
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 28 November 2008

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Executive Papers

Mr Wells asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many Executive papers have been approved; and (ii) to list each paper dealt with, by way of Urgent Procedure. (AQW 2262/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The following papers have been agreed under the Urgent Procedure set out in paragraph 2.14 of the Ministerial Code.

| Paper Title | Department |
|---|------------|
| Blue Tongue Response | (DARD) |
| EU School Milk Scheme | (DARD) |
| Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) (Amdt) Regs | (DEL) |
| Draft Marine Bill – NI Response | (DOE) |
| Maternity and Parental Leave / Paternity and Adoption Leave (Amdt) Regs | (DEL) |
| Regulatory Reform for Qualifications – Next Steps | (DEL) |
| Flood Management Strategy | (DARD) |
| BIC Summit Meeting Papers – Edinburgh 26 Sept 2008 | (OFMDFM) |
| The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amdts No 2) Regs (NI) 2008 | (DSD) |
| The Social Security (Incapacity Benefit Work-Focused Interviews) Regs (NI) 2008 | (DSD) |
| The Employment and Support Allowance (Consequential Provns No2) Regs (NI) 2008 | (DSD) |
| September Monitoring | (DFP) |
| Play and Leisure Policy | (OFMDFM) |
| Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan | (DHSSPS) |
| Pensions (No 2) Bill: Introduction | (DSD) |
| Counter-Terrorism Bill (CTB): Inclusion of Provision concerning credit unions in NI | (DETI) |
| Presbyterian Mutual Society | (DETI) |

Mental Health

Mr McCartney asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail its provisions for addressing mental health problems affecting young people. (AQW 2326/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: -We are supportive of any initiative on mental health but as this matter falls within the remit of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, it would be for the Health Minister to detail any provisions.

The aim of the Strategy for Children and Young People is to produce improved outcomes for all children and young people over the ten year period 2006-2016. The strategy is based around an outcomes framework consisting of 6 high level outcomes. This includes being able to report progress and have evidence which indicates that our children and young people are **healthy**. A three year action plan is being developed to deliver on the aims of the strategy.

The Junior Ministers, who have particular responsibility for children and young people, have established the Ministerial Sub-Committee, which they chair. The role of this group is to drive forward the implementation of the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People and it has identified 6 key priorities, one of which includes the **'promotion of good mental health and early intervention in addressing mental health issues as they arise'**.

A cross-departmental sub-group, led by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, has been set up to take this work forward by identifying 2-3 key issues to focus on over the next 12 months. This sub-group reports back to the full Ministerial Sub-Committee.

It is important that government continues to improve and adapt its services to meet the current and emerging needs of children and young people here, including those with mental health problems. Therefore, the strategy, associated indicators and the action plan are all living documents which are continually under review to ensure they reflect and address the issues facing children and young people.

Banking Sector

Mr McLaughlin asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps the banks could take to stimulate the economy, particularly in relation to their loan charges policy for commercial borrowers and businesses experiencing difficulties; and will it meet with the banking sector to assess the benefits of such an approach to the long-term economic interests of the region and the banking sector. (AQW 2336/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: Banking and financial regulation is, of course, a reserved matter. Nevertheless we met with representatives of the local banking institutions on 21 July 2008 to hear from them about the difficulties created by the global "credit crunch". We have also met with representatives of the business and construction sectors to listen to their views on the problems they are dealing with in the face of the current economic downturn. Restricted access to credit facilities was discussed at each of these meetings.

Growing our economy is our top priority and we do, of course, wish to do all that we can to support local businesses. Banks are, of course, businesses too and we fully endorse the general view that they need to exercise due diligence and corporate responsibility in their dealings. At the same time we were encouraged that the banking institutions operating locally have already or very shortly intend to pass on interest rate reductions to borrowers and businesses in a timely manner. They should continue to work with their business and other clients to work through credit and cash-flow problems to ensure that foreclosure is absolutely a measure of last resort. We would like to see local banks working closely with local businesses to bring forward fair, innovative and mutually beneficial financing packages that will stimulate and sustain local economic growth.

We are currently consolidating and assessing all of the information we have gathered about the local impacts of the economic downturn. If this assessment indicates that a further meeting with the local banking sector would be useful we will, of course, convene it.

Gender Advisory Panel

Ms Anderson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Gender Advisory Panel last met; and for an update on progress towards implementing the Gender Equality Strategy.(AQW 2382/09)

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, 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. They are currently being co-ordinated to provide a refreshed strategy to present to the Executive in early 2009.

Public Appointments

Ms Purvis asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail, for each of the last 3 financial years, (i) all public appointments filled by the Department; (ii) public appointments outstanding; and (iii) the grounds on which some appointments were not made; for its assessment of (a) the process adopted for public appointments; and (b) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance; and what action it is taking to ensure more efficient application of the procedures. (AQW 2424/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister:

(i) Set out below are all public appointments filled by this Department during each of the last 3 financial years:

| Financial Year | Public Appointments Filled | Number |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| 2005/06 | Advisory Council on Infrastructure Investment | 1 |
| | Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland | 1 |
| | Community Relations Council | 3 |
| | Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland Ltd | 2 |
| | ILEX Urban Regeneration Company Ltd | 2 |
| | Interim Victims Commissioner | 1 |
| | Planning and Water Appeals Commissions | 4 |
| | Strategic Investment Board | 2 |
| | Total | 16 |
| Financial Year | Public Appointments Filled | Number |
| 2006/07 | Commissioner for Children and Young People | 2 |
| | Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland Ltd | 1 |
| | ILEX Urban Regeneration Company Ltd | 8 |
| | Planning and Water Appeals Commissions | 8 |
| | Strategic Investment Board | 4 |
| | Total | 23 |
| 2007/08 | ILEX Urban Regeneration Company Ltd | 1 |
| | Planning and Water Appeals Commissions | 8 |
| | Total | 9 |

- (ii) The Department currently has 4 public appointment vacancies, 2 in the Strategic Investment Board and 2 in the Economic Research Institute.
- (iii) We plan to fill the vacancies in the Strategic Investment Board but the vacancies in the Economic Research Institute are on hold whilst we consider the findings of a recent review of the Institute.
- (a) Most OFMDFM public appointments are either regulated or monitored by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and as such are made in accordance with the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner's office. For those appointments not regulated by the Commissioner for Public

Appointments the Department will, as far as is practicable and in line with the principle of proportionality, apply the principles and procedures set out in the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

- (b) The Commissioner for Public Appointments has a statutory responsibility to prescribe and publish a Code of Practice, to carry out an audit to establish whether the Code of Practice is being observed, and to publish an Annual Report which includes information as to the observance of the Code of Practice and an account of the audit process. When making public appointments the Department normally follows the principles and procedures set out in the Commissioner's Code of Practice and takes careful note of any and all recommendations contained in the aforementioned Annual Report and Audit Reports that would ensure the more efficient application of appointment procedures.

Equality Legislation

Mr Simpson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1604/09, if its interpretation of sexual orientation, when interpreting equality legislation, includes only the state of attraction towards (i) persons of the same sex, (ii) persons of the opposite sex; and (iii) persons of the same sex and of the opposite sex, or if it extends to include actions following on from the already existing state of attraction. (AQW 2524/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: As stated in the answer to AQW 1604/09, the interpretation of equality legislation is a matter for the courts. The definition previously provided was taken from The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 and The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. The former Regulations provide protection on grounds of sexual orientation in employment and vocational training. They prohibit direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment. The latter Regulations provide protection on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education and public functions.

Sustainable Development Strategy

Mr Gallagher asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) if a review; and, if so, (ii) to provide an update, of the contributions of all Government Departments, to the Sustainable Development Strategy. (AQW 2558/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have initiated a review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, with a view to producing a new strategy that will align closely with the Executive's Programme for Government and our other cross-cutting strategies.

As a means of informing the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, OFMDFM commissioned a report from all Departments on their progress against the 63 targets and associated actions contained in the Implementation Plan for the existing Strategy. During formal consultation on the new Strategy, Departments and others will have the opportunity to comment on its strategic objectives, which will provide the foundation for a new Implementation Plan.

The reports received by OFMDFM indicated that, of the 63 targets in the Implementation Plan, actions under 49 were complete or on track for completion. Thirteen targets were subject to uncertainty or significant delays, and actions under one target were reported as unlikely to be achieved.

Community Groups

Mr Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what funding it has provided to community groups from (i) a unionist background; and (ii) nationalist background, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2563/09)

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is not possible to provide this information as we do not hold details of the religious background of any organisation or body funded by OFMDFM.

Funding decisions are based on the contributions which organisations make to addressing the objectives of the particular funding scheme.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Organic Farming Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Organic Farming scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2269/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): In the last three years 58 farmers signed up to the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS).

Seed Potato Levy Fund Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the seed potato levy fund scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2271/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Over the last 3 years, 6 projects were approved for funding under the seed potato levy scheme. These projects were approved on issues ranging from seed potato trials abroad, a store hygiene training course and a cold storage training course. Approximately 110 farmers benefitted from these projects.

Farm Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Farm Woodland Grant scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2272/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Over the three year period, 2005 - 2008, there were 316 recipients of grant aid to create new woodland under the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and, in addition, now receive annual premium payments under the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS) to compensate them for agricultural income foregone in respect of planting their agricultural land.

Short Rotation Coppice Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Short Rotation Coppice scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2273/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Over the three year period, 2005 - 2008, 33 people received grant aid to create Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) under the Short Rotation Coppice 2007 scheme and its predecessor, the Short Rotation Coppice Challenge Fund.

Woodland Environment Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Woodland Environment scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2274/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There have been 7 recipients of the Woodland Environment Grant over the past three years.

New Forestry Bill

Mr Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to (i) give an update on the progress of the new forestry Bill; and (ii) detail its implications for the Forestry Act (NI) 1953. (AQW 2277/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Following Executive agreement in June 2008 to the drafting of a new Forestry Bill, my officials have been involved in instructing the Office of the Legislative

Counsel. This process will take until the end of the year, with the intention that the draft legislation will be cleared by myself and the Executive in the January- February 2009 period.

The new Forestry Bill will repeal the Forestry Act (NI) 1953, but will retain many of its provisions.

However, this will be in the context of a broader range of powers, to ensure that the new Bill will reflect the work of a modern Forest Service across the wide range of contemporary functions, economic, environmental and social.

Sustainable Forest Operation Grant

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Sustainable Forest Operation Grant over the last 3 years. (AQW 2306/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There have been 4 beneficiaries under the Sustainable Forestry Operations Grant over the past three years.

Replanting Grant

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Replanting Grant over the last 3 years. (AQW 2308/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There have been 25 recipients of the Replanting Grant over the past three years relating to the afforestation of agricultural land.

Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Countryside Management scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2309/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In the last three years 3552 farmers signed up to the Countryside Management Scheme (CMS).

Agriculture and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Agriculture and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2310/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since 2006 a total of nine farmers have been awarded funding under the Agricultural and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme.

New Entrants Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the New Entrants scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2311/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since the New Entrants Scheme opened in June 2005, 265 applicants have received full approval to proceed with their proposals under the Scheme.

Flood Defence Measures

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if any type of assistance is available to help homeowners install flood defence measures at their property. (AQW 2364/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has no powers to provide financial assistance for private flood defences to protect individual properties or on undesignated watercourses, which are the maintenance responsibility of riparian landowners. The Rivers Agency maintains some 6,800 kilometres of designated watercourses, including associated flood defences. On designated watercourses, the Rivers Agency

may pay a contribution towards works to improve the watercourse for general drainage benefit, but this power is used mainly to enable Rivers Agency to co-operate with other public bodies, such as DRD, Roads Service or NI Water in the execution of public works at locations where there is connecting infrastructure.

If landowners wish to provide private flood defences and such are likely to affect flows in a watercourse, consent is required from Rivers Agency and advice can be given. The Government did however provide hardship payments for householders affected by flooding in August.

Benchmarking

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up Benchmarking over the last 3 years. (AQW 2391/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Over the last three years the following numbers of farmers have taken up benchmarking.

- 2005/06 – 413 farmers
- 2006/07 – 869 farmers
- 2007/08 – 539 farmers

Supply Chain Partnership Training

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up Supply Chain Partnership Training over the last 3 years. (AQW 2393/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A pilot Supply Chain Development Programme, designed to provide support for farmers and growers working collaboratively to improve rewards from their supply chain, was delivered during 2006 – 2008. Seven groups comprising almost 100 participants were invited to participate in the Scheme. Provision for a new Supply Chain Development Programme has been made in the NI Rural Development Plan and is due to open for applications early in 2009.

Prior to the Supply Chain Development Programme, DARD offered a Supply Chain Awareness Programme which was available between 2003 and 2007 and attracted some 1335 participants. The programme improved communications and integration between producers, processors and multiple retailers throughout the supply chain by developing an awareness of market requirements, best practice methods and the capability to access and interpret information.

Farm Modernisation Programme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Farm Modernisation Programme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2394/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: No farmers have taken up the Farm Modernisation Programme as no such Programme has been opened for applications in the past three years.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Rural Development Programme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2396/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Rural Development Programme 2000-2006 was a wide ranging package of funding measures which provided support to the broad spectrum of rural communities – farmers, growers, land owners and rural dwellers.

The total number of beneficiaries of that Programme over the last three financial years is 1,668. It is not possible to identify the number of farmers who received funding because those figures are not held.

However, part of the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme (PEACE II) implemented by DARD specifically targeted farmers and farm families and was worth £21 million.

Family Farm Options Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have taken up the Family Farm Options scheme over the last 3 years. (AQW 2401/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: This information is not held on a year by year basis, however in the three year period 2004/05 2005/06 and 2006/07 approximately 5,500 members of farm households participated in the Farm Family Options Programme.

Poultry Farming

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many jobs are dependent on poultry farming and processing; and to detail the gross value added of the industry to the economy. (AQW 2403/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: It is estimated by DARD that in 2007 there were 432 jobs dependent on poultry farming and 4,503 full-time equivalent jobs dependent on poultry processing in the North. Gross value added of the poultry processing sector was estimated at £92 million in 2006. Gross value added is not available at farm level, but sector gross margin was estimated at £21.8 million in 2006.

Poultry Litter Disposal

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has received a joint report from her Department and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in relation to poultry litter disposal; and if she will share the findings of the report with Members of the Assembly. (AQW 2404/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Expert Group on Alternative Uses of Manures, (EGAUM), was convened by DARD in 2005. It reviewed technologies for processing manure, including poultry litter. The group published its final report in March 2006.

In July 2008, a joint working group of government officials, including representatives of my Department and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, and poultry farming representatives was established. The Group is considering measures for the storage and management of poultry litter and compliance with the Nitrates Directive. It will shortly be making recommendations on future options for compliance. My Department and the Department of Environment have joint responsibility for the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations. The Departments will review the current provisions for poultry litter in those Regulations in light of the working group's recommendations.

Ice-Home

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps is her Department taking to prevent the Ice-Home being sold or closed in (i) Portavogie; (ii) Ardglass; and (iii) Kilkeel. (AQW 2420/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: NIFHA carried out a Strategic Review of its ice plants in early 2007 which outlined options for the future of the ice plants. The report suggested that the provision of ice could be more flexible and cost-effective in the private sector, rather than in the public sector and recommended that NIFHA offered the provision of ice in the ports (including NIFHA's ice plants) to the private sector.

I met with the NIFHA in September I indicated that I was supportive of the Report's recommended option. NIFHA subsequently commenced a tendering process by writing to stakeholders with an interest in ice supplies at the ports and advertising for expressions of interest. On 3rd November tender packs were sent to applicants who completed a pre-qualification questionnaire to the satisfaction of the Authority. The closing date for tenders is 9th January.

Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority has had discussions with local fisherman and their organisation to put in place a system where gates are kept open to make harbours accessible between the hours of 11 pm and 5am. (AQW 2422/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The NI Fishery Harbour Authority holds regular Port user meetings quarterly by rotation in Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie. Meetings are chaired by a Board member, are minuted and both operational matters and capital works & maintenance issues are included on the agenda. These meeting are attended by port users/fishermen, the producer organisations leaders and sometimes by local Councillors.

Port security and access issues are regularly discussed. There has been no specific discussion in relation to putting in place a system to keep gates open between 11.00pm and 5.00am however local arrangements are in place to permit access through contacting the Harbour Master.

