acute hospital in the South West. (AQW 2333/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department has no plans to purchase more land adjacent to Wolf Lough, the site of the new South West Acute Hospital. The Western HSC Trust, in commissioning the development of the Hospital, is satisfied that the new hospital's facilities will be contained within the existing site boundaries without the need for further land.

Monitoring the Heart Rate of Babies

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what (i) training; and (ii) retraining, his Department has in place, for staff involved in monitoring the heart rate of babies, prior to birth. (AQW 2334/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: When training as midwives, students are trained to intermittently monitor the fetal heart rate using specialised equipment. They are trained to monitor the fetal heart rate during labour, before and after contractions, and to record their findings half hourly on the intrapartum partograph. In addition, student midwives are trained in the Use and Interpretation of Cardiotocography Fetal Monitoring (EFM CTG).

Regarding medical students, all Obstetrics and Gynaecology trainees in the UK must undergo CTG interpretation as part of basic training.

In respect of retraining, all Maternity Units in NI have purchased an online (e-learning) training package, with initial training mandatory for all labour ward staff – midwives, junior staff, trust grade doctors and consultants. Staff are also required to update the training annually. All Maternity Units have also established a monthly random review of CTG traces that are multiprofessional, and a rolling programme exists of the Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO course).

People Registered as Blind

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1684/09, if the number of people registered as (i) blind; and (ii) partially sighted, is recorded by each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 2421/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Whilst the Trusts do hold information regarding those who are blind or partially sighted, they have advised that the information held is not a complete register as people may refuse to have their names added to relevant HSC Trust records.

Legal Services

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, to detail the reasons for abandoning the establishment of a new tender exercise for legal services; and what consideration he gave to the Public Contract Regulations in deciding to award a contract for legal services to the Directorate of Legal Services. (AQW 2499/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following careful consideration of the relevant issues, I concluded it was not necessary or appropriate to carry out a major procurement exercise for legal services at this time. My decision to bring legal services in-house recognised the experience and expertise of the Directorate of Legal Services within CSA, its capacity to handle large numbers of referrals economically and with no potential conflicts of interest, its ability to provide consistency and continuity of advice, and the opportunity it would provide to streamline existing administrative and accountability arrangements for Boards and Trusts. The Public Contract Regulations were not relevant to this decision.

Listeria Outbreak

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the report into the Listeria outbreak at the Royal Victoria Hospital will be published and made available to the public.

(AQW 2501/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The team investigating the recent cluster of cases of Listeria in Belfast Trust hospitals is due to meet on 26 November 2008 with the aim of finalising their report. A publication date cannot be confirmed at this time, however the report will be published as soon as possible after it has been finalised.

Legal Services

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the reasons for awarding all legal services work to the Directorate of Legal Services without formal consultation and contrary to the decision to establish a further tendering process, as announced by his Department in October 2006.

(AQW 2502/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I reviewed the previous decision by Direct Rule Ministers to expose the provision of legal services to competition and concluded that was not necessary or appropriate at this time to carry out a major procurement exercise and that in future all HSC bodies should seek legal advice from the DLS.

The decision to bring all HSC legal services in-house was taken after careful consideration of the relevant issues, but was not subject to formal consultation. There was no statutory requirement for such a process and nor was there any consultation on previous decisions in relation to the arrangements for providing legal services to Health and Social Care organisations.

Legal Services

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) if his Department has completed its own internal investigation into the fraud by Brangham and Bagnall, and if so, what recommendations have been made; (ii) to detail the total cost to the taxpayer of the fraud; and (iii) why so many Health and Social Care Trusts decided to use the firm, despite the availability of other firms on the legal services panel. (AQW 2504/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department has completed its investigation into the fraud committed by Brangham and Bagnall. The Department commissioned a forensic investigation to determine the quantum of loss and also established a group to review the payment process and identify the principal risks in respect of clinical negligence cases. Revised guidance was issued which set out clearly the key controls which should be in place and requiring each body to review the controls currently operating in their organisation and where appropriate to implement immediately any controls not already in place. The key recommendations included:

- The need for independent confirmation of settlements;
- Third party payments to be made directly to third parties and confirmation of receipt of all monies; and
- Establishment of a database for all payments made including information on settlements, fees and outlays etc.

There will be no cost to the taxpayer as the monies lost as a result of the fraud have been repaid in full. The costs associated in processing the case are also being recovered.

Legal Services

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the work of the Legal Services Forum cost his Department before he decided to abandon it in August 2008. (AQW 2506/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department does not hold this information.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Capital and Maintenance Budgets

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) capital budgets; and (ii) maintenance budgets, for the North Down Borough Council area. (AQW 2014/09)

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I should explain that my Department's Roads Service does not apportion its capital/maintenance budgets equally across District Council areas. For example, resources available for each maintenance activity (i.e. resurfacing, patching, gully emptying, grass cutting, etc), are apportioned to District Council areas using appropriate indicators of need. This helps to ensure an equitable distribution of funds across the whole of the North. Therefore, District Council analysis is performed on the actual maintenance expenditure, after the end of the financial year.

Roads Service produce a report every year, detailing Capital and Maintenance spend across District Councils. For you information, below are the figures relating to the North Down Borough Council area for the last financial year.

NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

2007/2008	£000's
Capital Spend	£1,770
Maintenance Spend	£3,974
Total Spend	£5,744

Northern Ireland Water

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to question AQW 914/09, will the pay and grading levels within Northern Ireland Water be completed before employees are asked to make decisions regarding the transfer of pension schemes. (AQW 2039/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the review of pay and grading arrangements is expected to be completed by the end of November 2008, which is well in advance of the deadline of 2 February 2009 for employees to complete the Pensions Options Exercise.

Properties Leased by Department

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide (i) the current cost in terms of rent and rates; (ii) a list; and (iii) the current leasehold terms of renewal, of properties leased by his Department. (AQW 2055/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The table below details the current cost, in terms of rent and rates, and the current leasehold terms of renewal, of car parks and other properties leased directly by my Department.

Address	Rates*	Rent (pa)	Terms of Renewal
Car Parks			
Bankmore Street, Belfast	£15,150.51	£27,000	Yearly
Balmoral Avenue, Whitehead	No Rates	£600	5 Yearly
Market Square, Ballyclare	£4,238.79	£8,000	10 Yearly
Cromac Street, Belfast	£11,456.57	£22,800	Yearly
Smithfield, Belfast	£27,339.53	£45,500	Quarterly
Joymount, Carrickfergus	£6,442.95	£8,250	5 Yearly
Ballynahinch Street, Hillsborough	No Rates	£2,000	10 Yearly
Terrace Row, Coleraine	No Rates	£36,000	10 Yearly
Convention Avenue, Portstewart	No Rates	£13,000	5 Yearly
Rectory/Masonic (Court House) Londonderry	£14,069.81	£30,000	15 Yearly
Society Street, Londonderry	£2,498.89	£86	On-going lease
Fair Green, Lisnaskea	No Rates	£7,000	5 Yearly
Other Properties			
Mooring Rights, Strangford Ferry	No Rates	£2,000	2 Yearly
Newry Street, Banbridge	£5,096	£9,500	5 Yearly
Station Road, Ballycastle	£5,103	£11,000	Current term 20 Sept 1999 to 30 Apr 2011
Railway Yard, Molesworth Street, Cookstown	£15,944	£22,750	Being renewed
College House, Kelvin Avenue, Omagh	£16,738.98	£50,000	5 Yearly

Rates not payable on free car parks and mooring rights

Northern Ireland Water

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his plans to relocate staff working at the Conlig depot of Northern Ireland Water. (AQW 2057/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that, following the closure of the Conlig depot, some managerial and administrative staff will be redeployed to other office accommodation in Belfast.

However, there will be no need to relocate field staff as the introduction of new technology will enable work instructions to be passed to them electronically either at their homes, thereby enabling them to proceed direct to areas where maintenance or repair work is required or from local operational sites in the vicinity.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his disposal plans for properties currently owned or rented by Northern Ireland Water. (AQW 2058/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is currently disposing of 7 of its local offices/depots. Disposal of these properties, and any other offices/depots subsequently identified as no longer required for future use, will be processed in accordance with NIW's disposal policy and legislative and regulatory requirements. Proceeds from the disposal of NIW properties are currently used by the company to support water and sewerage services.

NIW is not responsible for disposing of rented accommodation - this is a matter for the owners. One of the properties rented by NIW is being sold by the owner with NIW as sitting tenant until 2012.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the arrangements for reducing staff travel distances for employees working for Northern Ireland Water at the Conlig Depot. (AQW 2060/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that a package of measures for reducing staff travel distances is under consideration, including staff starting and finishing work from home or parking vehicles at treatment works or other operational sites closer to their homes.

The introduction of new technology will enable work instructions to be passed to field staff electronically at their homes, thereby enabling them to proceed direct to areas where maintenance or repair work is required. This will reduce significantly the distances employees are required to travel and will result in a greater speed of response.

Northern Ireland Water and the Roads Service

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the work being carried out by Northern Ireland Water and the Roads Service in the South Antrim constituency during November 2008. (AQW 2139/09)

The Minister for Regional Development:

My Department's Roads Service has advised that the following work is being carried out in the South Antrim constituency during November 2008:

- M2 city-bound off-slip at Sandyknowes – modification of the bus gate at the bottom of the junction;
- Antrim Road/Ballyclare Road junction - upgrade the traffic signals;
- Market Square, Ballyclare - upgrade two pelican crossings;
- Stile's Way, Antrim - provision of Traffic Calming measures;
- Tully Road and Oldstone Road, Antrim - ladder hatching and installation of road studs;
- C21 Lurgan Road, Crumlin, at the junction with Cherryvalley Road - minor improvement scheme;
- Craigmore Road, Randalstown - culvert replacement work and repairs to the roadside verge.

In addition, work will continue on the M2 Improvement Scheme between Sandyknowes and Greencastle junctions. Routine maintenance work will also be carried out on roads, in the South Antrim constituency, during November 2008.

Northern Ireland Water has also advised that the following work is being carried out in the South Antrim constituency during November 2008:

- Castle Road, Antrim – Laying of watermain to serve Randalstown;
- Clonkeen, Randalstown – Replacement of watermain;
- Old Ballybracken Road, Kells – Replacement of watermain;
- Aghnadarragh Road, Glenavy – Watermain extension;
- Rashee Service Reservoir – Rehabilitation;
- Newtownabbey – Enhanced security work at divisional sites;
- Hightown Road, Newtownabbey – Replacement of watermain;
- Hyde Park Service Reservoir – Replacement of joints;
- Boghill Service Reservoir – Rehabilitation;
- Antrim Road, Aldergrove – Foul sewer upgrade;
- Milltown Wastewater Treatment Works, Antrim – Upgrade of existing works;
- Creevery Sewerage Scheme Phase II – Foul sewer upgrade;
- Milltown Road, Antrim – Foul sewer upgrade; and
- various small wastewater treatment works – Priority upgrades.