Public Appointments

Ms Purvis asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail, for each of the last 3 financial years, (i) all public appointments filled by her Department; (ii) public appointments still outstanding; and (iii) the grounds on which some appointments were not made; for her assessment of (a) the process adopted for public appointments; and (b) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance; and what action she is taking to ensure more efficient application of the procedures. (AQW 2425/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

(i) My Department made a total 76 public appointments during the last 3 financial years. Details are as follows -

| Year | Body | Number Of Appointments Made (including reappointments) |
|---------|--|--|
| 2005/06 | Agricultural Wages Board | 3 |
| | Drainage Council for NI | 18 |
| | Livestock and Meat Commission for NI | 5 |
| | Pig Production Development Committee | 5 |
| | Research and Education Advisory Panel | 11 |
| | Rural Development Council | 4 |
| | Total | 46 |
| 2006/07 | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute | 13 |
| | Livestock and Meat Commission for NI | 1 |
| | Pig Production Development Committee | 2 |
| | Rural Development Council | 1 |
| | Research and Education Advisory Panel | 1 |
| | Total | 18 |
| 2007/08 | Agricultural Wages Board | 3 |
| | Fishery Harbour Authority (NI) | 4 |
| | Livestock and Meat Commission for NI | 2 |
| | Research and Education Advisory Panel) | 3 |
| | Total | 12 |
| | Overall Total | 76 |

- (ii) There are currently 9 public appointments unfilled posts on Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) sponsored by my Department. There are 4 unfilled posts on the Drainage Council for the North of Ireland, 4 on the Research and Agricultural Advisory Panel (REAP) and 1 on the Agri –Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI).
- (iii) It is intended to fill the Drainage Council and AFBI posts through open competition in due course. A formal review of REAP commenced during the summer and is not yet completed. A decision on whether to make further appointments to this body will not be made until the review has concluded.
- (a) All public appointments are made by my Department under the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment's Code of Practice which stems from the Nolan Principles of Public Life. My Department adheres to the principles that underpin the process including the principles of appointment on merit and equality of opportunity.
- Appointment competitions are publically advertised and are subject to independent scrutiny.
- (b) The Commissioner's Code of Practice is undergoing a fundamental review and my officials have contributed to this process.
- In addition to the Public Appointments Best Practice Guide provided by OFMDFM's Central Appointments Unit, my Department has an internal Supplementary Guide for public appointments which provides additional guidance on those areas where a Departmental policy line is required.

Northern Ireland Pork

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will express her support for Jamie Oliver's campaign to promote British pork; what action her Department is taking to promote Northern Ireland pork across the United Kingdom; and to make a statement on the matter. (AQW 2491/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: At the outset, I should advise that EU wide State Aid Rules place severe constraints on the use of Government funds for promotional activities, therefore my Department cannot provide direct funding for the marketing or advertising of pork both here or across the EU.

My Department provides support to the Ulster Pork and Bacon Forum through the Regional Food Programme, which over the last two years amounted to some £87k. The programme aims to promote quality regional food and increase its consumption within Ireland and Britain. At the IFEX event in Belfast at the end of April, I gave my personal support to the Pork and Bacon Forum's exhibition where the high quality of local pork was promoted to retail and food service buyers.

I have met with most of the major supermarket chains to encourage the retailers to support the sustainability of all local supply chains, including the pigmeat sector. I have also encouraged them to increase the quantity of produce sourced from the North for their stores, both locally and in Britain

Flooding in the Old Grand Jury Manor Area

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to address the problem of persistent flooding in the Old Grand Jury Manor area of Saintfield. (AQW 2492/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Rivers Agency is aware of concerns about flooding and has had a number of site meetings regarding this subject with yourself and other public representatives, accompanied by DRD Roads Service and NI Water.

However there is no watercourse involved at this location, and therefore Rivers Agency has no remit.

The cause of the persistent flooding in the Old Grand Jury Manor area remains surface water runoff from adjacent lands exceeding the capacity of the local road drainage system and the adopted NI Water storm sewer which deals with drainage in the area.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the progress (i) in developing a vaccine; and (ii) of an inoculation programme for badgers, for Bovine Tuberculosis. (AQW 2495/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Work to develop a vaccine for badgers for bovine Tuberculosis is currently underway in Britain and in the South. My Department is maintaining close contact with this work, with a view to assessing what involvement might be appropriate for us in the North. We will continue to keep under review how best we can contribute in the North to the development of a vaccine for badgers.

Flood Maps

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans are in place to create flood maps showing areas at risk in addition to the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. (AQO 1437/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As the competent authority for implementation of the EU Floods Directive in the North of Ireland, DARD, Rivers Agency has plans in place to assess, map and produce plans for areas at potential significant risk of flooding. The Directive requires the consideration of sources of flooding where there is the potential for significant flood risk. Rivers Agency is working with other government departments and responsible authorities to assess the areas at potential significant risk and once established will be undertaking detailed mapping of these areas by the end of 2013.

Flood Maps

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans are in place to create flood maps showing areas at risk in addition to the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. (AQO 1434/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As the competent authority for implementation of the EU Floods Directive in the North of Ireland, DARD, Rivers Agency has plans in place to assess, map and produce plans for areas at potential significant risk of flooding. The Directive requires the consideration of sources of flooding where there is the potential for significant flood risk. Rivers Agency is working with other government departments and responsible authorities to assess the areas at potential significant risk and once established will be undertaking detailed mapping of these areas by the end of 2013.

Dangerous Dogs Legislation

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what proposals exist for strengthening dangerous dogs legislation, in line with the proposals in Scotland, which will introduce control orders for dogs who have acted dangerously regardless of breed; and extend legislation to allow officials to intervene even on private property, in the event of an attack. (AQW 2658/09)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am aware of the proposals for the control of dogs in Scotland. Indeed, I have discussed them with the Kennel Club and others as part of my on-going Review of the dangerous dogs legislation here.

I note the proposal to extend legislation to enable officials to intervene on private property in the event of an attack. The current legal position in the North is different from that in Scotland. Under the Dogs (NI) Order 1983 (as amended), an owner whose dog attacks someone is already guilty of an offence, whether the attack has taken place on private or public property.

While I cannot pre-empt the outcome of my Review, I feel that there are lessons to be learned from Scotland and others on what actions they are taking to deal with dogs acting in a dangerous or aggressive manner.

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Re-Imaging Communities Programme

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much has been spent on the Re-Imaging Communities programme in the Ards Borough Council area, detailing the location and amount spent on each scheme. (AQW 2150/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The organisations and programmes funded through Re-Imaging Communities in the Ards Borough Council area are as follows:

| Organisation | Project Title | Grant £ |
|----------------------|--|---------|
| Ards Borough Council | Portavogie Mural Redefinition | 11,840 |
| Ards Borough Council | Glen Estate 1 | 12,890 |
| Ards Borough Council | Glen Estate 2 | 12,700 |
| Ards Borough Council | East End | 11,900 |
| Ards Borough Council | Mural Redefinition – Scrabo Residents Association | 12,482 |
| Ards Borough Council | Cloughy & District Association – Looking to the future | 3,950 |
| | | £65,762 |

Arts Council

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding is available through the Arts Council to help fund reimaging communities. (AQW 2190/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Arts Council has been administering the Re-Imaging Communities programme over the period 2006/07 to 2008/09.

The Arts Council suspended the Re-Imaging Communities Programme on 19 June 2008 as the budget had been assigned or earmarked in full.

My Department has recently secured an additional £500k for the Re-Imaging Communities Programme through the September Monitoring Allocations which will be made available to the Arts Council to administer.

Re-Imaging Communities Programme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to breakdown the amount spent on the Re-Imaging Communities Programme in the North Down Council area by (i) location; and (ii) each scheme. (AQW 2266/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

| District Council Area | Group Name | Project Title | Grant £ |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| North Down | North Down Local Strategy Partnership | Re-Imaging Kilcooley | 10,639 |
| North Down | Intra Community Cohesion Project | Re-Imaging Kilcooley | 48,290 |
| Total | | | £ 58,929 |

Education and Library Boards

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what the financial loss is for each Education and Library Board due to the non return of books, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2367/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The information you have requested is detailed in the table within the attached Annex.

BOOK LOSSES IN THE EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS FOR THE YEARS 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008

| | Branches Books (Static and mobile libraries) | Other Items | Branches Books | Other Items | Branches Books | Other Items |
|-------|--|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| | 2005/2006 | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 | 2007/2008 |
| SELB | £45637 | £4943 | £39040 | £7431 | £35859 | £9459 |
| BELB | £19746 | £3117 | £22867 | £7380 | £32722 | £6150 |
| WELB | £48167 | £4956 | £55467 | £4972 | £43,644 | £6518 |
| NEELB | £47836 | £4297 | £39051 | £2800 | £38283 | £2770 |
| SEELB | £30957 | £5409 | £35392 | £4785 | £35558 | £4706 |

Please note the following:

1. These figures exclude write off accrued in 2007/2008 following a review of the catalogue entries for the past 34 years.
2. The book loss figures relate to public library stock (including static and mobile libraries)
3. 'Other items' include DVD, video and CD losses.

Anniversary of the Plantation of Ulster

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what measures he is taking to prepare for the 400th anniversary of the Plantation of Ulster in 2010; and what consideration he has given to forming a steering group to investigate the various ways this historical event can be celebrated. (AQW 2490/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The organisations supported by my Department have planned a range of activities and projects in relation to the landmark anniversary of the Plantation of Ulster. These include the following:

- The Linen Hall Library, which DCAL partially funds, is planning an exhibition in 2010 of contemporary books, pamphlets, and at least one public lecture;
- The Ulster Scots Agency intends to republish the Reverend George Hill's 'An Historical Account of the Plantation of Ulster at the commencement of the seventeenth century, 1605-1620', first published in 1877. It will be accompanied by digital images of the Raven Phillips maps held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Those maps will also feature in the Ulster-Scots Agency's educational resources on the Plantation, funded by the Special European Programmes Body;
- Northern Ireland Screen would consider supporting professional film or television productions dealing with the Plantation of Ulster; and
- New history displays will feature in the refurbished Ulster Museum providing background to the Plantation and its main features. They will consider Ulster as the departing point for the Gaelic lords and present an account of the settlement of Ulster up to 1615.

There are currently no plans to form a steering group.

Sports Strategy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Sports Strategy; and to detail (i) the (a) expected; and (b) actual contribution, of each Department to the strategy to date; and (ii) the commitments he has received from each Department for future support of the strategy. (AQW 2575/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: A structure for the implementation of the Sports Strategy has been developed and is set out within a final version of the Strategy. This final version, including the

implementation structure, is currently being considered by the Northern Ireland Executive. The expected and actual contribution of each Department to the Sports Strategy to date is as follows:-

- The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) led the development of the Strategy in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland
- DCAL, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Social Development (DSD) were represented on a Ministerial led Steering Group set up to oversee the development of the Sports Strategy and;
- All Departments participated in consultative forums on the development of the Sports Strategy or provided comments on earlier drafts of the document submitted to them for consideration

I expect to receive commitments from each Department to provide future support to the Strategy once the Northern Ireland Executive approves the final version of the document.

Arts Council

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what requests for support have been made by Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (CCE) to the Arts Council, in each of the last 2 years. (AQW 2576/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann headquarter organisation, which is Dublin based, has not made any requests for support to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in the last 2 years.

However, individual branches of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann have made 11 requests for support to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2006/07, 4 requests in 2007/08 and 4 requests to date in the current financial year.

Details of these applications are set out in the table below.

| Year | Branch | Exchequer Funding | Lottery Funding | Amount of Award |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2006/07* | Bunrecht CCE | | Awards for All | £1,070 |
| | Clogher Valley | | Awards for All | £3,380 |
| | Newcastle | | Awards for All | £4,850 |
| | Coalisland | | Awards for All | £3,040 |
| | Ring of Gullion Forkhill | | Awards for All | £5,800 |
| | Dromore | | Awards for All | £4,950 |
| | Ballymoney (Comhaltas Dun Laithi) | | Awards for All | £6,940 |
| 2007/08 | Pomeroy | Place Identity and Art programme | | £5,000 |
| | Glens of Antrim | Turas | | £9,943 |
| | Ards | | Awards for All | £2,200 |
| | Portglenone | | Awards for All | £1,400 |
| 2008/09** | Clanbrassil | | Awards for All | £3,200 |
| | Newcastle | | Awards for All | £5,000 |
| | Ballymoney (Comhaltas Dun Laithi) | | Awards for All | £1,105 |
| | Total | | | £42,935 |

* Four Awards for All applications from CCE branches were rejected in 2006/07.

** One Awards for All application from a CCE branch was rejected in 2008/09.

Support for Local Talent

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if his Department would issue a statement to support and vote for Christine Bleakley in Strictly Come Dancing and Eoghan Quigg in XFactor. (AQW 2587/09)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, I welcome the success of Christine Bleakley in Strictly Come Dancing and of Eoghan Quigg in XFactor. Christine's and Eoghan's success is something that we in Northern Ireland can be very proud of. I believe Christine and Eoghan have demonstrated at national level the quality and variety of our local artistic talent and are great ambassadors for Northern Ireland.

Their success is providing a great deal of enjoyment to the people of Northern Ireland, and the rest of the United Kingdom. I would like to extend my very best wishes to both Christine and Eoghan for their continued success in their respective competitions. I am sure that the people of Northern Ireland will continue to vote for Christine and Eoghan.

EDUCATION

Exposure to Wi-Fi

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education what proof of harm would be required for wi-fi to be turned off in schools. (AQW 2248/09)

The Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Bíonn sláinte agus sábhailteacht na bpáistí agus na mball foirne ar fad inár scoileanna fíorthábhachtach.

The health and safety of all children and staff in our schools is paramount.

The Department of Education is committed to improving the use of new technology in schools and has been rolling out the C2K (Class 2000) strategy in recent years.

C2K aims to increase the opportunities for pupils to develop skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) irrespective of where they go to school.

C2K does not currently use WiFi for widespread connectivity of its equipment. However, around 30 schools have opted to purchase wireless access points for use on their C2K local area network.

The Department has taken advice from the Health Protection Agency and the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation, who say that it does not consider there to be an undue risk to health from wireless computer networks. I have advised my officials to keep this and any other relevant updated advice under review. The health and safety of our children is paramount.

Saint Cecilia's College

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education (i) for her assessment of progress on the delivery of a new school for Saint Cecilia's College in Derry/Londonderry; (ii) to detail the reasons for the stated 10 month delay to date in this project; and (iii) when the project will be completed. (AQW 2293/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá scoileanna nua do Saint Mary's College agus do Saint Cecilia's College san áireamh mar chuid de thionscadal atá á thabhairt chun cinn mar Chomhpháirtíocht Phríobháideach Phoiblí.

Replacement schools for Saint Mary's College and Saint Cecilia's College are included in a project being taken forward as a Public Private Partnership. The delay was caused by a need to undertake an extended period of examination on the material in the Full Business Case which needed to be approved by the Department before the project could move to the next stage. The contract is expected to be signed shortly with the buildings due to be completed during the summer of 2010.

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Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education (i) for her assessment of progress on the delivery of a new school for Saint Mary's College in Derry/Londonderry; (ii) to detail the reasons for the stated 10 month delay to date in this project; and (iii) when the project will be completed. (AQW 2294/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá scoileanna nua do Saint Mary's College agus do Saint Cecilia's College san áireamh mar chuid de thionscadal atá á thabhairt chun cinn mar Chomhpháirtíocht Phríobháideach Phoiblí.

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Lisnagelvin Primary School

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education (i) for her assessment of progress on the delivery of a new school for Lisnagelvin Primary School in Derry/Londonderry; (ii) to detail the reasons for the stated 6 month delay to date in this project; and (iii) when the project will be completed. (AQW 2295/09)

The Minister of Education: Tugadh conradh le haghaidh oibreacha ag Lisnagelvin P.S. agus tá Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair i mbun plé leis an chonraitheoir rathúil faoi láthair maidir le sprioc-chostas don tionscadal.

A contract for Lisnagelvin P.S. has been awarded and the Western Education and Library Board is currently in discussion with the successful contractor on a target cost for the project. Some redesign work was undertaken earlier this year to reduce the estimated costs of the project which caused the delay. The Board expect to formally submit a proposed target cost shortly. Provided this is satisfactory, it is anticipated that construction work could start on site early next year with an estimated completion date of autumn 2010.

School Repairs

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on school repairs in the Upper Bann constituency in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 2312/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní dhéantar aon idirdhealú idir cothabháil agus deisithe san eolas atá ar fáil faoi chaiteachas. Seo a leanas an caiteachas ar chothabháil do scoileanna rialaithe agus scoileanna faoi chothabháil i dtoghcheantar na Banna Uachtaraí mar a chaith Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt i ngach bliain le 5 bhliana anuas.

The expenditure information available does not distinguish between maintenance and repairs. Expenditure on maintenance by the Southern Education and Library Board on controlled and maintained schools in the Upper Bann constituency, in each of the last 5 years, was as follows:-

| 2003/04 £'000s | 2004/05 £'000s | 2005/06 £'000s | 2006/07 £'000s | 2007/08 £'000s |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2,821 | 1,545 | 1,127 | 1,332 | 2,373 |

Figures for Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools are not readily available.

Carrick Primary School, Warrenpoint

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education to explain the delay in the building programme for Carrick Primary School, Burren, Warrenpoint. (AQW 2349/09)

The Minister of Education: Bhí cuid míonna sa bhreis de dhíth, níos faide ná mar a ceapadh a bhí riachtanach, sula raibh an t iarratas chostais réamhthairisceana curtha ar fáil ag an fhoireann thionscadail don Roinn le breithniú a dhéanamh air.

It took several months longer than anticipated for the Pre-Tender cost submission to be provided by the project team to the department for consideration. In addition, the proposed replacement school requires an extended site through acquisition and vesting of additional land and there have been delays in getting the necessary site design plans and land acquired for the school. The school's Project Manager has confirmed the design work has been completed and a revised site map has now been submitted to the department for consideration.

Asbestos in Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the work that needs to be undertaken; (ii) the date for the work; and (iii) the potential costs, to replace asbestos structures, in schools in the North Down constituency. (AQW 2385/09)

The Minister of Education: The South Eastern Education and Library Board, which has responsibility for the maintenance of controlled and maintained schools in the North Down constituency, has advised that they plan to remove asbestos containing materials at Millisle primary school in December 2008 as part of a window replacement scheme. The estimated cost is £41,500. Any other asbestos containing materials in schools in the constituency are being managed in situ. The potential cost of their removal is estimated to be £110,500.