Newtownards to Donaghadee Road

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to upgrade the Newtownards to Donaghadee Road. (AQW 2164/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that extensive improvement work has been carried out on the section of the A48 Newtownards to Donaghadee Road, between the Six Road Ends junction and Donaghadee, within the last three years. This work included the installation of new drainage and carriageway resurfacing at a total cost of £232,000.

In addition to this Roads Service carried out a major junction improvement scheme at Six Road Ends, involving the provision of a roundabout, to improve traffic progression and road safety.

A further scheme, involving the resurfacing of the carriageway and footways on the Donaghadee Road, Newtownards, between Zion Place and Movilla Road, has also been carried out at a cost of £84,000.

There are no plans for any additional improvement works, on the Newtownards to Donaghadee Road, at this time.

Traffic Crossing

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has carried out an assessment of the need to provide a third traffic crossing over the river Foyle on the south side of Derry/Londonderry city. (AQW 2224/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I can confirm that one of the options currently being assessed by my Department's Road Service, to link the southern approaches to Derry City, includes a third crossing of the Foyle River, to the south of the city.

Traffic Calming Measures

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the locations where traffic calming measures have been introduced since January 1999 in the Strangford constituency; and what the total cost has been. (AQW 2267/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Details of the locations, the cost and the year in which my Department's Roads Service introduced traffic calming measures in the Strangford constituency, since January 1999, are provided in the table below.

Year of Introduction	Location	Cost
1999 – 2000	Cloughey Village	£5,000
1999 – 2000	Portavogie Village	£10,500
1999 – 2000	Ballyhalbert Village	£9,500
1999 – 2000	Ballybeen Phase 1	£34,000
2000 – 2001	Ballybeen Phase 2	£94,000
2000 – 2001	Scrabo Estate	£87,300
2000 – 2001	Main Street, Kircubbin	£4,500
2000 – 2001	Main Street, Millisle	£14,400
2001 – 2002	Darragh Road, Comber	£48,300
2002 – 2003	Movilla Road, Newtownards	£20,000
2002 – 2003	Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards	£4,000
2002 – 2003	Glenard Road, Newtownards	£3,000
2002 – 2003	Bangor Road, Newtownards	£4,200
2002 – 2003	Bowtown Road/Greenwell Street, Newtownards	£35,000

Year of Introduction	Location	Cost
2003 – 2004	Ballygowan Road, Comber	£5,000
2003 – 2004	Cloughey Road, Portaferry	£10,300
2003 – 2004	Westwinds Estate	£33,500
2003 – 2004	Shrigley Road, Killyleagh	£10,500
2003 – 2004	Ballywiskin	£5,500
2004 – 2005	Brentwood Way, Newtownards	£92,300
2004 – 2005	Moss Road, Ballygowan	£2,000
2004 – 2005	Carrickmannon Road, Ballygowan	£6,500
2004 – 2005	Balloo Village	£4,000
2004 – 2005	Manse Road/Main Street, Carrowdore	£40,000
2004 – 2005	Lisbane Village	£7,200
2004 – 2005	Newtownards Road, Greyabbey	£9,200
2004 – 2005	Melfort Drive, Tullycarnet	£5,000
2004 – 2005	Killynure Road, Carryduff	£10,000
2005 – 2006	Moneyreagh Village	£15,000
2005 – 2006	Saintfield Village	£76,000
2005 – 2006	Scrabo Estate (20mph zone)	£7,800
2005 – 2006	Portaferry Village	£12,200
2005 – 2006	Railway Street/Glen Link, Comber	£38,600
2006 – 2007	Belfast Road, Saintfield	£6,700
2006 – 2007	Upper Movilla Street/Upper Movilla Road, Newtownards	£15,000
2006 – 2007	Killinchy Village	£4,500
2006 – 2007	Donaghadee	£80,400
2006 – 2007	Gransha Road, Dundonald	£7,000
2007 – 2008	Movilla Street, Newtownards	£24,000
2007 -- 2008	Parsonage Road, Kircubbin	£3,500
2007 – 2008	Old Ballygowan Road, Comber	£3,500
2007 – 2008	Killyleagh Village	£6,500
2007 – 2008	Balloo (Enhanced signage)	£4,000
2007 – 2008	Lisbane (Enhanced signage)	£4,000
2007 – 2008	Ballyregan Road, Dundonald	£5,000
2008 – 2009	Strangford Heights, Newtownards	£12,500
2008 – 2009	Ballywalter Village	£6,500
2008 – 2009	Lougherries Village	£7,500
	Total	£954,900

Pedestrian Crossing at Main Street, Ballywalter

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will initiate a survey for a pedestrian crossing at Main Street, Ballywalter. (AQW 2303/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that an initial survey was carried out at Main Street, Ballywalter, on 15 June 2007. The figures and calculations revealed that the site would merit further detailed investigation. However, there are other sites in the Ards Council area which have higher priority and where pedestrian crossing facilities are likely to be installed before the Ballywalter site is considered.

I should also point out that all proposed pedestrian crossings are subject to a suitable location being available for the crossing, consultation with affected shopkeepers/householders and sufficient finance being available.

Roads Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total amount of money spent by the Roads Service annually on the (i) M1; (ii) M2; (iii) M3; and (iv) A2, in the last ten years. (AQW 2338/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not record details of total annual expenditure on individual roads. I am, therefore, unable to provide the requested information.

Roads Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the identities of; and (ii) money paid out to, each contractor employed, annually on the (a) M1; (b) M2; (iii) M3 and (iv) A2, over the last ten years. (AQW 2339/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not record details of total annual expenditure on individual roads. I am, therefore, unable to provide the requested information.

Department Projects

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide a full list of contractors who are on the restricted list of tenderers for his Department's projects. (AQW 2340/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not hold a list of contractors who are on a restricted list of tenderers. Contracts over £1M are procured on an individual basis.

Department Projects

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the criteria that must be met for a contractor to be included in the restricted list of tenderers for his Department's projects. (AQW 2341/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that a restricted list is formed for every works contract over £1M and that this is done in accordance with the European Union Procurement Directives Restricted Procedure. Works contracts above the current minimum threshold level of £3.8M, are advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union.

In both cases Roads Service require the interested parties to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire to allow them to gather relevant information. The selection criteria are project specific, are based on a combination of both financial and non-financial factors and consider the Economic Operators:-

- Acceptability (Regulation 23 of the Public Contract Regulations 2006 (PCR)).
- Economic and Financial Standing (Regulation 24 of the PCR 2006).
- Technical and Professional Ability (Regulation 25 of the PCR 2006).

Primrose Hill/Saintfield Road Junction

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has (i) received correspondence from Taggart Homes Ltd. outlining a programme for completion of all outstanding works at the Primrose Hill/Saintfield Road junction, in the requested 21 day period; and (ii) considered the impact the collapse of Taggart Homes Ltd. will have on the delivery of traffic lights at the Primrose Hill/Saintfield Road junction. (AQW 2348/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Taggart Homes Cairnshill Limited has not responded to their letter, of 1 October 2008, requesting that they submit a programme for the completion of outstanding works at the junction. Indeed, subsequent to the issue of the letter, Taggart Homes Limited went into administration.

Having sought legal advice on the best way to proceed, Roads Service has served notice on both Taggart Homes Cairnshill Limited and their Surety, on 29 October 2008, advising them of their obligations under the relevant legislation, agreement and bond. They were advised that failure to respond positively would result in Roads Service having to complete the outstanding work at the junction and claim back all associated costs. Under the agreement, the Surety is permitted 28 days from receipt of the notice to confirm how they intend to progress the works. If Roads Service does not receive a satisfactory reply by the end of this period, the agreement will be terminated and Roads Service will arrange to complete the roadworks at the Primrose Hill/Saintfield Road junction.

Roads Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail why Wills Bros. Ltd. were unsuccessful in their tenders for the (a) A2 Maydown to City of Derry Airport dualling project; and (b) A26 Mallee Road East to M2 Ballymena bypass dualling scheme; and (ii) if Roads Service plans to meet with Wills Bros. Ltd. to discuss its decision. (AQW 2351/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Wills Bros Ltd were excluded from the selection of economic operators to be invited to tender for the A2 Maydown to City of Derry Airport dualling scheme, as they failed to satisfy Roads Service's minimum standards in their prequalification submission. Roads Service is currently arranging to debrief Wills Bros Ltd on their application.

In relation to the A26 Ballee Road East to M2 Ballymena scheme, Wills Bros Ltd were excluded from the selection of economic operators to be invited to tender for these works, as they failed to satisfy Roads Service's minimum standards in their prequalification submission. Wills Bros have already requested, and received, debriefing on their application, on Tuesday 11 November 2008.

Flooding on the A26

Mr Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to provide details of his Department's investigation into the problems of flooding; and (ii) what measures his Department is taking to prevent future flooding, on the A26 between Glenavy and Moira. (AQW 2352/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that their investigation into the problems of flooding, on the A26 between Glenavy and Moira, established that all road side gullies were operating normally at the times of the flooding. The flooding was found to be due to exceptional levels of rainfall, which raised the surrounding water levels, which include the nearby River Lagan and tributaries, above the level of the carriageway surface. This rendered the road drainage system ineffective.

Roads Service has contacted the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Rivers Agency and informed them of the effect the high water levels were having on traffic. The Rivers Agency has visited the site to assess the situation and I understand that they are currently investigating the matter.

Filter Traffic Signals

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would consider providing a filter traffic signal at the junction of Thornhill Road and Castlehill Road for traffic turning right onto the Upper Newtownards Road, from Thornhill Park. (AQW 2373/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: It is assumed that the question refers to the junction of the Upper Newtownards Road with Thornhill Park and the Castlehill Road. I can advise that my Department's Roads Service is aware of the traffic situation at this junction. A previous assessment of the traffic signal arrangements concluded that the introduction of filter signals would have a significant detrimental effect on the traffic flows on the Upper Newtownards Road. This would have resulted in an increase in the overall delays, particularly to pedestrians and buses, while providing only marginal benefits to traffic using the side roads. Given the outcome of this assessment, I can advise that Roads Service is not currently considering the installation of a filter traffic signal at this junction.