Tá tugtha le fios dom ag scoileanna ghradaí dheonacha nach bhfuil pleananna ar bith acu le struchtúir aispeiste a bhaint. Níl aon fhigúirí costais ar fáil maidir le hoibreacha bainte.

Voluntary Grammar schools in the North Down constituency have advised that they do not have plans to remove asbestos structures. Cost figures for removal works are not available.

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

School Repairs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on school repairs in the North Down constituency, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2386/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní dhéantar aon idirdhealú idir cothabháil agus deisithe san eolas atá ar fáil faoi chaiteachas. Seo a leanas an caiteachas ar chothabháil do scoileanna rialaithe agus scoileanna faoi chothabháil i dtoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh mar a chaith Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt i ngach bliain le 5 bhliana anuas.

The expenditure information available does not distinguish between maintenance and repairs. Expenditure on maintenance by the South Eastern Education and Library Board on controlled and maintained schools in the North Down constituency, in each of the last 5 years, was as follows:-

| 2003/04 £'000s | 2004/05 £'000s | 2005/06 £'000s | 2006/07 £'000s | 2007/08 £'000s |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1,344 | 545 | 301 | 333 | 410 |

Figures for Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools are not readily available.

North Belfast City Learning Centre

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the funds her Department has allocated to the North Belfast City Learning Centre; and (ii) how this fits in with her Department's Statutory Duty of Opportunity and Equality. (AQW 2416/09)

The Minister of Education: The North Belfast City Learning Centre is the name given to facilities that are being provided as a pilot scheme on a cross-departmental basis as part of the replacement schools for Belfast Model School for Girls and the Belfast Boys Model School. The facilities are intended to be for the benefit of the schools and the whole community in North Belfast. The facilities are being provided under a Public Private Partnership approach and funding would commence once the buildings become operational, which is scheduled

for 2010. The overall capital cost of the facilities is estimated to be £5.5m and an annual unitary charge of £865k in the first full year of operation (2011/12).

Is ceantar é Béal Feirste Thuaidh atá comhcheangailte le leibhéal suntasacha de dhíothacht shocheacnamaíoch. Tá sé beartaithe go gcuideoidh na háiseanna seo le deiseanna foghlama a fheabhasú agus athbheochán a spreagadh i bpobail trí neartú háiseanna áitiúla agus mar sin de, feileann sé don dualgas a bhaineann le comhdheiseanna a chur chun cinn.

North Belfast is an area associated with high levels of social and economic deprivation. The facilities are intended to help improve learning opportunities and regenerate communities by strengthening local access to educational and other facilities. They will support the objective of targeting social need and addressing disadvantage in the community and the statutory obligation on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Public Appointments

Ms Purvis asked the Minister of Education to detail, for each of the last 3 financial years, (i) all public appointments filled by her Department; (ii) public appointments still outstanding; and (iii) the grounds on which some appointments were not made; for her assessment of (a) the process adopted for public appointments; and (b) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance; and what action she is taking to ensure more efficient application of the procedures. (AQW 2427/09)

The Minister of Education:

- (i) Tá gach ceapachán poiblí a líon an Roinn seo le linn gach bliana le 3 bliana airgeadais anuas leagtha amach thíos:
- (i) Set out below are all public appointments filled by this Department during each of the last 3 financial years:

| Financial Year | Public Appointments Filled | Number |
|----------------|--|------------|
| 2005/06 | Belfast Education and Library Board | 38 |
| | North Eastern Education and Library Board | 35 |
| | South Eastern Education and Library Board | 35 |
| | Southern Education and Library Board | 36 |
| | Western Education and Library Board | 35 |
| | Council for Catholic Maintained Schools | 8 |
| | Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards | 2 |
| | Diocesan Education Committees of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools | 15 |
| | Governing Bodies of Certain Voluntary Grammar Schools | 173 |
| | Grant Maintained Integrated – Board of Governors | 45 |
| | Council for Integrated Education | 2 |
| | Total | 424 |

| Financial Year | Public Appointments Filled | Number |
|----------------|--|-----------|
| 2006/07 | Belfast Education and Library Board | 2 |
| | General Teaching Council | 4 |
| | Governing Bodies of Certain Voluntary Grammar Schools | 12 |
| | Grant Maintained Integrated – Board of Governors | 39 |
| | Middletown | 5 |
| | Council for Integrated Education | 1 |
| | Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment | 17 |
| | North Eastern Education and Library Board | 1 |
| | South Eastern Education and Library Board | 1 |
| | Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards | 11 |
| | Southern Education and Library Board | 2 |
| | Total | 95 |
| 2007/08 | Belfast Education and Library Board | 3 |
| | Governing Bodies of Certain Voluntary Grammar Schools | 21 |
| | Grant Maintained Integrated – Board of Governors | 37 |
| | Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment | 1 |
| | Southern Education and Library Board | 3 |
| | Western Education and Library Board | 3 |
| | Total | 68 |

- (ii) My Department currently has 44 outstanding appointments.
- (iii) 20 of these vacancies are in the 5 Education and Library Boards, CCMS and the Diocesan Education Committees of the CCMS. Two of these vacancies are in the process of being filled. Of the remaining 18 vacancies, 15 will remain unfilled. These appointments are made via open competition and due to the impending establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) public appointment competitions have not been run. The remaining 3 vacancies are in the South Eastern Education and Library Board and will not be processed until a decision has been taken by me to reinstate the Board.

Of the remaining 24 vacancies, 22 refer to the appointment of Board of Governors of certain Voluntary and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools. I am currently in the process of considering the appointments of 3 Board of Governors and there are 19 other Board of Governor appointments to be made by me. However my Department is currently awaiting the completion of vetting or declaration forms.

The remaining 2 vacancies are in the Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and my Department is currently in the process of considering the most appropriate way to take forward these appointments. It is envisaged that appointments will be made in the next few months.

- (a) My Department adheres to the key principle in the Code of Practice that equality of opportunity and diversity must be inherent throughout the appointment process. Independent scrutiny has been applied to all public appointments made by me. Following this process in my view provides a sound basis for ensuring that the Department of Education observes its responsibility in terms of applying equal opportunities to the appointments consideration process within the overriding principle of appointments on merit.

All public appointments made by my Department have been made in line with the Code of Practice as set out by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA). This guidance stems from the Nolan Principles of Public Life which ensure an appointments process built on the merit principle.

- (b) OCPA is currently overseeing the development of a new Code of Practice. The Department of Education, along with other Departments and stakeholders is fully engaging and contributing to this review.

The Code of Practice is supplemented with guidance set out by the Central Appointments Unit, OFMdFM.

Peripatetic Tutors

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of peripatetic Spanish and Irish language tutors operating under the Primary Languages Programme, broken down by each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 2450/09)

The Minister of Education: Faoi lathair, tá 42 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 6 theagascóir Gaeilge ag obair i mbunscoileanna anseo agus tá 25 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 12 teagascóir Gaeilge eile faoi thraenáil a bhfuil imréiteach á dhéanamh orthu. Ní mhiondhealaítear an t-eolas ar na teagascóirí de réir limistéar an Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ach is é líon na scoileanna atá páirteach ó thaobh limistéar an Bhoird de mar a leanas: Béal Feirste 22; an tIarthar 70; an tOirthuaisceart 102; an tOirdheisceart 58; agus an Deisceart 72.

There are currently 42 Spanish tutors and 6 Irish tutors working in primary schools here and an additional 25 Spanish tutors and 12 Irish tutors are undergoing clearance and training. Information on tutors is not broken down by Education and Library Board area, but the number of schools participating by Board area is: Belfast 22; Western 70; North Eastern 102; South Eastern 58; and Southern 72.

The programme is expanding in the 2008/09 school year to include a newcomer language element. Irish and Spanish are the most popular programmes and I will continue to keep a focus on that. Far from any existing languages proving unpopular there is in fact great demand from schools for the languages being offered.

I will continue to keep the programme under review and, in determining languages which can be provided through the programme, will take account of views provided through evaluations, which will include feedback from principals. I am pleased with the positive feedback received to date from participating schools and look forward to more of our young people benefitting from learning a second language from an early age.

Primary Languages Programme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education if the Primary Languages Programme will be reviewed to (i) allow further modern languages to be added and (ii) for languages that are proving unpopular with schools to be replaced. (AQW 2451/09)

The Minister of Education: Faoi lathair, tá 42 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 6 theagascóir Gaeilge ag obair i mbunscoileanna anseo agus tá 25 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 12 teagascóir Gaeilge eile faoi thraenáil a bhfuil imréiteach á dhéanamh orthu. Ní mhiondhealaítear an t-eolas ar na teagascóirí de réir limistéar an Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ach is é líon na scoileanna atá páirteach ó thaobh limistéar an Bhoird de mar a leanas: Béal Feirste 22; an tIarthar 70; an tOirthuaisceart 102; an tOirdheisceart 58; agus an Deisceart 72.

There are currently 42 Spanish tutors and 6 Irish tutors working in primary schools here and an additional 25 Spanish tutors and 12 Irish tutors are undergoing clearance and training. Information on tutors is not broken down by Education and Library Board area, but the number of schools participating by Board area is: Belfast 22; Western 70; North Eastern 102; South Eastern 58; and Southern 72.

The programme is expanding in the 2008/09 school year to include a newcomer language element. Irish and Spanish are the most popular programmes and I will continue to keep a focus on that. Far from any existing languages proving unpopular there is in fact great demand from schools for the languages being offered.

I will continue to keep the programme under review and, in determining languages which can be provided through the programme, will take account of views provided through evaluations, which will include feedback from principals. I am pleased with the positive feedback received to date from participating schools and look forward to more of our young people benefitting from learning a second language from an early age.

Primary Languages Programme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education if primary school principals will be consulted about the choice of languages, to ensure the breadth and future relevance of the Primary Languages Programme. (AQW 2452/09)

The Minister of Education: Faoi lathair, tá 42 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 6 theagascóir Gaeilge ag obair i mbunscoileanna anseo agus tá 25 teagascóir Spáinnise agus 12 teagascóir Gaeilge eile faoi thraenáil a bhfuil imréiteach á dhéanamh orthu. Ní mhiondhealaítear an t-eolas ar na teagascóirí de réir limistéar an Bhoird

Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ach is é líon na scoileanna atá páirteach ó thaobh limistéar an Bhoird de mar a leanas: Béal Feirste 22; an tIarthar 70; an tOirthuaisceart 102; an tOirdheisceart 58; agus an Deisceart 72.

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School Build Projects

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education the value of each of the contracts for school build projects at (i) Saint Cecilia's College; (ii) Saint Mary's College; and (iii) Lisnagelvin Primary School, in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 2476/09)

The Minister of Education: Meastar gur fiú £38m iad na hoibreacha tógála don tionscadal ag St Cecilia's College agus ag St Mary's College (conradh aonair).

The value of the construction works for the project at St Cecilia's College and St Mary's College (a single contract) is estimated at £38m. In the case of Lisnagelvin P.S. the contract for the provision of a new school has been awarded and the Western Education and Library Board is currently in discussion with the contractor on a target cost for the project. The Board expects to submit a target cost shortly.

Peripatetic Tutors

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education, further to the answer to AQW4200/08, to detail the rates for peripatetic music tutors, in each of the five Education and Library Boards. (AQW 2496/09)

The Minister of Education: Seo a leanas na rátaí pá do theagascóirí taistil lánaimseartha ceoil uirlise:-

The rates of pay for full-time peripatetic instrumental music tutors are set out below:-

| Scale Point* | Annual Salary with effect from 1/09/07 £ |
|--------------|---|
| M1 | 20,133 |
| M2 | 21,726 |
| M3 | 23,472 |
| M4 | 25,278 |
| M5 | 27,270 |
| M6 | 29,427 |

* The Pay Scale for:

- (i) Qualified Tutors appointed after 1 October 1990 is Points M2 - M6.
- (ii) Unqualified Tutors in post at 1 October 1990 is Points M1 - M6
- (iii) Unqualified Tutors appointed after 1 October 1990 is Points M1 - M5

The exception to this is the full-time teaching staff in the Belfast Education and Library Board's School of Music and 2 music tutors in the Western Education and Library Board who are employed on teachers' terms and conditions and paid in accordance with the teachers' pay scales. These scales are set out in the Department's

Circular 2008/20 which is available at the following web address: http://www.deni.gov.uk/de1_08_85628__teachers__pay_increase_from_september_2008_-_circular_2008_20.pdf

Development of Integrated Education

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Education how her Department's current policy on area planning encourages and facilitates the development of integrated education. (AQW 2526/09)

The Minister of Education: Mínítear sa dréacht-pháipéar beartais faoi phleanáil bunaithe sa cheantar go mbeadh leasanna na hearnála oideachais mar chuid den phróiseas pleanála; go mbeadh gá ann le pleanáil chomhleanúnach a fhorbairt thar earanálacha agus d'fhéadfaí go n-áireofaí orthu sin deiseanna agus tograí maidir le comhroinnt agus comhoibriú. Tá freagairtí ar chomhairliúchán an phaipéir faoi bhreithniú ag an Roinn faoi láthair.

The draft area-based planning policy paper explains that the educational sector interests would be involved in the planning process; that coherent planning would need to be developed across sectors and that these could include opportunities and proposals for sharing and collaboration. Responses to the consultation exercise on the paper are currently being considered by the department.

Development of Integrated Education

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Education how her Department's current policy on sustainable schools encourages and facilitates the development of integrated education. (AQW 2527/09)

The Minister of Education:

Díríonn an beartas um Scoileanna Inbhuanaithe ar an riachtanas le scoileanna láidir inmharthana bheith ann a sholáthraíonn oideachas den scoth agus tá an beartas ábhartha thar an chóras oideachais. Sainaitníonn an doiciméad beartais na beartais ar leith atá ábhartha do na breithnithe a bhaineann le hinmharthanacht fhadtéarmach agus pleanáil an eastáit amach anseo, chomh maith le forbairt an oideachais imeasctha a spreagadh agus a éascú.

The Sustainable Schools policy addresses the need to have strong viable schools providing quality education and is relevant across the education system. The policy document identifies specific policies relevant to considerations of long-term viability and the future planning of the estate, including encouraging and facilitating the development of integrated education.

The document also highlights the Bain Report recommendations that there should be commitment to encouraging and facilitating a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1786/09, for her assessment of what the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child means by 'segregation of education', in comments within its 49th Report, in relation to Northern Ireland. (AQW 2528/09)

The Minister of Education: Is é mo mheas ar usáid na bhfocal 'idirdeighilt san oideachais' ag Coiste na Naisiún Aointaithe um Chearta an Linbh ná go ciallaíonn sé idirdheighilt ó thaobh cúlra pobail de.

My assessment of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child use of the wording 'segregation of education' is segregation by community background.

Community Audits

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to introduce community audits as part of the area planning process. (AQW 2529/09)

The Minister of Education: Cé nach bhfuil pleananna ar bith agam faoi láthair le hiniúchtaí pobail a thabhairt isteach mar chuid de phróiseas pleanála na gceantar, aithníodh sa dréacht-doiciméad beartais faoi phleanáil sa cheantar go mbeadh tuairimí na dtuismitheoirí, na ndaltaí agus na ndaoine óga ábhartha d'fhorbairt na bpleananna.

Whilst I have no plans presently to introduce community audits as part of the area planning process, the draft area-based planning policy document recognised that the views of parents, pupils and young people would be relevant to the development of plans.

Glastry College

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Education what discussions she has had with representatives from Glastry College in relation to increasing the size of the new school, given that it is now oversubscribed. (AQW 2559/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní dheachaigh Glastry College i dteagmháil liom, mar sin, ní raibh aon phlé agam le hionadaithe na scoileanna ar an cheist seo.

No approaches have been made by Glastry College and therefore I have not had any discussions with representatives from the schools on this issue.

Language Support

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education how many children, whose first language is not English, are enrolled in (i) nursery schools; (ii) primary schools; (iii) special needs schools; and (iv) post-primary schools, in each of the last 3 years, broken down by Education and Library Board. (AQW 2605/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an teolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos:

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PUPILS RECORDED AS HAVING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE BROKEN DOWN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD 2005/06 – 2007/08

| Year | School Type | Education Board | | | | | TOTAL |
|---------|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | BELB | WELB | NEELB | SEELB | SELB | |
| 2005/06 | Nursery | 25 | 7 | 7 | 22 | 15 | 76 |
| | Primary | 436 | 184 | 343 | 329 | 610 | 1,902 |
| | Post primary | 277 | 51 | 93 | 94 | 188 | 703 |
| | Special | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| | Total | 738 | 242 | 443 | 445 | 813 | 2,681 |
| 2006/07 | Nursery | # | # | 24 | 13 | # | 112 |
| | Primary | 511 | 319 | 437 | 359 | 1,004 | 2,630 |
| | Post primary | 252 | 119 | 113 | 148 | 516 | 1,148 |
| | Special | * | * | 8 | 6 | * | 21 |
| | Total | 796 | 455 | 582 | 526 | 1,552 | 3,911 |

| Year | School Type | Education Board | | | | | TOTAL |
|---------|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | BELB | WELB | NEELB | SEELB | SELB | |
| 2007/08 | Nursery | 39 | # | 21 | # | 19 | 112 |
| | Primary | 698 | 482 | 666 | 522 | 1,441 | 3,809 |
| | Post primary | 395 | 167 | 202 | 226 | 724 | 1,714 |
| | Special | 7 | * | 7 | # | 8 | 30 |
| | Total | 1,139 | 668 | 896 | 770 | 2,192 | 5,665 |

Source: Annual school census

Notes:

1. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
2. “*” denotes fewer than 5 pupils
3. “#” denotes figure more than 5 suppressed due to possible identification of pupils.
4. A child with English as an additional language is defined as one for whom English is not their first language and who has significant difficulty with the English language and requires assistance.
5. In the 2005/06 year EAL was not collected for the Special schools sector.