Zebra Crossings

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of zebra crossings in East Belfast. (AQW 2374/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Roads Service has advised that there are ten zebra crossings within the East Belfast Constituency. They are located as follows:

- Bloomfield Road at Grand Parade;
- North Road at Bloomfield Road;
- Grand Parade at Bloomfield Road;
- Mount Merrion Avenue at Bell's Bridge;
- Cregagh Road (country side) at Bell's Bridge;
- Cregagh Road at Downshire Park Central;
- Hollywood Road at Connsbrook Avenue;
- Beersbridge Road at Grove Street East;
- Newtownards Road at Belvoir Street; and
- Newtownards Road at Bryson Street

Road Safety

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he will take to review and improve road safety for (i) pedestrians; and (ii) vehicles, in Belfast City Centre, to help reduce traffic accidents in the area. (AQW 2378/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's transport proposals for Belfast City Centre are set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015. The Plan proposes a reorganisation of the road network within the city centre, which, in turn, will facilitate the reduction of traffic and encourage walking, cycling and increased use of public transport.

The design aspiration for the streets in the main retail and commercial areas, such as Donegall Place and Royal Avenue, is for a high level of priority for pedestrians. However, these streets are used for a number of different purposes, including access for servicing and for public transport, and conflict can arise between the needs of transport and the urban environment.

My Department's Roads Service receives details of all road traffic collisions that involve personal injury from the PSNI. Officials use this information to identify where engineering measures might be used to reduce the likelihood of further incidents. I am aware that there have been a number of such incidents recently within Belfast City Centre, although full details of the circumstances surrounding them are not yet known. When these details become available, my officials will review them to see what, if any, further measures might be appropriate to improve road safety for all road users.

Roads Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total amount of money spent by the Roads Service annually on the (i) A1; (ii) A5; (iii) A6; and (iv) M3, in the last ten years. (AQW 2402/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not record details of total annual expenditure on individual roads. I am, therefore, unable to provide the requested information.

Traffic Calming Measures

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider examining the possibility of implementing additional traffic calming measures, such as rumble strips or ramps, in the vicinity of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School on the Crockanboy Road, Greencastle, Omagh. (AQW 2406/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I am aware that Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School participated in my Department's Roads Service's "Travelwise Safer Routes to Schools" accelerated programme. Under this initiative, Roads Service provided enhanced warning signs, incorporating flashing amber lights, which operate during the school's opening and closing times. These signs provide a very clear warning message to approaching motorists, that there is likely to be activity at the school ahead, and that they should drive carefully.

Roads Service has advised that Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School is located on a route where the national speed limit currently applies, and such routes are not considered appropriate for the provision of traffic calming measures. However, I can confirm that Roads Service officials, in liaison with the PSNI's Roads Policing Branch, recently assessed the need for a reduced speed limit in the Greencastle area. They jointly concluded that the area now meets the criteria for the introduction of a 40mph speed limit. The legislation to provide this limit is currently being prepared, and it is anticipated that it will be introduced in approximately 6 months time.

Roads Service will monitor vehicle speeds in the Greencastle area after the 40 mph speed limit has been in place for a period of time. If traffic speeds have not reduced, then an assessment will be undertaken to consider the priority of the site for the provision of traffic calming measures.

Traffic Calming Measures

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider constructing speed cushions in Loughmacrory and Mountfield villages, to calm traffic and prevent future accidents and deaths. (AQW 2407/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is currently assessing the need for traffic calming measures in Mountfield and Loughmacrory villages. Roads Service plans to undertake vehicle volume and speed assessment surveys at both villages. Following this, it is anticipated that the assessment for traffic calming measures for Mountfield and Loughmacrory villages will be completed before the end of 2008.

Zebra Crossings

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department is proposing to replace the zebra crossing with a pelican crossing on the Cregagh Road in East Belfast. (AQW 2430/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are three zebra crossings on the Cregagh Road, Belfast. Two are in the vicinity of the Bell's Bridge roundabout and the third is close to the junction with Downshire Park Central. There are no proposals at present to replace any of these with pelican crossings.

Footways at Kingsdale Park

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the progress for the adoption of the footways at Kingsdale Park. (AQW 2431/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The Member may recall that, during the Adjournment Debate on 8 April 2008, I advised that my Department's Roads Service would be content to adopt these footways when they have been provided to the proper standard. I remain of the view that responsibility for bringing the Kingsdale Park private footways to adoption standard rests with the property owners/frontagers. My Roads Service officials remain available to discuss the extent of the required improvement works. However, no advice has been sought to date.

Roads Service

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the identity of; and (ii) the money paid out to, each contractor employed annually on the (a) A1; (b) A5; (c) A6; and (d) M3, over the last ten years. (AQW 2432/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not record details of total annual expenditure on individual roads. I am, therefore, unable to provide the requested information.

Bus Station in Banbridge

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's plans to build a new state of the art bus station in Banbridge. (AQW 2455/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I refer you to my earlier response to this matter dated 26 September 2008 (AQW380/09). As yet the issues surrounding the identification of a suitable site have not been resolved and therefore there are no current plans to build a new bus station in Banbridge.

Peninsula Community Transport Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people have used the Peninsula Community Transport scheme in the last 2 years. (AQW 2465/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Peninsula Community Transport that the information which you have requested is not available in the form requested. However I have been told that this partnership currently has a membership of 280 individuals and 72 groups. It provided 36,318 passenger trips for its members during the two years ending 31 October 2008.