Language Support

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education how many children, whose first language is not English, are enrolled in (i) nursery schools; (ii) primary schools; (iii) special needs schools; and (iv) post-primary schools, in the Western Education and Library Board area, broken down by language. (AQW 2606/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an teolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos.

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PUPILS RECORDED AS HAVING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AT SCHOOLS IN THE WELB AREA BY FIRST LANGUAGE – 2007/08

| Language | School Type | | | | Total |
|------------------------|-------------|---------|--------------|---------|-------|
| | Nursery | Primary | Post Primary | Special | |
| Arabic | 0 | # | * | 0 | 9 |
| Cantonese | # | 15 | 9 | * | 30 |
| Filipino | 0 | 26 | 5 | 0 | 31 |
| German | 0 | * | * | 0 | 7 |
| Hindi | 0 | * | * | 0 | 6 |
| Hungarian | 0 | 14 | 8 | 0 | 22 |
| Indian (not specified) | 0 | # | * | 0 | 7 |
| Latvian | 0 | 8 | 10 | 0 | 18 |
| Lithuanian | 0 | 35 | 16 | 0 | 51 |
| Malaysian | 0 | # | * | 0 | 11 |
| Mandarin | 0 | * | * | 0 | 8 |
| Malayalam | 0 | # | * | 0 | 6 |
| Other | * | 105 | 39 | * | 149 |
| Punjabi | * | * | * | 0 | 6 |
| Polish | # | 222 | 59 | * | 288 |

| Language | School Type | | | | Total |
|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|---------|------------|
| | Nursery | Primary | Post Primary | Special | |
| Slovakian | 0 | # | * | 0 | 14 |
| Spanish | 0 | * | * | 0 | 5 |
| Total | # | 482 | 167 | * | 668 |

Source: Annual school census

Notes:

6. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
7. “*” denotes fewer than 5 pupils
8. “#” denotes figure more than 5 suppressed due to possible identification of pupils.
9. A child with English as an additional language is defined as one for whom English is not their first language and who has significant difficulty with the English language and requires assistance.

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the answer to AQW 8882/08, when ‘in the near future’, will the Department make an announcement on this subject. (AQW 2607/09)

The Minister of Education: Beidh mé ag breathnú ar athbhunú bhord an SEELB atá ar fionraí i gcomhthéacs an chláir ama athbheithnithe maidir le bunú an Údaráis nua um Oideachas agus Scileanna.

I will be considering the reinstatement of the suspended board of SEELB in the context of the revised timetable for the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority.

Language Support

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education how many children, whose first language is not English, are enrolled in (i) nursery schools; (ii) primary schools; (iii) special needs schools; and (iv) post-primary schools, in the Western Education and Library Board area, broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 2608/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá an teolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos.

The information requested is contained in the table below.

Pupils recorded as having English as an additional language at schools in the WELB, broken down by parliamentary constituency – 2007/08

| School Type | Constituency Name | | | | Total |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | East Derry | Fermanagh And South Tyrone | Foyle | West Tyrone | |
| Nursery | 0 | # | # | 6 | # |
| Primary | 31 | 133 | 141 | 177 | 482 |
| Post Primary | 19 | 66 | 34 | 48 | 167 |
| Special | 0 | * | * | 0 | * |
| Total | 50 | 206 | 181 | 231 | 668 |

Source: Annual school census

Notes:

10. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
11. “*” denotes fewer than 5 pupils
12. “#” denotes figure more than 5 suppressed due to possible identification of pupils.
13. A child with English as an additional language is defined as one for whom English is not their first language and who has significant difficulty with the English language and requires assistance.

Language Support

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education what language support is available to parents of children whose first language is not English, in the Western Education and Library Board area. (AQW 2609/09)

The Minister of Education: The Inclusion and Diversity Service brought together services across the five Education and Library Boards in relation to the education of all newcomer pupils, whose first language is not English. The aim is to strengthen and improve support to all such pupils, their parents and teaching staff, primarily working through schools by using a number of new services and approaches available on a regional basis. Whilst the service works with schools, it also offers specific help to parents whose first language is not English. In particular, parents can have access to interpreters for initial parent/teacher interviews, parent consultation interviews, critical incidents and pastoral care issues. In addition, schools have access to 10 generic school policies and a number of key letters translated into 15 languages for issue to parents in their own language.

In response to a need to inform the parents of newcomer children about our education system, the Inclusion and Diversity Service created a multi-lingual website for parents in 15 languages, as well as Irish and English. This website can be accessed at www.education-support.org.uk. All of these services are available to all schools.

Tá tugtha le fios dom ag an Aire Fostaíochta agus Foghlama go mbíonn cúrsaí sainchruthaithe á soláthar ag coláistí breisoideachais leis an Bhéarla a theagasc d'oibrithe ó thíortha eile.

I am advised by the Minister for Employment and Learning that further education colleges provide courses specifically tailored to teaching English to migrant workers.

Kindle Primary School

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools now attended by the former pupils of Kindle Primary School, following its closure in June 2008. (AQW 2621/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios dom ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt gurb iad na scoileanna ar a mbíonn iardhaltaí Kindle Primary School ag freastail anois, i ndiaidh a druidte i mí Meithimh 2008 ná Cumran Primary School, Clough agus St Joseph's Primary School, Tyrella.

The South-Eastern Education and Library Board have advised that the schools now attended by the former pupils of Kindle Primary School, following its closure in June 2008 are Cumran Primary School, Clough and St Joseph's Primary School, Tyrella.

School Maintenance Programme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the possible health and safety risks as a result of the backlog in the School Maintenance Programme for schools in (i) the Derry City Council area; and (ii) the Foyle constituency. (AQW 2623/09)

The Minister of Education: Bíonn freagracht ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair as cothabháil scoileanna Rialaithe agus scoileanna faoi Chotheabháil i limistéar Chomhairle Cathrach Dhoire agus i dtoghcheantar an Fheabhail.

The Western Education and Library Board has responsibility for the maintenance of Controlled and Maintained schools in the Derry City Council and Foyle constituency areas. The Board carries out a rolling programme of condition surveys to identify maintenance needs at an early stage. If a high risk health and safety issue were to be identified it would be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

School Maintenance Programme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to address the backlog in the Schools Maintenance Programme for schools in (i) the Derry City Council area; and (ii) the Foyle constituency. (AQW 2624/09)

The Minister of Education: Bíonn freagracht ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair as cothabháil scoileanna Rialaithe agus scoileanna faoi Choithabháil i limistéar Chomhairle Cathrach Dhoire agus i dtoghcheantar an Fheabhail.

The Western Education and Library Board have responsibility for the maintenance of Controlled and Maintained schools in the Derry City Council and Foyle Constituency areas. Whilst my Department determines the overall centre budget allocation for the Board, it is for the Board to determine, along with other services to be provided, how much funding it attributes to its maintenance budget.

The Western Education and Library Board are keen to address the maintenance backlog. My Department has supported the Board's bid for an additional £320k in the December monitoring round, to help ease pressure on its maintenance budget in the current financial year.

Attacks on Teachers

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education to detail what happened to the pupils responsible for the 29 physical attacks on teachers in the North Eastern Education and Library Board, between 2006-07 and 2007/08. (AQW 2631/09)

The Minister of Education: Ní chruinníonn an Roinn an t-eolas a iarradh.

The Department does not collect the information requested.

The Department collects information annually from each of the Education and Library Boards in relation to suspensions and expulsions of pupils. This data does provide the reasons for suspensions and expulsions, of which 'physical attacks on teachers' is one; however the data is anonymised and it is therefore not possible to track the outcomes for the pupils involved.

Teaching Vacancies

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how many teaching vacancies there are in each school, in the Upper Bann constituency. (AQW 2647/09)

The Minister of Education: The Department seeks information on teacher vacancies from all grant-aided schools on an annual basis. The information provides a "snapshot" of vacancies at a specific date each year. The latest information available identifies vacancies at 2 November 2007, and details for the Upper Bann constituency are set out below:

NO. OF VACANCIES STILL TO BE FILLED DURING THE 2007/08 ACADEMIC YEAR AT 2ND NOVEMBER 2007 IN SCHOOLS IN THE UPPER BANN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

| | School Ref | Full-time, Permanent | Part-time, Permanent | Full-time, Temporary | Part-time, Temporary |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Craigavon Senior High School | 5210282 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| St Mary's High School | 5230070 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lismore Comprehensive School | 5230213 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| New-Bridge Integrated College | 5260285 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| King's Park PS | 5011124 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Edenderry PS | 5011189 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Drumgor PS | 5016080 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ballyoran PS | 5016117 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Bridge Integrated PS | 5066540 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ceara Special School | 5316521 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Tá eolas maidir le folúntais múinteoirí a mbíonn ann ar an 2 Samhain 2008 á lorg ag an Roinn.

The Department is currently seeking data on teacher vacancies which exist at 2 November 2008.

Middletown Centre for Autism

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Education (i) whether Middletown Centre for Autism is registered and operates as a private company; (ii) if so, when this decision was taken and by whom; and (iii) how the centre is funded. (AQW 2663/09)

The Minister of Education: Bhunaigh an Roinn Oideachais (DE) sa tuaisceart agus an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (DES) sa deisceart an Middletown Centre for Autism Ltd leis an Ionad a oibriú agus corpraíodh é sa Companies Registry i dtuaisceart na hÉireann i mí an Mhárta 2007 mar chuideachta faoi theorainn ráthaíochta, gan scairchaipiteal ar bith aici.

The Middletown Centre for Autism Ltd was established in order to operate the Centre by the Department of Education (DE) in the north and the Department of Education and Science (DES) in the south and was incorporated in Companies Registry in the north of Ireland in March 2007 as a company limited by guarantee, having no share capital. The operation of the company is subject to a robust Memorandum and Articles of Association agreed by both DE and DES and contains Reserved Matters for which prior Departmental approval must be sought.

The decision to establish the operation of the Centre through a company limited by guarantee was taken in June 2006 as the preferred option, as outlined in an Economic Appraisal (EA) completed by the Department of Education and agreed with the Department of Education and Science. This EA was approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel in July 2006. The EA was placed in the Assembly Library in February 2007. The operational mechanism for the Centre will be reviewed on the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority.

The Centre operates within the terms of reciprocal Funding Agreements with each Department. In addition, a Management Statement Financial Memorandum (MSFM) which has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel and signed by DE and the Centre is in place. This MSFM sets out the corporate governance arrangements under which the Centre must operate. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between both Departments, which commits each to funding on a 50:50 basis.

School Maintenance Programme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action her Department is taking to address the backlog in the schools maintenance programme for schools, in the North Down constituency. (AQW 2672/09)

The Minister of Education: Bíonn freagracht ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt as cothabháil scoileanna Rialaithe agus scoileanna faoi Chothabháil i dtoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board have responsibility for the maintenance of Controlled and Maintained schools in the North Down constituency. Whilst my Department determines the overall centre budget allocation for the Board, it is for the Board to determine, along with other services to be provided, how much funding it attributes to its maintenance budget.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board are keen to address the maintenance backlog. My Department has supported the Board's bid for an additional £1.2 million in the December monitoring round, to help ease pressures on its maintenance budget in the current financial year.

Teaching Vacancies

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many teaching vacancies there are in each school, in the North Down constituency. (AQW 2673/09)

The Minister of Education: The Department seeks information on teacher vacancies from all grant-aided schools on an annual basis. The information provides a "snapshot" of vacancies at a specific date each year. The latest information available identifies vacancies at 2 November 2007, and details for the North Down constituency are set out below:

NO. OF VACANCIES STILL TO BE FILLED DURING THE 2007/08 ACADEMIC YEAR AT 2ND NOVEMBER 2007 IN SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

| School Name | School Ref | Full-time, Permanent | Part-time, Permanent | Full-time, Temporary | Part-time, Temporary |
|-------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Donaghadee PS | 4011654 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bloomfield Road PS | 4013023 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Conlig PS | 4013032 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Grange Park PS | 4013045 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kilcooley PS | 4016002 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kilmaine PS | 4016192 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ballymagee PS | 4016430 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| St Malachy's PS | 4036148 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bangor Academy And 6th Form College | 4210296 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Glenlola Collegiate | 4410097 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bangor GS | 4420015 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Tá eolas maidir le folúntais múinteoirí a mbíonn ann ar an 2 Samhain 2008 á lorg ag an Roinn.

The Department is currently seeking data on teacher vacancies which exist at 2 November 2008.

School Crossing Patrols

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of school crossing patrols in Upper Bann, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2676/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá deimhnithe ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt gur mar seo a leanas atá líon na bPatról Trasnaithe Scoile i dtoghcheantar na Banna Uachtaraí i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas:

The Southern Education and Library Board has confirmed that the number of School Crossing Patrols in the Upper Bann area, in each of the last three years, is as follows:

| | |
|---------|----|
| 2005/06 | 72 |
| 2006/07 | 60 |
| 2007/08 | 58 |

School Crossing Patrols

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how many school crossing patrols are to be abolished in the next three years (i) in total; and (ii) broken down by Education and Library Board. (AQW 2680/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne dom nach bhfuil aon phleananna acu faoi láthair chun deireadh a chur le haon Phatróil Trasnaithe Scoile thar na chéad trí bliana eile.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards that they have no plans at present to abolish any School Crossing Patrols over the next three years. I should advise, however, that if a post becomes vacant, a survey of the location is conducted to determine whether the road safety hazard still exists. If the location continues to meet the criteria for the provision of a School Crossing Patrol then the post will be advertised. If, however, the criteria are not met then the post will be abolished.

Public Liability Claims

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how many public liability claims have been successful (i) in total; and (ii) broken down by Education and Library Board; and, what was the amount paid out (a) in total; and (b) broken down by Education and Library board, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2681/09)

The Minister of Education: Thug gach ceann de na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an t-eolas atá mionsonraithe sna táblaí thíos:

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

- (i). Total number of successful public liability claims and total amounts paid out in each of the last three years.

| Financial Year | Number of claims | Total cost |
|----------------|------------------|------------|
| 2005/06 | 48 | 218,822.32 |
| 2006/07 | 80 | 469,412.66 |
| 2007/08 | 50 | 312,113.72 |

- (ii). Successful public liability claims and total amounts paid out in each of the last three years broken down by Education and Library Board.

| Authority | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| BELB | | | |
| No of Public Liability Claims | 3 | 8 | 6 |
| Amount Paid | 33,156.64 | 119,528.80 | 53,818.90 |
| NEELB | | | |
| No of Public Liability Claims | 10 | 15 | 6 |
| Amount Paid | 27,124.00 | 117,314.00 | 107,906.00 |
| SEELB | | | |
| No of Public Liability Claims | 15 | 22 | 16 |
| Amount Paid | 105,126.58 | 75,792.34 | 92,040.07 |
| SELB | | | |
| No of Public Liability Claims | 15 | 21 | 14 |
| Amount Paid | 39,783.20 | 58,603.41 | 30,125.96 |
| WELB | | | |
| No of Public Liability Claims | 5 | 14 | 8 |
| Amount Paid | 13,631.90 | 98,174.11 | 28,222.79 |

It should be noted that these figures include compensation costs, plaintiff legal costs and defence legal costs.

Vocational Career Choices

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education how school careers teachers gain knowledge and experience to enable them to offer advice on vocational career choices, particularly within the traditional trades. (AQO 1228/09)

The Minister of Education: Tugann múinteoirí gairmthreorach saibhreas a gcuid taithí , a gcuid saineolais agus a gcuid tiomantais don obair a dhéanann siad le daoine óga.

Careers teachers bring a wealth of experience, expertise and commitment to their work with young people. They are supported by their employers with opportunities to develop an understanding of vocational pathways, including through working in partnership with the professional careers advisers employed by the Department for Employment and Learning and with employers, Sector Skills Councils, further and higher education

establishments and others to gain knowledge and understanding of the many vocational areas for the pupils who require it.

Additionally, the Education and Library Boards' Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) provides a programme of teacher placement into industry that allows teachers a period of work experience.

It is, however, important to note that the role of schools and careers officer is not to give advice on specific careers or jobs to pupils but rather to educate them about career options and pathways that are available to them and, in the context of the revised curriculum, to help pupils develop the opportunities for careers exploration and the thinking, analytical and decision-making skills that they need to reach their own decisions on the career pathways that are right for them.

It is essential that we move away from the mindset where the true value of vocational courses is not fully recognised. Through the Entitlement Framework our pupils will be guaranteed access to a broad range of qualifications, both academic and vocational, that can prepare them for working in today's society.

Early Years Strategy

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Education when her Department will publish its Early Years Strategy. (AQO 1291/09)

The Minister of Education: Mar is eol daoibh bhunaigh an Roinn grúpaí geallsealbhoirí le hinchur ar sheachadadh, ar bheartas agus ar chleachtas na luathbhlianta a bhailiú agus lena bheith mar bhonn eolais don straitéis.