Knockmore Railway Line

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to confirm if any consideration has been given to re-opening the Knockmore railway line, to allow trains to run from Londonderry/Derry once per hour on alternating patterns, between Bleach Green and Knockmore railway station. (AQW 2471/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The re-opening of the Antrim to Knockmore line was one of the options considered as part of a study completed in August 2007 looking at the options for future railways investment in the region. It was found that there was no case for bringing the line back into service at this time. The re-opening of the line would involve substantial costs but would bring relatively low levels of benefits.

Plans are progressing to complete a full relay of the track between Coleraine and Derry and this would include the construction of a passing loop. This work is scheduled to be completed by 2013 and will coincide with the introduction to passenger service of two additional trains on the Belfast to Derry line. Consequently there will be an increase in the frequency and capacity of services between Belfast and Derry.

Traffic and Pedestrian Crossing lights

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to installing (i) traffic; and (ii) pedestrian crossing, lights at the Belmont Road roundabout in East Belfast. (AQW 2484/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a recent review of the history of collisions involving personal injury, at the Belmont Road roundabout, does not indicate that this is an unsafe location for pedestrians. Therefore, there are no plans, at present, to change the roundabout to a traffic signal-controlled junction.

With regards to the installation of a pedestrian crossing at this location, I can advise that all requests for the provision of controlled pedestrian crossing facilities are assessed using agreed guidelines and then placed on a prioritised list. This assessment takes into account the volume of pedestrians and traffic using the road in question, as well as a number of other factors. It is designed to ensure that every location is assessed equally and that pedestrian crossings are provided where they are most needed.

A recent survey at this location has indicated that this site is placed midway on the prioritised list, when ranked against all other potential pedestrian crossing sites within the Greater Belfast area. Given the limited funding that is available, the Belmont Road site will be required to compete with similar locations, on a basis of need and value for money, when Roads Service is deciding which schemes to include in future works programmes.

Road Reinstatements

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development how many road reinstatements carried out by other services, such as gas and water, have been deemed unacceptable by his Department in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2485/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The table below details the number of reinstatements, carried out by other services, which have been deemed defective, by my Department's Roads Service, in each of the last 3 years.

Year	Number of Defective Reinstatements detected
2005/06	1082
2006/07	885
2007/08	651

Claims for Damaged Vehicles

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of compensation claims made for damage to vehicles allegedly caused by poor or inadequate roads surface, in the financial years (i) 2003/04, (ii) 2004/05, (iii) 2005/06, (iv) 2006/07 and (v) 2007/08. (AQW 2513/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The Departmental claims database does not record the cause of claims in the way requested, but the following details relate to compensation claims lodged against Roads Service in the last five financial years arising from potholes in the road.

2003/04	829
2004/05	610
2005/06	652
2006/07	910
2007/08	891

Department Performance Review Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Regional Development how many staff in his Department did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in their last reporting year. (AQW 2521/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Of those 1,861 staff in my Department for whom a Performance Review Report has been completed in respect of the 2007/08 reporting year, 4 did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report.

These figures relate only to the non-industrial workforce as Annual Performance Review reports are not completed for the industrial workforce.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Housing Executive

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact that the Review of Public Administration will have on the delivery of Housing Executive grants. (AQW 1116/09)

The Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The delivery of Housing Executive grants will not be affected by the Review of Public Administration because that element of the Private Sector Improvement Service, the name used to describe the grants service and the Houses in Multiple Occupation service, is remaining with

the Housing Executive. However, as the registration of Houses in Multiple Occupation element is transferring to local District Councils, the Housing Executive intends to review its grants service with the aim of identifying potential efficiencies. With the exception of a planned merger of the two Belfast grants offices later this year, no actions are intended until late 2009.

Mesothelioma Compensation Legislation

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Social Development what consideration she has given to (i) extending the Mesothelioma compensation legislation; or (ii) introducing new legislation, to compensate sufferers of pleural plaques. (AQW 2138/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council provides independent advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and my Department on matters relating to industrial injuries and prescribed diseases for the purposes of the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Scheme. In its Report on asbestos-related diseases (Cm 6553) published in 2005, the Council found that there is a lack of evidence that pleural plaques cause impairment of lung function sufficient to cause disability and did not recommend adding pleural plaques to the list of prescribed diseases. The Council undertook to monitor new research and to keep the matter under review. The Council is expected to publish shortly a further report on the prescription of pleural plaques. I will of course consider its recommendations carefully.

The Department of Finance and Personnel is exploring the most appropriate way of supporting people diagnosed with pleural plaques and has published a consultation paper which sets out a number of issues for consideration. The consultation exercise will close on 12 January 2009.

Housing Executive

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development how many claims for permanent lodgings in Housing Executive properties have been found to have included false details, in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 2156/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised that, in the process of assessing housing applications, it does not record the level of false information.

Social Housing

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has for social housing, over the next three years, for the North Down area. (AQW 2179/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Social Housing Development Programme includes 8 schemes totalling 148 dwellings for the North Down Borough Council area over the next three years 2009/10 – 2011/12.

The Improvement and Maintenance Scheme Programme includes 21 schemes which will include work on 1941 dwellings for the North Down Borough Council area over the next three years 2009/10 – 2011/12.