As you are aware the Department formed stakeholder groups to capture input on the delivery, policy and practice of early years and inform the strategy. Since initial stakeholder consultations ceased in November 2007 the Department has been gathering and collating the evidence from local, national and international best practice models of early years to highlight the policy implications for the Early Years 0 - 6 Strategy. The Department also has to ensure that the policy linkages throughout the education sector and with other Government Departments are made to ensure the recommendations arising from the Strategy are not seen in isolation from other policy areas to maximise their effectiveness.

The Strategy will recognise that early years services encompass a wide range of complex issues and appropriate targeting and intervention means identifying and addressing specific needs in a timely way. Those needs all contribute to the individual's ability to grow and learn, to develop and fulfil his or her potential, and, vitally, to enjoy the very best start in life that every child deserves.

The Department hopes to bring the draft Strategy before the Education Committee early in 2009, after which a broad and inclusive public consultation will follow (to include consultation with the broader health and education sectors and children and parents) before the strategy is finalised and published.

Specialist Schools

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of specialist schools in the post primary sector. (AQO 1221/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá clár na Scoileanna Speisialta fréamhaithe go láidir laistigh den fhócas foriomlán atá agam ar fhorbairt scoileanna agus tugann sé tacaíocht dó; ag diriú isteach ar thearcghnóthú oideachasúil; agus ag méadú na roghanna agus an tsolúbthacht atá ann do dhaoine óga, go háirithe tríd an Chreat Teidlíochta.

The Specialist Schools programme sits firmly within and supports my overall focus on improving schools; addressing educational underachievement; and increasing choice and flexibility for young people, particularly via the Entitlement Framework.

Specialist Schools, by definition, are outward looking. They use their particular strengths in one curricular area not just to benefit their own pupils but also for the benefit of pupils in partner schools and the wider community. They are tasked with supporting the delivery of the Entitlement Framework through partnerships with post-primary schools within their Area Learning Community. These schools are involved in and are driving active school collaboration and developing models of best practice which they share through the network of Specialist Schools.

In the Programme for Government, promotion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) related activities is a very high priority and the Specialist schools programme provides the opportunity to enhance the teaching of STEM subjects in schools. In September 2008, three new schools under the STEM specialisms joined the 8 existing schools.

The fourth cohort of the Specialist Schools programme was launched on 21 November 2008, inviting post primary schools to apply for Specialist Schools status from September 2010.

My Department will continue to work with the Education and Training Inspectorate to closely monitor and evaluate the success of the Specialist Schools programme.

School Buses

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to allow rural children to be offered free travel on partially filled school buses that pass close to their homes. (AQO 1269/09)

The Minister of Education: Bíonn iallach ar Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne cúnaimh iompair a sholáthar do na daltaí sin a bhíonn i dteideal é a fháil faoi na socruithe a tugadh isteach i mí Mheán Fómhair 1997.

Education and Library Boards are obliged to provide transport assistance for those pupils who are eligible under the arrangements which were introduced in September 1997. This restricts transport provision to pupils who have been unable to gain a place in all suitable schools within statutory walking distance of their home – 2 miles for primary age pupils and 3 miles for post-primary pupils.

However, provided pupils are travelling to their nearest suitable school then Boards may provide seats for otherwise ineligible pupils on a concessionary basis. Such seats are provided only until they are required by eligible pupils, until a Board changes a route to accommodate the changing demographics of eligible pupils, or until a Board acts to ensure transport services continue to operate efficiently and economically.

Boards will not provide concessionary seats to ineligible pupils who seek to travel beyond their nearest suitable school, as to do so could have a potentially damaging effect on the viability of the nearer school.

Grammar Schools

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Education what percentage of children sitting the transfer test in 2007, from the (i) Malone Road; (ii) Kilcooley; (iii) Shankill; and (iv) Falls areas, were admitted to grammar schools. (AQO 1287/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá eolas curtha ar fáil ag Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste agus an Oirdheiscirt maidir leis na bunscoileanna a dhéanann freastal go tradisiúnta ar cheantar Bhóthar Mhaigh Luain, ar cheantar Chill Chúile, ar cheantar na Seancille agus na bhFál.

The Belfast and South-Eastern Education and Library Boards have provided information in respect of primary schools that traditionally serve the Malone Road, Kilcooley, Shankill and Falls areas. The percentage of children sitting the transfer test in 2007 in these schools who were subsequently admitted to grammar schools is as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| (i) Malone Road | 95% (214 of 225 pupils who sat the test) |
| (ii) Kilcooley | 0% (0 of 11 pupils who sat the test) |
| (iii) Shankill | 26% (10 of 39 pupils who sat the test) |
| (iv) Falls | 45% (49 of 108 pupils who sat the test) |

In addition, only 16 out of 79 pupils who sat the transfer test (which equates to 20%) in primary schools serving the New Lodge area secured a grammar school place.

Post-Primary Transfer

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education what consultation she has had with the CCEA on the proposed interim post-primary transfer test. (AQO 1238/09)

The Minister of Education: Ó choimisiúnaíodh CCEA, ar 14 Bealtaine 2008, chun teist a fhorbairt, bhí mo chuid oifigeach i dteagmháil rialta le hoifigigh CCEA ar réimse saincheisteanna a bhaineann leis an choimisiúnú.

Since commissioning CCEA, on 14 May 2008, to develop a test, my officials have been in regular contact with CCEA officials on a range of issues related to the commission. In particular, consultation has taken place on procurement, contractual and costing issues, on a detailed schedule for rigorous test development including extensive trialling and also a specification for test development has been agreed.

Traveller Children

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Education what action her Department is taking to ensure that Traveller children receive a fair and equal education. (AQO 1286/09)

The Minister of Education: Bíonn deacrachtaí ag páistí den Lucht Siúil ina n-oideachas, amhail leibhéil freastail agus gnóthachtála atá níos ísle ná an meánleibhéal; eispéireas diúltach ar an scoil; mí-oiriúnacht idir ábharthacht an churaclaim iar-bhunscoile agus a stíl mhaireachtála; traidisiún agus stíl mhaireachtála gluaiseachta; agus leatrom ón phobal socraithe.

Traveller children experience difficulties in their education such as lower than average levels of attendance and achievement; negative experience of school; a misfit between the relevance of the post-primary curriculum and their lifestyle; a tradition and lifestyle of movement; and discrimination from the settled community.

My Department is working on a number of fronts to address these issues.

I have established a Taskforce for Traveller Education with membership from the Traveller community, and from government departments and voluntary agencies both north and south. The first meeting took place on Monday 10 November. I believe this Taskforce will be a catalyst for real and lasting change in the area of education for children from the Traveller community.

I want the Taskforce to explore and understand the educational issues that are important to Travellers and to use that knowledge to assist my Department to develop an action plan on Traveller education that will improve educational outcomes.

As a starting point, we need more education related data on Travellers to establish a baseline and set targets that can be measured. My Department is carrying out an additional data gathering exercise in conjunction with Classroom 2000 to collate data on attendance and achievement. Analysis of this information together with data on type of accommodation and special educational needs will assist the Taskforce in establishing the baseline position.

In addition, my Department is organising, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science, a conference of best practice in the education of Traveller children in March 2009. The published report of the conference will inform the development of specific objectives and targets in the Department's action plan.

Draft guidance to schools on issues which impact on the education of Traveller children such as inclusion and diversity, the revised curriculum, management of attendance, home-school links, bullying, the recording of information and partnership working will be issued for consultation in the near future.

A good education is a key element in determining life chances. I hope through these elements of research, the sharing of best practice and the recommendations of the Taskforce, we will be able to raise educational standards to ensure Traveller children, like all children, have the best possible chance to reach their full potential.

Irish Language

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Education if her Department encourages the inclusion of the Irish language as a subject on the curriculum of post-primary schools. (AQO 1273/09)

The Minister of Education: Aithnim an tábhacht a bhaineann le foghlaim teanga dár ndaoine óga, ar bhonn áitiúil agus ar bhonn domhanda.

I recognise the importance of language learning for our young people, on both a local and global basis. I am currently awaiting the recommendations from the Universities' Joint Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies which will inform a strategic approach to language learning at all levels, and will also look specifically at the indigenous languages here, including Irish.

At post-primary level languages are part of the statutory revised curriculum at Key Stage 3 for all pupils, and schools must offer pupils access to language courses at Key Stage 4. Under the revised curriculum schools also have greater flexibility in the languages they offer. This can be any official language of the EU member states, which includes Irish, and any other additional languages.

My Department supports and encourages the delivery of all languages in schools and, in relation to Irish, has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish medium education and has duties under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

To address a gap, the Department has provided support for Irish resources in post-primary schools to ensure schools are able to deliver the subject of Irish language.

I also believe that learning a language from an early age means that young people can develop a lifelong enjoyment of languages. The peripatetic programme I introduced for primary schools last year will allow young people to learn Irish, among other languages, from an early stage in primary school, which they can then build on at post-primary school.

Primary Schools

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what action she will take against primary schools that are preparing pupils for tests as opposed to teaching the curriculum. (AQO 1310/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá dualgas reachtúil ar bhunscoileanna an curaclam athbheithnithe a sheachadadh agus tá freagracht dhleathach mhóralta acu dá ndaltaí i dtús báire, ar neamhaird le haon bhrú a d'fhéadfaí bheith orthu le socrúithe eile a dhéanamh.

Primary schools have a statutory duty to deliver the revised curriculum and have a legal and moral responsibility first and foremost towards their pupils, regardless of any pressure they may come under to make other provisions. My Department has recently 350,000 leaflets to schools across the North, providing details of the revised curriculum and associated assessment and reporting arrangements. These are going to every family which has a child in a primary or post-primary school.

No post-primary school can oblige a primary school to assist in the preparation of pupils for any particular feature of its admissions process. If a complaint brought forward in relation to any individual school through the Curriculum Complaints Tribunal process is upheld, and remedial action not taken as a result, the matter may be referred to the Department of Education which may result in the issue of a direction requiring that school to comply with its statutory duties.

'Every School a Good School' Consultation Document

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Education what are the policy objectives of her current consultation document 'Every School a Good School'. (AQO 1280/09)

The Minister of Education: Cé go mbíonn caighdeán arda san iomad scoileanna anseo, tá i bhfad barraíocht páistí ann go fóill a bhíonn ag streachailt le léitheoireacht, scríbhneoireacht agus matamaitic agus tá barraíocht daoine óga ann a fhágann an scoil gan scoileanna agus gan mhuinín sna réimsí seo.

While standards are high in many schools here, there are still far too many children who struggle with reading, writing and using mathematics and too many young people who leave school still lacking in skills and confidence in these areas. No child should move into their teenage years and on into adulthood unable to read, write or work with numbers.

The aim of 'Every School a Good School: A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy' therefore is to raise standards in literacy and numeracy through learning and teaching strategies designed to help young people acquire and develop core literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently they can then benefit from the educational and other opportunities encountered in the years of formal education and beyond and contribute positively as adults to society.

The strategy is designed to work in conjunction with other strategies, particularly the new school improvement policy to:

- Raise the levels of attainment for all young people in literacy and numeracy;

- Narrow the current gaps in relation to the outcomes achieved between those most and least disadvantaged;
- Narrow the gap between the highest performing and lowest performing pupils and schools, after 12 years of compulsory education.

The measure of its success will be whether the numbers of young people who reach or exceed the expected standards at KS1-3 and, ultimately, GCSE A*-C level increase.

Modern Language Teaching

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education what discussions she is having with schools and teacher training providers to build the capacity for modern language teaching in (i) initial teacher training; and (ii) in-service development for existing teachers, in primary schools. (AQO 1305/09)

The Minister of Education: Tá mé ag súil le moltaí a fháil ar ball ón chomhLárionad Ábhair um Theangacha, Theangeolaíocht agus Staidéir Ceantair de chuid Ollscoil na Banríona Bhéal Feirste agus Ollscoil Uladh maidir le cur chuige straitéiseach i leith foghlama teanga ag gach leibhéal, lena n-áirítear foráil bunscoile.

I am expecting to receive recommendations shortly from the joint Queen's University Belfast-University of Ulster Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies on a strategic approach to language learning at all levels, including primary provision. This will inform the discussions which will follow between the Department, schools and teacher training providers about modern language teaching.

In the meantime, the Department is working with its education partners to look at ways of providing continuing professional development in modern languages for primary teachers.

In addition, teachers in those primary schools opting in to the primary languages programme which I introduced last year will also benefit from training and support, provided through the Education and Library Boards, in relation to teaching languages at primary level.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Courses in Building Trades

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of people (i) enrolled in courses; and (ii) who have successfully completed courses in (a) plumbing; (b) plastering; and (c) bricklaying, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2315/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): Due to differences in collection methodologies, data regarding enrolments/completions are presented separately for mainstream Further Education provision and Government training.

The following table details the number of student enrolments and completions on mainstream Further Education courses in a) plumbing; (b) plastering; and (c) bricklaying, from 2002/03 to 2006/07.

| Academic Year | Enrolments | | | Final year completers | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Plumbing | Plastering | Bricklaying | Plumbing | Plastering | Bricklaying |
| 2002/03 | 386 | 9 | 281 | 181 | - | 140 |
| 2003/04 | 181 | 57 | 289 | 89 | 6 | 115 |
| 2004/05 | 226 | 61 | 262 | 93 | 3 | 114 |
| 2005/06 | 379 | 26 | 338 | 215 | 20 | 193 |
| 2006/07 | 765 | 38 | 602 | 549 | 29 | 485 |

Data Sources: Further Education Statistical Record and Further Education Leavers Survey Note: Some courses are run over more than one academic year. In addition, enrolment and completer data in FE colleges are not tracked by cohorts. Therefore, in the above table enrolments and completers are not directly comparable.

The tables below indicate the number of trainee (plumbing, plastering and bricklaying) starts, the number of achievers and the relevant percentage achievement rate at NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 in the past five years. These figures reflect activity on the Traineeship and Modern Apprentice provision of the Jobskills Programme.

The achievement rates shown are typical within this particular range of occupational areas. There are many reasons for the lower or higher achievement rates within certain industrial sectors. For instance the retention rates (i.e. trainees remaining on a programme) for those within the building trades is generally much lower than in engineering trades. The technical focus within the engineering discipline and the higher entry qualifications relevant for apprentice plumbers may be a contributory factor for the higher retention and achievement in this area.

Data for the Training for Success 2007 cohort have not been included as there has been insufficient time for completion of training which normally takes two years for these occupational areas.

TRAINEESHIP NVQ LEVEL 2

| Cohort Year | Plumbing | | | Plastering | | | Bricklaying | | |
|-------------|----------|-----------|----|------------|-----------|----|-------------|-----------|----|
| | Starts | Achievers | % | Starts | Achievers | % | Starts | Achievers | % |
| 2002/03 | 283 | 223 | 79 | 1057 | 539 | 51 | 309 | 152 | 49 |
| 2003/04 | 383 | 269 | 70 | 1131 | 629 | 56 | 334 | 188 | 56 |
| 2004/05 | 398 | 286 | 72 | 1113 | 576 | 52 | 407 | 187 | 46 |
| 2005/06 | 316 | 223 | 71 | 1173 | 665 | 57 | 429 | 239 | 56 |
| 2006/07 | 360 | 249 | 69 | 1271 | 749 | 59 | 415 | 241 | 58 |

MODERN APPRENTICESHIP NVQ LEVEL 3

| Cohort Year | Plumbing | | | Plastering | | | Bricklaying | | |
|-------------|----------|-----------|----|------------|-----------|----|-------------|-----------|----|
| | Starts | Achievers | % | Starts | Achievers | % | Starts | Achievers | % |
| 2002/03 | 179 | 123 | 69 | 412 | 216 | 52 | 97 | 34 | 35 |
| 2003/04 | 241 | 179 | 74 | 470 | 264 | 56 | 125 | 60 | 48 |
| 2004/05 | 276 | 205 | 74 | 483 | 267 | 55 | 120 | 47 | 39 |
| 2005/06 | 315 | 216 | 69 | 491 | 278 | 57 | 126 | 48 | 38 |
| 2006/07 | 222 | 36 | 16 | 530 | 144 | 27 | 119 | 28 | 24 |

Data Source: Client Management System

Note: Unlike Further Education, starts and achievers data are tracked by cohorts. Therefore, in the above two tables starts and achievers are comparable. However, it should be noted that for 2006/07 many starts are still due to complete their programme of study.

Projects in the Lagan Valley

Mr Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what projects in the Lagan Valley constituency (i) his Department delivered in 2007-08; and (ii) are due to commence in 2008-09. (AQW 2335/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has delivered, and is delivering, a number of projects in the Lagan Valley constituency.

The Department's Employment Service has introduced a number of initiatives within its network of Jobs and Benefits offices/Jobcentres, including Pathways to Work. Lisburn Jobs & Benefits Office is the most successful of the four offices in Northern Ireland that have been piloting, since January 2007, a new initiative offering Pathways to Work for Lone Parents. Over 150 Lone Parents have been helped to find work in the Lisburn area by this initiative.

The Department has supported projects in Lagan Valley under European funding programmes Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) and the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2007-13.

Under BSP, the “Childcare Solutions” project undertaken by Employers for Childcare in Moira received a total of £2,209,000 between June 2002 and May 2008, of which European funding (65%) was £1,436,000. In 2007/2008, this project was offered European funding of £66,000 (65%) against a total spend of £101,000.

The “Coach-ability (NI)” project run by Dering Employment Service in Lisburn commenced on 1 April 2008. Total spend in 2008/09 is estimated at £76,000, of which ESF funding will be £30,000 (40%). DEL is contributing a further £19,000 (25%) and the remaining match funding is £27,000 (35%), which I understand is being provided by the project itself.

Another project, which received £263,000 from my Department, is “Bytes”, which has centres throughout Northern Ireland, including Lagan Valley. The project provides opportunities in an informal setting for young people to accelerate their own personal development through the creative and enjoyable use of technology. The project also assists young people to achieve their full potential, through progression to further education, training, or employment. In addition, there were two projects within Lagan Valley funded under Bridge to Employment—one received £9,650 in 2007/08 and another is expected to receive £11,000 in 2008/09.

Finally, turning to the further education side, the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) signed contracts in April 2008 on a new-build, £20m FE campus for Lisburn. This 15,000m² campus is targeted for completion by April 2010, and the PFI contract will then provide a fully maintained and serviced facility for 25 years.

Three proposals submitted by SERC have also been approved under the Further Education Innovation Fund, and will impact on enterprise development, incubation and innovation in Lagan Valley, and will help local businesses increase energy efficiency.

In addition, further education colleges are in the process of awarding contracts to third party organisations for the provision of learner support under the Learner Access and Engagement project. SERC’s tender included a contract for employment-related FE provision covering the Lisburn City Council Area.

Teacher Training

Mr McClarty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students received initial teacher training at (i) the University of Ulster; and (ii) the Open University, in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 2354/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Enrolments on initial teacher training courses at (i) the University of Ulster and (ii) the Open University in each of the last 5 years are shown in the table below:

| | University of Ulster | Open University |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 2002/03 | 200 | 25 |
| 2003/04 | 200 | 35 |
| 2004/05 | 190 | 50 |
| 2005/06 | 185 | 5 |
| 2006/07 | 180 | 35 |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2006/07.
- (3) Data on enrolments are not mutually exclusive and therefore students may be included in more than one year.
- (4) The figure for the Open University is particularly low in 2005/06 as the vast majority of initial teacher training students were recorded as ‘student has suspended studies’ and so were not included in the enrolments population in this year.

Projects in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the projects in the North Down constituency (i) his Department has delivered in 2007-08; and (ii) are due to commence in 2008-09.

(AQW 2387/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has delivered, and is delivering, a number of projects in the North Down constituency.

On the Skills side of the Department's work, in 2007/08 funding of just over £16,000 was directed towards Management Development programmes to help companies in North Down. Some 12 companies participated in four programmes: Management Analysis and Planning; the Management and Leadership Development Programme; INTRO; and Investors in People. In 2008/09, it is expected that funding of £9,665 will be provided to nine companies in North Down on the same four programmes.

Also on the Skills side, a Software Professional course in North Down received £91,000 in 2007/08 under Critical Sector Initiatives. Further Departmental funding of £124,300 for the same project is anticipated in 2008/09.

From the European Social Fund (ESF), the Department provided support to enable the delivery of one project in the North Down Constituency during 2007-2008 and one project during 2008-09. In 2007/08, Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland were supported under the ESF Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme 2000-2006 to fund their 'Environmental Employment Skills' project. Total funding of £136,126 was offered for the period 1 April 2006-31 March 2008, of which 65% was ESF and 35% was match funding provided by Conservation Volunteers.

In 2008/09, Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland again received support, this time for their 'Training for Employment' Project under the Northern Ireland ESF Programme 2007-2013. The total cost for the project is anticipated to be £333,273 over the three-year period 1 April 2008-31 March 2010. The Department has offered funding of £216,628, comprising ESF (40%) and DEL (25%) contributions. The remaining 35% of costs will be provided by Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland.

Finally, turning to the further education side, in 2007-08 DEL funded £120,000 of health and safety capital works at the Bangor campus of the South Eastern Regional College (SERC). In 2008-09, DEL is providing £1m towards the advanced works for the development of a £13m Performing Arts, Technology and Innovation Centre, also in Bangor.

Public Appointments

Ms Purvis asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail, for each of the last 3 financial years, (i) all public appointments filled by his Department; (ii) public appointments still outstanding; and (iii) the grounds on which some appointments were not made; for his assessment of (a) the process adopted for public appointments; and (b) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance; and what action he is taking to ensure more efficient application of the procedures. (AQW 2426/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Annex A details the public appointments made by my Department in the last three financial years.

At 12 November 2008, my Department had 27 outstanding public appointments. Details of these appointments and the grounds for their being outstanding are attached at Annex B.

My Department follows the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice for all public appointments. The DEL Public Appointments Unit regularly revisits internal procedures to take account of issues emanating from the Commissioner's Annual Report and Audit Reports of specific competitions. In addition, the Unit is currently carrying out a full internal review to ensure that all public appointments competitions are carried out in line both with best practice and with the OCPANI Code.

Further Education Colleges

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprentices from further education colleges have been made redundant during (i) 2007/2007 and (ii) 2008/2009, academic years. (AQW 2453/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The following information has been collated directly from the FE Colleges:

| FE College | Redundancies from Sept 2007 – Oct 2008 (surveyed in October 2008) | Redundancies from Sept 2008 – Nov 2008 (surveyed in November 2008) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Belfast Metropolitan College | 23 | 8 |
| Northern West Regional College | 33 | 7 |
| Northern Regional College | 106 | 3 |
| South Eastern Regional College | 16 | 24 |
| South West College | 40 | 64 |
| Southern Regional College | 12 | 10 |
| Total | 230 | 116 |

John Luke Mural

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1923/08, what action has been taken by (i) Belfast Metropolitan College; and (ii) his Department, to bring the John Luke mural back into public ownership and make it accessible to the public. (AQW 2539/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Having had to concede ownership of the John Luke mural, Belfast Metropolitan College has not been in a position to bring it back into public ownership. The College did engage legal advisors and legal Council to defend claims of ownership by Eastwoods (Demolition Contractor) and the advice was that the College would not win the case.

John Luke Mural

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1923/08 (i) what consideration was given to the future of the John Luke mural during negotiations about the redevelopment of Belfast Metropolitan College at Millfield; (ii) what reference was there to the mural in the contract with the developer; and (iii) when was the contract with the developer signed. (AQW 2540/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The College commissioned an engineering appraisal for the removal and safe transfer of the mural to the Ulster Museum. The cost was estimated to be £350,000. The College made application to the Lottery Fund for funding but the application was unsuccessful.

The contractual documents with Northwin stated that the John Luke Mural was “to be retained for removal by others.”

The Public Private Partnership contract was signed at July 2000.

John Luke Mural

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1923/08 (i) when the mural was painted by John Luke; (ii) who commissioned the mural; and (iii) what fee was paid to the artist and by whom. (AQW 2541/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The mural was painted by John Luke between 1963 and 1964. It was never actually finished and remained uncompleted at the time of John Luke’s death in 1975. Belfast City Council commissioned a number of murals; one of which was for the Belfast Institute. No fee was paid by the College. The College has no information whether the City Council paid John Luke.

John Luke Mural

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1923/08, did Belfast Metropolitan College (i) obtain a valuation and, if so, what this was; and (ii) seek legal advice about the disposal of the John Luke mural prior to signing the contract for the redevelopment of the Millfield complex. (AQW 2543/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Sotheby's of London valued the mural at £20,000.

No legal advice was sought prior to the signing of the contract as the proposal, at that time, was to donate the mural to the Ulster Museum.

John Luke Mural

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1923/08, (i) did the board of governors discuss the future of the John Luke mural, at any of their meetings; and if so, what were the dates of those meetings; (ii) who was the director during the negotiations of the contract for the redevelopment of the Millfield complex; and (iii) who was the chairman of the Board of Governors during the negotiation of the contract. (AQW 2545/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Belfast Metropolitan College has confirmed that the mural was discussed at the Governing Body and Committee meetings on a number of occasions. The dates of these meetings were:

- 21/11/05 Finance & General Purposes Committee
- 28/11/05 Governing Body
- 26/11/06 Finance & GP Committee
- 13/02/06 Governing Body
- 04/05/06 Finance & GP Committee

The Director of Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education at the time of the negotiations of the Public Private Partnership contract was Dr Patrick Murphy.

The Public Private Partnership contract was signed at July 2000. During the contract negotiations, Mr R T Jordan was Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Projects in Mid-Ulster

Mr I McCreagh asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the projects in the Mid-Ulster constituency that; (i) his Department delivered in 2007-08; and (ii) are due to commence in 2008-09. (AQW 2580/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has delivered, and is delivering, a number of projects in the Mid-Ulster constituency.

On the Skills side of the Department's work, in 2007/08 funding of £44,298 was directed towards Management Development programmes to help companies in Mid-Ulster. Some 15 companies participated in four programmes: Management Analysis and Planning; the Management and Leadership Development Programme; INTRO; and Investors in People Assessments. In 2008/09, it is expected that funding of £40,084 will be provided to 33 companies in Mid-Ulster on the same programmes and also another programme, Investors in People Contracts.

From the European Social Fund (ESF), the Department provided support to enable the delivery of one project in the Mid-Ulster Constituency during 2007-2008 and two projects during 2008-09.

In 2007/08, First Steps Women's Group were supported under the ESF Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme 2000-2006 to fund their 'A Future in Childcare' project. Total funding of £176,260 was offered for the period 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2008, of which 65% was ESF and 35% match funding provided by First Steps Women's Group and South West College.

For 2008/09, First Steps Women's Group has also been offered support for their 'Women Towards Greater Education and Employment' (WTGE&E) project under the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF)

Programme 2007-2013. Total cost for the WTGE&E Project is £1,199,190 over the three-year period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011. The Department offered funding of £779,477 comprising ESF (40%) and the DEL contribution (25%). The remaining 35% match funding will be provided by the Department for Social Development and Surestart.

Also in 2008/09, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council has been offered support for their Skills, Education, Employment, Knowledge (SEEK) project under the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2007–2013. Total costs for the SEEK project is £459,196 over the three-year period 1 April 2008-31 March 2011. The Department offered funding of £298,471 (40% ESF and 25% DEL contribution). The remaining 35% match funding will be provided by Dungannon & South Tyrone Council and the South West College (SWC).

Turning to the further education side, Northern Regional College (NRC) and SWC both have college campuses in the Mid-Ulster constituency. DEL provided funding of £2.7m in 2007/08 for unitary payments under a Public Private partnership contract for the Dungannon campus of SWC, and a further £2.7m will be paid in 2008/09. In addition, DEL provided £40,000 of capital funding in 2007/08 for the Magherafelt campus of NRC, with a further £3,000 provided for 2008/09.

Proposals submitted by NRC and SWC have also been approved under the Further Education Innovation Fund. These proposals include: training and placement of lecturers with local companies; training lecturing staff to help them develop the entrepreneurial skills of their students; improving cross-border co-operation in supporting industry and local enterprise; providing industry linked research and development services, innovation support and bespoke training; and helping to promote the STEM agenda.

In addition, further education colleges are in the process of awarding contracts to third party organisations for the provision of learner support under the Learner Access and Engagement project. These contracts are expected to commence by December 2008.

Finally, both colleges are involved in initiatives in the local area. For example, throughout 2007/08 NRC worked in partnership with Magherafelt District Council to support local manufacturing companies by developing induction and health and safety materials for manufacturing businesses and farmers. NRC will continue to work with local businesses to provide skills training in 2008/09.

In 2008, SWC launched a new National Diploma in Civil Engineering, in partnership with the NI Quarry Producers' Association. The programme is designed to develop technicians for this industry from the Mid Ulster Area.

Other examples of initiatives by SWC include:

- SWC, in partnership with Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council, is investigating the feasibility of a district heating scheme using biomass;
- SWC has a dedicated Business Innovation Centre in the Dungannon campus providing direct innovation support to companies in the mid-Ulster area;
- SWC is currently providing direct support to business in mid-Ulster through the Invest Northern Ireland innovation voucher scheme. This scheme enables SMEs to access tailored training and technical services from the College to the value of £4,000 to assist with small development and business growth projects;
- Through the HE/FE Collaboration fund, SWC is working with the two NI universities and local companies to facilitate the transfer of knowledge of the latest research and technology processes into the local industry base; and
- SWC works closely with the Local Enterprise Agencies in the Mid-Ulster area and has recently submitted a joint tender bid with these agencies for delivery of the new Invest Northern Ireland small business support programme.

Department's Staff Annual Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many staff in his Department did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in the last reporting year. (AQW 2678/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: Unacceptable performance, in accordance with the NICS Performance Management Policy and Guidelines is indicated by a Box marking 4 or 5. The last full reporting year for performance management is the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. For this reporting year, one employee in the Department for Employment and Learning achieved a Box 4 marking.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if full-time courses are provided at the Gerald Moag Campus of the Belfast Metropolitan College; and in which parliamentary constituency the centre is located. (AQW 2683/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: A range of full-time courses are offered at the Gerald Moag Campus of Belfast Metropolitan College.

The Gerald Moag campus is located in the Belfast West parliamentary constituency.

Tuition Fees

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration he has given to variable university tuition fees for different subjects, to encourage uptake in key economic areas. (AQW 2707/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: In terms of my Department prescribing lower tuition fees to encourage the uptake of subjects in key economic areas, this is not an option as we would be ultra vires in doing so. Article 4 of the Higher Education Order (which facilitates variable fees) places restrictions on the Department's powers to discriminate, in terms of fee levels, between different courses on the basis of the area of study.

I am, however, keen to examine the recommendations of the forthcoming STEM Review to see how my Department can work with our universities and businesses to incentivise students to study subjects which are economically relevant.

In addition, the 300 additional PhDs which my Department is funding until 2011 will all be in areas which are economically relevant.

Tuition Fees

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration he has given to introducing lower tuition fees for STEM subjects to encourage the uptake of these subjects at universities. (AQW 2708/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: In terms of my Department prescribing lower tuition fees to encourage the uptake of subjects in key economic areas, this is not an option as we would be ultra vires in doing so. Article 4 of the Higher Education Order (which facilitates variable fees) places restrictions on the Department's powers to discriminate, in terms of fee levels, between different courses on the basis of the area of study.

I am, however, keen to examine the recommendations of the forthcoming STEM Review to see how my Department can work with our universities and businesses to incentivise students to study subjects which are economically relevant.

In addition, the 300 additional PhDs which my Department is funding until 2011 will all be in areas which are economically relevant.

Further Education Colleges

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to give an assurance that apprentices who lose their jobs will not have to withdraw from their Further Education college course. (AQW 2709/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has evidence of over 300 apprentices at the six FE Colleges being made redundant, with the majority of these people working in construction training.

In light of this situation, 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 initially be introduced 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.

Calcast Ltd

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department is taking to assist employees facing redundancy at Calcast Ltd. in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 2763/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department will assist individuals to find alternative employment.

Arrangements have been made for officials to meet with the management of Calcast Ltd on Wednesday 26th November at 11.00am to outline what services can be provided.

The Department, in partnership with the Social Security Agency and other organisations, will provide advice on employment opportunities, job search, training and education opportunities, careers advice and benefits advice.

Some of these services can be provided initially on site if agreed with the management and workers and be continued as and when employees present to their local Job & Benefits offices.

Sector Skills Councils

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if all Sector Skills Councils will have achieved their sector skills agreements by December 2008. (AQO 1214/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: To date, 23 of the 25 Sector Skills Councils have achieved their Sector Skills Agreements. Work is underway by the other two Councils with the aim of achieving their Agreements by the end of 2008.

'C'mon Over' Campaign

Mr McFarland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the success of the 'C'mon Over' campaign. (AQO 1252/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The 'C'Mon Over' campaign has raised the awareness of employment opportunities in Northern Ireland through the use of Facebook (which now has 540 fans, the majority of which are in the 25-34 age range), an on-line advertising campaign and a presence at a number of graduate fairs in Scotland, the North of England and Dublin. These fairs, which together attracted nearly 18,000 students, were supported by Citi, NYSE Euronext Advanced Trading Solutions, Radox, Liberty IT, Kainos, Abacus Professional Recruitment and Blueprint Appointments.

The majority of those people who were surveyed expressed an interest in the job opportunities available in Northern Ireland.

Publication of the Careers Strategy

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide a timescale for the publication of the Careers Strategy. (AQO 1243/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department and the Department of Education have prepared and agreed the content of the joint Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy and Implementation Plan. Subject to the agreement of the Minister of Education it is our intention to present the Strategy and Implementation Plan for Executive approval when circumstances allow.

TWL Headquarters

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to explain why casual callers to TWL Headquarters in England seeking information on TWL in Northern Ireland on 29 September 2008 were unable to be given contact details of TWL premises; and why callers were provided with the mobile number of a TWL employee in Northern Ireland who could only provide information up to the award of Steps 2 Work contracts. (AQO 1296/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: In accordance with the conditions of the contract award letter to TWL, the company was providing services from 29 September.

To ensure that casual callers to the TWL Headquarters in England received the most up to date information regarding the organisation's Steps to Work provision in Northern Ireland, TWL Senior Management viewed it appropriate that these callers should be referred to the dedicated mobile number of the TWL's Northern Ireland Head of Operations while British Telecom installed all the necessary telephone lines.