Housing Waiting List

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to detail for the North Down constituency (i) the number of people on the housing waiting list; (ii) the average waiting time for a house; and (iii) the points required; by electoral ward area. (AQW 2197/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available by constituency area or electoral ward. At 30th September 2008 the social housing waiting list for the Housing Executive's Bangor District Office (which corresponds to the North Down Council area) had 1941 housing applicants on the housing waiting list.

The table below shows the average length of time on the waiting list for those allocated a property.

< 6mths	6mths -1yr	1-2yrs	2-3yrs	3-4yrs	4yrs or more	Total
64	37	30	12	2	13	158

The table below shows the allocations to applicants by points bands.

<30 pts	40-49pts	50-59pts	70-79pts	80-89pts	90-99pts	100 or more pts	Totals
1	1	1	2	2	1	150	158

Pension Schemes

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development how enrolment in a pension scheme will impact on the net income of an employee at the lowest end of the payscale. (AQW 2206/09)

The Minister for Social Development: From 2012, workers aged between 22 and State Pension age with gross earnings of more than £5,035 in a pay reference period will be automatically enrolled into a qualifying pension scheme. Jobholders will pay contributions amounting to 4 per cent of earnings over £5,035, up to a ceiling of £33,540¹. A jobholder earning £10,000 a year would have earnings of £4,965² on which contributions would be due. The jobholder's annual personal contribution would, therefore, be around £198. Those contributions will be matched by a minimum employer contribution of 3 per cent and 1 per cent from the State in the form of tax relief. Jobholders who do not wish to save will have the right to opt-out.

The lower earnings limit will avoid the automatic enrolment of the very low paid for whom income replacement rates from State Pensions are likely to be relatively high.

¹ In 2006/07 earnings terms.

² Based on the 2006/07 earnings band.

Lone Parents

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development what contact she has had with other Departments on the provision of childcare, given legislation that will impact on lone parents, particularly their ability to work. (AQW 2210/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Through the Ministerial Sub-Group on Children and Young People regular contact is maintained with other government departments. Childcare is a priority issue for the Ministerial sub-group and the Children's Champions group. The possible impact of new legislation affecting lone parents has been raised at the interdepartmental Children's Champions group by my officials. Discussions and close contact is also underway between officials from my Department and the Department for Employment and Learning to consider the implications of legislation that will impact on lone parents.

In addition, in my papers circulated to my Ministerial colleagues on the proposals, I have flagged up the lack of childcare provision in Northern Ireland as an issue.

Lone Parents

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development who will make the decision about benefit sanctions on lone parents when adequate childcare is not available. (AQW 2211/09)

The Minister for Social Development: When a lone parent claims Jobseeker's Allowance, an Adviser will draw up a jobseeker's agreement and amongst other things will discuss, the availability of suitable and affordable childcare with the lone parent. If in the view of the Adviser suitable and affordable childcare is available and the lone parent has not fulfilled the terms of the jobseeker's agreement, the question of whether a sanction should be considered will be referred to a decision maker in the Social Security Agency. Where suitable and affordable childcare is not available a lone parent will not be sanctioned.

Social Housing

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to promote the building of eco-friendly and zero carbon homes for social housing. (AQW 2222/09)

The Minister for Social Development: As part of the New Housing Agenda, I have made it clear that I want to deliver more environmentally friendly and sustainable housing.

I have already announced that all new build social housing must now comply with at least Level 3 in the new Code for Sustainable Homes. This in effect will make these new homes up to 25% more energy efficient than ever before.

I recently opened the first zero carbon home in Northern Ireland and am pleased to note that some of these technologies are now being incorporated into new social housing developments.

I also announced plans for our first eco-village on the site of the former military barracks in Grosvenor, Enniskillen. I want this development to be an exemplar not just more sustainable and energy efficient housing but helping create more sustainable communities.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Doherty asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the health and safety rationale for removing back boilers when oil fired central heating upgrades/conversions are being undertaken under the Warm Homes Scheme. (AQW 2281/09)

The Minister for Social Development: There are no health and safety regulations preventing the retention of back boilers as long as the boiler has been drilled and drained correctly. The Department will continue to drill and drain back boilers until a new Warm Home Scheme comes into operation in April 2009. The Department is considering the feasibility of dual heating systems as part of the new Scheme's specification which is now subject to public consultation. The public consultation exercise on the proposed changes to the Scheme will run until 19 December.

Housing Associations

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the valuation process followed by Housing Associations, including tendering and payment methods, for 'off the shelf' new build acquisitions. (AQW 2285/09)

The Minister for Social Development: There is no specific tendering process involved with the acquisition of 'Off the Shelf' housing.

Many developers and builders have already approached the NIHE and Housing Association movement to offer them this sort of housing for the Social Housing Development Programme. Housing Associations can also approach developers themselves if they think that there may be suitable housing in a specific scheme or location.

Housing Associations enter into direct discussions with the developer and if those initial discussions are positive, the Housing Association will make an application to the NIHE for approval. This application must be accompanied by a recent valuation from either the District Valuer or an independently accredited and qualified valuer.

As part of the approval process the NIHE will need to be satisfied that the scheme is cost and design compliant, in an area of high housing need and that sufficient funding is available to support that particular scheme.

When approval is issued, grant becomes payable directly to the Housing Association once the process is taken through to purchase with appropriate contracts and legal searches satisfactorily undertaken.