Apprenticeships

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given the difficulties with finding places for apprenticeships, to outline his plans to address these issues through job centres and schemes that are in place to encourage these types of opportunities. (AQO 1223/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: On 11th November 2008, I made a statement to the Assembly in which I outlined plans to engage with Sector Skills Councils and employers, with a view to encouraging "foster employers" for any apprentices who have been made redundant in the construction, motor vehicle, and engineering industries. I also outlined plans to enable unemployed apprentices in these occupational areas to continue with training through Further Education Colleges and under the Department's Steps to Work initiative.

In my statement and in our work with the Sector Skills Councils, I and the Department are appealing to employers to continue to invest in training and staff development so that they are in a ready and competitive position for the inevitable upturn in the economy, when it comes.

Additionally, the Department has already rolled out an employer-focussed advertising campaign, to raise awareness of the importance of investing in apprentices in order to better raise skills levels for industry.

Teacher Training

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans he has to conduct an inquiry into the six year delay in the production of the Review of Teacher Training to determine what failures occurred in the management of the Review and the lessons that can be learned. (AQO 1289/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: It had been hoped to publish the review shortly after the conference in 2005. However, this coincided with the announcements on the Review of Public Administration and the Independent Strategic Review of Education undertaken by Sir George Bain. These significant policy issues and matters relating to the development of a new funding model for the University Colleges needed to be reflected in the final document. As this was a joint review between the Department of Education and my Department, any inquiry into the delay to determine what lessons can be learned would need to be agreed between both Departments.

Rates of Undergraduate Retention

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how the rates of undergraduate retention at Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster compare to the United Kingdom average. (AQO 1246/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: The non-continuation rates for full-time undergraduate entrants in 2005/06 at Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster and the UK are given in the table below: -

| | Non-continuation rate |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Queen's University Belfast | 7.9% |
| University of Ulster | 15.5% |
| UK average | 9.9% |

Source: 2006/07 Performance Indicators, Higher Education Statistics Agency

Vocational Career Choices

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how careers advisors gain knowledge and experience to enable them to offer advice on vocational career choices, particularly within the traditional trades. (AQO 1229/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department's Careers Advisers are professionally qualified from NVQ Level 4 to Masters level in the delivery of information, advice and guidance. Their knowledge and experience on vocational career choices is enhanced through attendance at Professional Development days. Close liaison with the Sector Skills Councils including Construction Skills ensures access to up-to-date labour market information. Advisers also carry out individual research and regular employer visits.

Construction Industry

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he is taking to support people that have lost their jobs in the construction industry. (AQO 1254/09)

The Minister for Employment and Learning: A comprehensive range of services is available through my Department's network of 35 Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentres and through contracted Providers to help the unemployed find work including those formerly in the construction industry. The services include mandatory work-focused interviews; action planning for certain clients and measures designed to improve the job prospects for those who have become unemployed.

In particular, the Department has recently rolled out the Steps to Work initiative, which will provide a flexible approach to the use of its adult return to work provision. In effect, this will allow this provision to be tailored appropriately to each individual's needs in helping to overcome their barriers to returning to employment.

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Wind Farms

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how the per kWh subsidy paid to wind farms compares with that paid in the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 2251/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The answer assumes the question refers to large-scale onshore wind, and gives a response in subsidy per MWh as the standard metric. It is also difficult to make a direct comparison.

The Republic of Ireland announced feed-in tariff rates for large-scale onshore wind in 2006 of €57 per MWh. The Department of Energy and Natural Resources in the Republic of Ireland advise that a 4% compound annual up-rate applies, giving a 2008 figure of €61.65 or around £52.25 (as at 13th November 2008): this represents the full amount that the wind farm generator would receive for the electricity.

In the UK, the picture is more complex under the Renewables Obligation regimes. Here the nominal value of a Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) is equivalent to the buy-out price plus money recycled from the ROC buy-out fund. For example, for 2007/08 the buyout price was set at £34.30 and the recycled payments from the buyout fund were £18.59. So the nominal value of a ROC for 2007/08 was £52.89 per MWh.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the Northern Ireland wind farm generator receives this full amount. In fact, generators may not get the full value of the ROC, as this will be subject to negotiations with the supplier. While generators will want to receive at least the buyout price for their ROC, and gain as much of a share of the benefit from the additional recycling of the buyout fund as possible, suppliers will want to retain as much of the recycled buyout fund for their ROC as possible (and at least to cover their costs). The final price will therefore depend on the relative strengths of the generators and the suppliers exactly what proportion is passed through. In addition to ROCs, wind farm generators will get an additional price for the electricity which here in Northern Ireland would be the Single Electricity Market pool price. Some generators sell their ROCs and electricity together, whilst others will prefer to sell separately.

Tourism Ireland

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the work her Department has carried out in the last year to improve the way in which Tourism Ireland markets Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. (AQW 2314/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Officials from my Department meet regularly with Tourism Ireland (TIL) to discuss the marketing of Northern Ireland as a Tourist destination in Great Britain and international markets. These meetings include reviewing targets and discussing various marketing campaigns and the focus and emphasis of each.

It is clear that Northern Ireland features prominently across all markets in TIL's extensive destination marketing programme. In addition, the organisation carries out specific campaigns and activities focusing exclusively on Northern Ireland, particularly in Great Britain, and in markets with direct access services. This serves to raise awareness of, and interest in, Northern Ireland as a holiday destination by focusing on the diversity of things to see and do, on Signature Projects and Winning Themes, and on the diversity of things to see and do throughout Northern Ireland.

Tourism Ireland's strategy of stimulating demand from key markets and segments has been shown to be effective in recent years. For 2009 this strategy will be refined to meet the challenges presented by the new economic realities in our key source markets. My officials will continue to work with TIL to maximise effectiveness and to ensure that TIL continues to play its key part in contributing to the achievement of the ambitious targets included in the Programme for Government to grow visitor numbers and revenue in Northern Ireland.

Tourism Ireland

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the way in which Tourism Ireland has marketed Northern Ireland as a tourist destination, over the last 3 years. (AQW 2316/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I believe there is room for improvement in the way that Tourism Ireland markets Northern Ireland. There continues to be an increase in the number of tourists coming to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland attracted almost 1.8 million overseas visitors during 2007 – an additional 83,000 compared to 2006 and an increase of 4.9%. Particularly welcome also was the very substantial growth in holidaymakers from all market areas including Great Britain (+34%), North America (+25%), Mainland Europe (+42%) and Other Areas (+10%).

Tourism Ireland features Northern Ireland across all markets in its destination marketing programme. In addition, it carries out specific campaigns and activities focusing exclusively on Northern Ireland, particularly in Great Britain and in markets with direct access services. This serves to raise awareness of, and interest in, Northern Ireland as a holiday destination by focusing on the diversity of things to see and do, on Signature Projects and Winning Themes, and on the diversity of things to see and do throughout Northern Ireland.

Tourism is now one of the most important indigenous industries in Northern Ireland and it is vital that we consolidate and build on this position next year and beyond, despite global challenges.

Orange Order

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the working relationship between (i) the Northern Ireland Tourist Board; and (ii) Tourism Ireland, with the Orange Order; and if these bodies have worked with the Orange Order to maximise its tourism potential. (AQW 2327/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Both the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland are in regular contact with representatives of the Loyal Orders to see how events like the Twelfth of July parades can be developed as tourist attractions.

NITB worked with the Orange Order to help broaden the appeal of this year's Twelfth of July demonstrations and identified four "flagship" parades, Belfast, Tandragee, Dromara and Coleraine as having the most potential to appeal to visitors. NITB provided Welcome Host training for stewards at these parades.

Tourism Ireland also helped raise the profile of this year's parades. For example the Tourism Ireland website carried a link direct to the BBC's live coverage of the Twelfth.

I understand that considerable interest was generated and am optimistic that such events have the potential to make a real contribution to the Northern Ireland tourism product.

Energy From Waste Facility

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if Arc 21's proposal for an Energy From Waste facility is compatible with the need to diversify energy supplies and encourage renewable energy generation. (AQW 2362/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I understand that Arc21 manages 57% of all the municipal waste produced in Northern Ireland. The planned Energy from Waste Facility could contribute significantly to its capacity to dispose of that waste in a way that represents the best environmental and economic option for its councils and their ratepayers. The energy generated by the plant could also be supplied to the electricity grid thus contributing to the diversity of energy supply in Northern Ireland.

Generation of electricity from waste will help achieve the Programme for Government target that by 2012, at least 12% of all electricity consumed in Northern Ireland is obtained from indigenous renewable energy sources - at least 15% of which must be generated by non-wind technologies.

Public Appointments

Ms Purvis asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail, for each of the last 3 financial years, (i) all public appointments filled by her Department; (ii) public appointments still outstanding; and (iii) the grounds on which some appointments were not made; for her assessment of (a) the process adopted for public appointments; and (b) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance; and what action she is taking to ensure more efficient application of the procedures. (AQW 2428/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

(i) All public appointments filled for each of the last 3 financial years

| Year | Body | No. of Appointments |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2005/2006 | Invest NI | 1 extension, 7 reappointments, 1 appointment |
| | NI Authority for Energy Regulation | 1 reappointment |
| | Health & Safety Executive (NI) | 3 reappointments |
| | General Consumer Council | 7 appointments, 3 reappointments |
| | Northern Ireland Tourist Board | 2 appointments, 4 reappointments |
| 2006/2007 | NI Authority for Energy Regulation | 6 appointments |
| | Invest NI | 3 appointments |
| | General Consumer Council | 1 reappointment |
| | Northern Ireland Tourist Board | 1 appointment |
| | Health & Safety Executive (NI) | 5 appointments, 1 reappointment |
| 2007/2008 | NI Authority for Utility Regulation | 1 appointment |
| | NI-CO | 3 appointments |
| | General Consumer Council | 1 extension and 3 appointments |

(ii) There are no public appointments outstanding.

(iii) Not applicable.

(a) Through the application of criteria-based selection processes the Department meets the requirements of the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (OCPANI).

(b) The Department is subject to audit for compliance against the Code by OCPANI on an ongoing basis and implements recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the potential for the regulation of the prices of home-heating oil through the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation. (AQW 2437/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Regulation of the home heating oil industry is viewed as unnecessary across the United Kingdom due to the competitive nature of the industry and the fact that wholesale prices are set internationally, thus outwith the scope of the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation. The Northern Ireland oil industry is, of course, subject to UK and EU competition law and to the scrutiny of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland. Regulation would also impose additional costs on consumers.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to her answer to AQW 2059/09, in relation to the vacant premises currently rented by Invest NI at Campsie Industrial Estate on a 25-year contract, (i) why Invest NI does not possess the original copy of the leasing agreement; (ii) what has happened to Invest NI's original copy; (iii) the nature of all Invest NI and Departmental investigations into this matter; (iv) the timing and circumstances of Invest NI discovering the leasing agreement was missing; (v) the nature of any remedial or disciplinary measures that have been instituted as a result; and (vi) why Invest NI has continued to pay public money for a leasing agreement for which it does not possess an original copy. (AQW 2460/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI does hold an original copy of the leasing agreement for the unit at Campsie Industrial Estate in a secure location and also retains a copy on its file.

As is normal practice, and in line with government policy, Land and Property Services holds a master copy of the lease and provides certified copies to authenticate that the copy is in fact based upon the master. It was appropriate therefore that in its response to AQW 2059 a certified copy of the agreement was provided.

Given that Invest NI does hold an original copy of the lease, responses to parts (ii) to (vi) inclusive are not applicable.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the identity of each (i) consultant; (ii) consultancy firm; and (iii) commercial service provider, professionally engaged by Invest NI in each year for which its accounts have been audited; and to further detail (a) the amount paid in each instance; (b) the declared purpose of work in each instance; (c) the duration of engagement in each instance; and (d) any relationship between any previous or serving Invest NI Board Member, or senior staff member, with any of the specified consultants, consultancies or commercial service providers. (AQW 2461/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has no operational requirement to capture information in a way that would facilitate answering this question in the format requested, either in whole or in part. Whilst it completes an annual 'Consultancy Return' for the Department of Finance and Personnel, the definition of consultancy, and the detail required in this question, is much broader than that used for the annual return.

Detailed answers could only be provided by undertaking a major exercise to retrieve the information manually and incorporate it into the requested format. This could only be provided at a considerable disproportionate cost. It is estimated that the exercise could take in excess of 90 man days to complete and would cost a minimum of £18,000. In addition, the displacement of the specialist staff that would be required to undertake the exercise would have a negative impact on the agency's ability to fulfil its prompt payment commitments to clients and suppliers.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide a comprehensive breakdown of all taxi expenses incurred by Invest NI in each year for which its accounts have been audited, detailing (i) the identity of the officials in each instance; (ii) the departure and destination of each one-way journey; (iii) the cost in relation to each one-way journey; (iv) the identity of the taxi firm in each instance. (AQW 2463/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has no operational requirement to capture information in a way that would facilitate answering this question in the format requested, either whole or in part.

Detailed answers could only be provided by undertaking a major exercise to retrieve the information manually and incorporate it into the requested format. This could only be provided at a disproportionate cost. It is estimated that the exercise could take in excess of 20 man days to complete and would cost a minimum of £4,500. In addition, the displacement of the specialist staff that would be required to undertake the exercise would have a negative impact on the agency's ability to fulfil its prompt payment commitments to clients and suppliers.

Invest NI

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for a comprehensive list of all credit card expenses incurred by Invest NI in each year for which its accounts have been audited, detailing (i) the identity of the officials; (ii) the item paid for; (iii) the place of purchase; and (iv) the cost of each item, in each instance. (AQW 2464/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has never held or operated any corporate credit cards. All staff expenses are incurred personally and reclaimed retrospectively.

In common with many government organisations, Invest NI uses two government procurement cards. One of these is held centrally and used mainly for the payment of travel bookings under the NICS travel booking contract. It is a requirement of the contract that a government procurement card be held and used for payment. The second procurement card is held in, and used by, approved staff in Invest NI's Boston office. Again this card is not used or carried by staff members but is only used when required to secure bookings for items such as travel, accommodation and events. The cards are not used by individual staff to cover expenses.

Social Economy Enterprises

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what the estimated value of social economy enterprises is to the economy; and how this compares as a percentage of the total economy. (AQW 2472/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In July 2007 DETI published the findings of a survey undertaken to collect for the first time, information on identified social economy enterprises (SEE's) in Northern Ireland. The survey provided baseline data designed to increase understanding of the profile of SEE's and provide a basis for future monitoring of change.

The survey provided baseline data on nearly 400 enterprises with a total of 6,700 paid employees, 5,000 volunteers and turnover of just over £355million. The turnover represents approximately 1% of total economic output.

The survey database has been transferred to the Social Economy Network (NI) Ltd, the representative body of the sector in Northern Ireland, to help it grow its membership, develop products and services for its members; and to provide a basis to build and maintain a detailed database on the size and scale of the sector.

Department's Staff Annual Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many staff in her Department did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in the last reporting year. (AQW 2674/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: 3 members of staff in the Department (including 1 in the Health and Safety Executive NI) did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report in the last reporting year.

Calcast Ltd

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps her Department and Invest NI are taking to support employees facing redundancy at Calcast Ltd. in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 2760/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI are meeting senior management of Calcast/Montupet on Friday 28 November 2008.

Redundancy related issues fall within the remit of DEL.

Invest NI has been in discussions with DEL and meetings have been arranged with the company.

Invest will work with DEL to assist employees affected, particularly those wishing to consider the start a business option.

DEL, in partnership with other organisations, will provide advice on employment opportunities, job search, training and education opportunities, careers advice and benefits advice.

Calcast Ltd

Ms Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to intervene in the dispute over the notice period given to employees facing redundancy at Calcast Ltd. in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 2761/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The dispute has now been resolved to the satisfaction of both parties.

Tourism Ireland

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to attract tourists from North America in light of the global economic downturn. (AQO 1328/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Tourism Ireland has significantly increased its online presence in North America, working closely with prominent intermediaries e.g. travel and lifestyle sites, carriers and major travel partners like Amex. Their 2008 autumn programme in North America includes attendance at key consumer promotions such as the Stone Mountain Highland Games and the Stars of the South conference, running direct mail campaigns and organising trade workshops.

The current dollar/sterling exchange rate provides an opportunity to encourage more tourists from North America, but this opportunity must be weighed against low consumer confidence globally. This may have a detrimental impact on the willingness of potential tourists to spend their money.

Nevertheless, I believe that a combination of the clear strategic direction currently adopted by Tourism Ireland and a continuation of the tactical flexibility displayed this year will serve Northern Ireland well.

Small Business Rates Relief Scheme

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has held with the Minister of Finance and Personnel on a small business rates relief scheme. (AQO 1245/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Whilst the Department of Finance and Personnel has lead responsibility for rating policy matters, it consults my department regularly on matters relating to businesses. The then Minister of Finance and Personnel corresponded with my predecessor earlier this year in relation to the ERINI report which concluded that there is no justifiable economic case for a small business rate relief scheme for NI, despite such schemes existing in the rest of the UK. I understand that the Minister of Finance and Personnel will make a final decision on the matter shortly. For my Department's part, Invest NI is offering a range of well-focused interventions designed to assist small businesses weather the current economic difficulties and reach their full potential.

Finance Sector

Mr Armstrong asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she is taking to address the fall in productivity in the business service and finance sector. (AQO 1262/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Productivity has been identified as the single most important factor behind Northern Ireland's relatively low level of economic prosperity. My Department and Invest NI have therefore identified increasing private sector productivity as its top priority.