Housing Associations

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to provide details from Housing Associations with a registered interest in Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt districts, of the contemporary valuations that have been established for dwellings in those areas. (AQW 2287/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Housing Associations must obtain a valuation which has been prepared by the District Valuer or an independently accredited and qualified valuer. The purchase price negotiated directly between the Housing Association and the vendor must not exceed that valuation.

Whilst individual property values vary from site to site, as a guide my Department would not expect to pay any more than £136,917, £144,045 and £136,224 for an “off the shelf” 5 person, 3 bedroom house in Cookstown, Magherafelt and Dungannon respectively.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr Cobain asked the Minister for Social Development to detail, for each of the last three years, her Department’s funding for advice services, other than those provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau, broken down by district council area. (AQW 2290/09)

The Minister for Social Development: DSD funding for each of the last three years for advice services, other than those provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau, for 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008 totals *£2,561,430.29.

(*This figure includes an estimate for one local council for one year).

It has been broken down into Council Area and has been detailed in the table below.

DSD Contribution by Council Area to non-CAB Advice Services 2005-08

Council	DSD Contribution £		
	05-06	06-07	07-08
Antrim	£ -	£ -	£ -
Ards	£ -	£ -	£ -
Armagh	£ -	£ -	£ -
Ballymena	£ -	£ -	£ -
Ballymoney	£ -	£ -	£ -
Banbridge	£ -	£ -	£ -
Belfast	£ 333,276.34	£ 645,949.21	£ 685,969.16
Carrickfergus	£ 420.00	£ -	£ 1,385.00
Castlereagh	£ -	£ -	£ -
Coleraine	£ 3,747.45	£ 12,396.50	£ 10,036.46
Cookstown	£ -	£ -	£ -
Craigavon	£ 9,000.00	£ 5,496.00	£ 3,680.17
Derry	£ -	£ 253,148.00	£ 307,635.00
Down	£ -	£ -	£ -
Dungannon	£ -	£ -	£ -
Fermanagh	£ -	£ -	£ -
Larne	£ -	£ -	£ -
Limavady	£ 25,000.00 (estimate)	£ 27,500.00	£ 39,000.00
Lisburn	£ -	£ -	£ -
Magherafelt	£ -	£ -	£ -
Moyle	£ -	£ -	£ -
Newry & Mourne	£ 20,000.00	£ 12,000.00	£ 20,000.00
Newtownabbey	£ -	£ -	£ -
North Down	£ -	£ -	£ -

Council	DSD Contribution £		
	05-06	06-07	07-08
Omagh	£ 58,122.00	£ 37,440.00	£ 50,229.00
Strabane	£ -	£ -	£ -
Totals	£ 449,565.79	£ 993,929.71	£ 1,117,934.79

Home Start

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development what consideration she has given to making new funding programmes available to Home Start; and when these will become available. (AQW 2298/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Home Start may be eligible to apply to the Community Volunteering Scheme when applications are reopened in the new financial year. All applications received will be assessed in accordance with the scheme criteria.

Social Security Benefits

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Social Development to outline her Departments plans to provide insulation grants to elderly people, 70 and over, who do not receive any Social Security benefits. (AQW 2331/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My Department funds the Warm Homes Scheme which provides heating and insulation measures and uses Social Security Benefits as a means of determining eligibility. I intend using all available resources to fund the Warm Homes Scheme which will target those people in greatest need. The Energy Savings Trust will be able to offer advice and guidance on energy efficiency and any scheme available to offer assistance to people not in receipt of social security benefits.

Housing Executive

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development how many fatalities (i) have occurred in Housing Executive/Housing Association properties from 2000-2007; and (ii) were the result of accidental or unintentional fires. (AQW 2345/09)

The Minister for Social Development: In the case of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the information is not available as they do not record details regarding fatalities within its properties. Where Housing Associations have recorded the information, records show a total of 16 fatalities from 2000 – 2007, with nine of these as a result of accidental or unintentional fires.

Fuel Poverty

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions she has had with the UK Government on measures to tackle fuel poverty. (AQW 2372/09)

The Minister for Social Development: I wrote to James Purnell, Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions in June 2008 requesting a meeting to discuss the government's response to rising energy prices. This meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 19 November and I intend to raise a number of issues including actions to assist people in Northern Ireland most affected by the rise in energy prices.

ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Safety of Using Wi-Fi**

Mr Shannon asked the Assembly Commission what assessment it has undertaken to ensure that staff and MLAs working in Parliament Buildings are safe using wi-fi. (AQW 2250/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): At the NI Assembly Commission meeting on 9 July 2007, approval was given for the then Senior Management Team to oversee the procurement of replacement networking equipment within Parliament Buildings to provide additional network capacity for the Assembly, enhanced security measures and a wireless network. The wireless network facilities, in particular, were requested by Members and guests in Parliament Buildings including the various political correspondents.

The contract was awarded to Hewlett Packard and design & installation was carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Supply of suitable software to monitor and manage the installation was part of the contract.

The IS Office monitors developments in this area on behalf of the NI Assembly Commission and would draw your attention to the latest information and research in this area provided by the UK Health Protection Agency (HPA). HPA has responsibility for providing advice to central government and devolved administrations on protecting people from radiation hazards, including exposure to electromagnetic fields. As of 8 September 2008, the HPA does not believe that there are health issues associated with the use of wireless computer networks.

The full text of the advice is available on the HPA website at:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1199451940308?p=1199451940308>

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