I also recognise that relative productivity in business and financial services has been falling over recent years. Much of the decline is due to the significant growth in lower paying service sector jobs in Northern Ireland.

My Department is therefore committed to do all that it can to improve productivity in key sectors such as business and financial services. That's why the Programme for Government has outlined a series of actions and stretching targets to increase innovation and exports, improve our telecoms infrastructure, promote the greater use of renewable energy and boost tourism activity in NI.

The Programme for Government also contains a commitment to attract high quality inward investment with the aim of creating jobs that offer salaries well above the private sector average wage.

All of these actions are in support of the overarching productivity goal in the Programme for Government, which aims to halve the private sector productivity gap with the UK average, excluding the Greater South East of England, by 2015.

Agriculture and Food Processing Industry

Mr Poots asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what meetings she has had with representatives of the agriculture and food processing industry, since taking up office. (AQO 1277/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Since taking up Office I have had seven meetings with representatives of the food and agriculture sectors. These included meetings with individual companies in addition to those involving a range of industry representatives, such as the Ulster Farmers Union and Dairy UK (NI), to discuss current issues facing these sectors.

I also attended a Breakfast Food Branding conference on 19 November 2008 in Craigavon, where I had the opportunity to address more than 80 food companies.

In addition to the challenges arising from the current economic climate, the agri food sector also faces a number of specific issues, including cost implications of the EU Regulatory regimes, uncertainties pending the outcome of World Trade negotiations and changes generated by the response to major sectoral reviews such as the Red Meat Industry taskforce recommendations. Consumer reaction to recent spiraling food costs places further pressures on food manufacturing companies.

I can, however, assure you that my Department, through Invest NI, is working closely with companies throughout the industry to help them to maximise business opportunities arising from both local and international markets.

Current Economic Downturn

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the ability of Northern Ireland to face the current economic downturn. (AQO 1258/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The global economy is faced with unprecedented challenges and Northern Ireland, like other regional economies, is not immune to the downturn. Official statistics from my Department indicate that certain sectors are experiencing particular difficulties. For example, construction and services are reporting declining employment and output. However, I was encouraged to note that manufacturing output in Quarter 2 of 2008 remained relatively strong.

Though I am not complacent, I believe that Northern Ireland is as well placed as any UK region to cope with the current economic downturn. We will continue to implement the actions outlined in the Programme for Government to grow a more dynamic, innovative private sector. For now, we are less exposed to the turbulence in the financial sector, given its small size locally, and our relatively large public sector should act as a stabilising influence.

Also, the 1.5% reduction in interest rates by the Bank of England, the recapitalisation of the banking sector and the recent fall in the value of sterling should help the economy. In addition, I anticipate that the further measures the Chancellor will be announcing in the Pre-Budget report today may help businesses throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland.

Current Economic Downturn

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to attract investment in light of the global economic downturn. (AQO 1326/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI works with those Northern Ireland businesses in the manufacturing and tradeable services industry sectors that can demonstrate potential for growth through increasing exports and by becoming more internationally competitive. To qualify for such support, businesses should have sales outside of Northern Ireland greater than 25 per cent of turnover or greater than £250,000 per annum.

Invest NI's 2008-2011 Corporate Plan outlines its priority actions as realising the potential of existing businesses; shifting the sectoral focus towards higher value-added sectors; and supporting academia and frontier companies at the leading edge of innovation and technology.

Performance against many of Invest NI's 2008/09 key targets has been encouraging to date, particularly when set against the prevailing economic conditions. The agency has signalled that there should be a sufficient existing pipeline of activity to achieve this year's targets, although it is still too early to predict with any confidence the impact which the global economic downturn is likely to have in this respect.

In terms of attracting value-added Foreign Direct Investment in higher productivity sectors, by the end of September 2008 six new inward investment projects had been secured. These will promote 259 new jobs, attracting annual average wages and salaries of over £8million and associated investment of £23.5million. The immediate pipeline for potential Foreign Direct Investment projects remains reasonably healthy despite the current economic climate. However, there is some evidence that the volume of investment decisions is declining and that investors are beginning to defer their expansion plans.

Invest NI is seeking to respond to this situation by marketing Northern Ireland as a cost competitive location. We have a number of key selling points which make the region attractive to inward investors. These include a highly educated workforce, competitive operating costs, advanced telecoms infrastructure, excellent university / business linkages and a pro-business environment.

Whilst there is no doubt that securing Foreign Direct Investment and achieving our targets will be very challenging,

Invest NI nevertheless continues to target those investment prospects that are driven by cost reduction, or which are seeking to position themselves in preparation for the situation improving. Last month, for example, I accompanied 15 of our companies on an intensive Trade Mission to Boston and Silicon Valley where I met with existing investors and followed up on a number of prospects from the US NI conference.

Gas Pipeline

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to extend the gas pipeline to Cookstown. (AQO 1231/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department, in cooperation with the Utility Regulator will, in the near future, be initiating a study into the possibility of taking gas to the west of Northern Ireland. Extension of the gas network has the potential to provide environmental, fuel diversity, and security of energy supply benefits to energy consumers. However any extension to the Northern Ireland gas network will be dependent on the economic viability of particular proposals.

In the meantime, any application for a licence to take gas to Cookstown will be duly considered by the Department and the Utility Regulator.

Foreign Direct Investment

Rev Dr Robert Coulter asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the current economic downturn, what additional steps she is taking to ensure the retention of existing foreign direct investment. (AQO 1260/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI is committed to working very closely with its overseas investors and client aftercare has always been a key part of our normal activity.

A dedicated Client Team, working with each investor's local Northern Ireland management, ensures that projects are implemented as smoothly as possible. This also provides an opportunity to work with the client to maximize any potential prospects for further investment. This will continue to be the case, particularly in the present economic climate, which is forecast to prevail in the medium term.

Invest NI Client Teams will continue to work with our overseas clients to safeguard our existing foreign investment projects and, where possible, to secure additional re-investment.

This approach has proved to be very successful to date. Since Invest NI's inception in 2002, almost 6000 additional jobs have been secured through £800m of re-investment from existing foreign owned clients. Significant re-investments from companies such as Michelin, Bombardier, Caterpillar, Allstate and Citi have made these companies some of our largest employers and have had a very positive impact on our local economy.

Level of Unemployment

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the anticipated level of unemployment over the next three years. (AQO 1213/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Recent statistics published by my Department indicate that the unemployment rate for Northern Ireland, over the period July – September 2008, was estimated at 4.1%. This rate was significantly below the UK average of 5.8% and represented the lowest unemployment rate among the UK regions. The rate also compared favourably against the European Union (6.9%) and the Republic of Ireland (6.2%).

In terms of this measure of the unemployment rate, there are no forecasts. However, as part of the work with the Economic Development Forum, my Department monitors a range of economic forecasts which includes the claimant count rate. On this measure, the officially published rate for October 2008 was 3.5% and it was forecast to rise to 3.9% in 2009 and 4.2% in 2010, before falling to 4.0% by 2011.

However, the national and international outlook has deteriorated significantly since these forecasts were produced. This will have implications for the Northern Ireland forecasts, and I expect that the number of claimants could be higher than that previously estimated.

Consumer Confidence

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the downturn in retail sales and the failure of the Executive to meet since June, what steps she is taking to improve consumer confidence. (AQO 1334/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Official statistics published by my Department indicate that a number of sectors, including retail, face ongoing pressures. For example, over the year to Quarter 2 2008, the output of the distribution, wholesale and retail sector fell by 7%. This was a sharper decline than for the services sector as a whole, which fell, over the same period, by 4.3%. However, increased cross-border trade, as a result of the recent decline in the value of sterling against the euro, is expected to provide some support to domestic retail businesses.

These trends reflect the slowdown in the global economy and it is important to recognise the limited policy levers that the Northern Ireland Executive has to address these pressures, particularly within sectors such as retail.

I am encouraged by the steps being taken nationally to stimulate the economy and strengthen consumer confidence. For example, the 1.5% reduction in interest rates by the Bank of England, the recapitalisation of the banking sector, alongside the recent fall in the value of sterling, should help the retail sector. In addition, the further measures that the Chancellor may be announcing in his Pre-Budget report will help businesses and consumers throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland.

In addition to these national measures, the actions taken by the Executive as part of the Programme for Government are also aimed at stimulating wealth and employment, which are vital for consumer confidence. My Department will therefore continue to implement the range of actions outlined in the Programme for Government to grow a more dynamic, innovative private sector in Northern Ireland.

Current Economic Downturn

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact of the current downturn in the world economy on the local business community. (AQO 1217/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The global economy continues to face a range of unprecedented challenges. Northern Ireland, like other small open economies, cannot be insulated from the downturn.

In terms of the business community in Northern Ireland, I am very aware that certain sectors face ongoing pressures. For example, retail and business and financial services have all reported declining levels of output and, of course, the construction sector is reporting significant reductions in employment.

This reflects global trends, with important export markets such as the EU and the Republic of Ireland officially in recession. Output has also fallen in the US. This is resulting in declining levels of demand for locally produced goods and services throughout Northern Ireland, including in your own constituency.

However, as you will be aware, we are using the policy levers available to us to address these near-term pressures. For example, Invest NI has established a £5m Accelerated Support Fund (ASF) to offer Invest NI clients targeted support during the current economic difficulties. In addition, they have introduced, or specifically tailored, a number of other initiatives to assist client companies in the areas of innovation, energy efficiency and exports.

There are also important steps being taken nationally. The recent reduction in interest rates by the Bank of England, the recapitalisation of the banking sector and the fall in the value of sterling should help the economy. In addition, the further measures that the Chancellor will be announcing in his Pre-Budget report should help businesses throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland.

Current Economic Downturn

Mr O'Loan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with local major financial institutions on the levels of support available to help ameliorate the impact of the current economic downturn on local small to medium sized enterprises. (AQO 1327/09)

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI and Invest NI officials have recently held discussions with a number of local banks to explore the low uptake of the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme by Small and Medium Size Enterprises in Northern Ireland.

Discussions are ongoing. These will involve all the key lenders in Northern Ireland, business representative organisations and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), which administers the UK-wide scheme, to see what might be done to improve take up of the scheme in Northern Ireland.

The 1.5% reduction in interest rates by the Bank of England will also be welcomed by local businesses. The Finance Minister, in this Assembly, recently urged local banks to pass on the full rate cut to their customers, and I would echo and re-emphasise the importance of that call.

ENVIRONMENT

Renaming of Streets

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment who has the authority to rename streets; and if local residents should have an input into the decision making process on the re-naming of streets. (AQW 2130/09)

The Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 makes provision about district council powers in relation to street names. The 1995 Order does not make specific provision about the renaming of streets.

Wetlands

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment whether the definition of ‘wetland’ in the proposed regulations on the use of lead shot over wetlands can be kept simple to allow for effective enforcement.

(AQW 2241/09)

The Minister of the Environment: We will use the Ramsar Convention definition of ‘wetland’, which is “wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”. This definition is sufficiently simple to allow for effective enforcement.

Wetlands

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment if the definition of ‘wetland’ in the proposed regulations prohibiting the use of lead shot over wetlands, will, from a shooters perspective, be clearly defined to aid compliance and to avoid infringements being made.

(AQW 2242/09)

The Minister of the Environment: ‘Wetlands’ will be defined in the explanatory note to the Regulations.

In addition, to aid compliance and avoid infringements, my officials assisted by field sports bodies, will produce detailed practical guidance for shooters which will set out clearly what is and is not a ‘wetland’ for the purposes of the Regulations.

Single Dwellings in the Country

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many applicants for single dwellings in the country side were submitted in the (i) Banbridge; and (ii) Newry and Mourne council areas, before 16 March 2006, have yet to be determined.

(AQW 2261/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The number of applications received before 16 March 2006 that have yet to be determined is as follows:-

- (i) Banbridge – Nil
- (ii) Newry & Mourne - 153

Hare Numbers

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment if hare numbers have increased; and at what level it will be decided to restore hares onto the quarry list.

(AQW 2289/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Hare numbers have increased. The 2008 survey estimated a population of 2.86 hares per km², compared to a population of 1 hare per km² estimated by the first survey, which was published in 1997.

The Irish hare has never been removed from the quarry list.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what guidance has been issued to Planning Service staff advising them on how to assess applications for high density housing, following the amendment to the definition of what constitutes Brownfield Land, as outlined in the Regional Development Strategy.

(AQW 2299/09)

The Minister of the Environment: No new guidance has been issued to staff as the change in the definition of brownfield land does not have a direct influence on planning applications and they continue to be dealt with under the same policy context. However, staff have been made aware that the change in the definition of brownfield sites to exclude gardens will prevent developers attempting to justify high density developments in established residential areas on the basis they comply with Regional Planning Policy. Staff in my Department continue to assess such applications subject to the relevant detailed planning policy and guidance including PPS 7

Quality Residential Environments, PPS 12 “Housing in Settlements”, Planning Circular 03/07 Assessing Planning Applications for Residential Development in Urban Areas, Villages and other Small Settlements”, DCAN 8: Housing in Existing Urban Areas and all other material considerations.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all the planning applications for high density housing that have been refused as a result of the amended definition of Brownfield Land, included in the revised Regional Development Strategy. (AQW 2300/09)

The Minister of the Environment: No planning applications for high density housing have been refused as a result of the amended definition of Brownfield Land, included in the revised Regional Development Strategy. The change in definition of brownfield land does not have a direct influence on planning applications as they continue to be dealt with under the same policy context that was in place prior to the amendment of the Regional Development Strategy. However, the change in the definition of brownfield sites to exclude gardens will prevent developers attempting to justify high density developments in established residential areas on the basis that they comply with Regional Planning Policy.

Glass Recycling

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to increasing the dividend for glass recycling. (AQW 2301/09)

The Minister of the Environment: On the understanding that you are enquiring if I have considered offering some sort of “subsidy” to those who collect glass for recycling to counteract the current low prices being offered for some recyclables, I have not given this any consideration as it is not within my power to do so. However, the demand for high quality glass cullet remains high and indeed colour separated glass cullet has increased slightly in price in recent months.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 654/09, if the amended definition of Brownfield Land, as outlined in the revised Regional Development Strategy, has led to the refusal of planning applications for high density housing in urban areas, since 1 July 2008. (AQW 2302/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Further to my answer to AQW 2300/09 no planning applications for high density housing in urban areas have been refused as a result of the amended definition of Brownfield Land, as outlined in the revised Regional Development Strategy. The change in definition of brownfield land does not have a direct influence on planning applications as they continue to be dealt with under the same policy context that was in place prior to the amendment to the Regional Development Strategy. However, the change in the definition of brownfield sites to exclude gardens will prevent developers attempting to justify high density developments in established residential areas on the basis that they comply with Regional Planning Policy.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail what individuals and organisations the Northern Ireland Environment Agency consults before designating an Area of Special Scientific Interest. (AQW 2304/09)

The Minister of the Environment: In advance of the statutory designation of an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) consults with the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and with Planning Service. The Agency also endeavours to visit all owners and occupiers of the subject lands to advise them of the Agency’s intention to designate and to confirm the scientific interests on the lands.

At the time of declaration, NIEA gives formal notice of such to every owner and occupier of lands that are affected, and to each District Council in whose area it is located.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the criteria used by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in designating an Area of Special Scientific Interest. (AQW 2307/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) are designated in accordance with Article 28(1)(a) of the Environment (NI) Order 2002 which states that the Department must be satisfied that the area of land is of special scientific interest by reason of its flora, fauna, or geological, physiographical or other features.

ASSIs come under two broad categories; those selected for biological reasons and those whose interest is earth science.

In selecting areas suitable for declaration for biological purposes, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency uses the guidelines set out in the published Guidelines for the selection of Biological ASSIs in Northern Ireland (1999) which are themselves a version of the Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs published in 1998 by the then Nature Conservancy Council for use in Great Britain.

Earth science ASSIs are selected through the use of the guidance set out in the Earth Science Conservation Review: site selection guidelines for earth science ASSIs. These guidelines are based on those published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee under its Geological Conservation Review, 1996.

Driving Test

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of people, who pass their driving test on the (a) first attempt; and (b) second attempt, in each test centre. (AQW 2398/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Detail for the period 1 April to 31 October 2008 of the number and percentage of people who passed their driving tests on the first and second attempt, in each test centre, is included in the following table.

| | Number Passed 1st Time | % | Number Passed 2nd Time | % |
|---------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| Armagh | 308 | 40.3 | 195 | 44.9 |
| Ballymena | 628 | 50.0 | 353 | 54.4 |
| Balmoral | 898 | 38.1 | 534 | 40.0 |
| Dill Road | 631 | 37.1 | 417 | 39.5 |
| Coleraine | 682 | 47.6 | 341 | 46.3 |
| Cookstown | 773 | 49.0 | 440 | 51.3 |
| Craigavon | 910 | 48.2 | 460 | 49.8 |
| Downpatrick | 517 | 47.3 | 301 | 53.8 |
| Enniskillen | 514 | 59.6 | 199 | 56.2 |
| Larne | 896 | 46.9 | 446 | 45.6 |
| Lisburn | 652 | 47.2 | 359 | 50.4 |
| New Buildings | 160 | 46.8 | 86 | 54.1 |
| Waterside | 649 | 41.6 | 370 | 43.7 |
| Newry | 694 | 51.6 | 371 | 56.2 |
| Newtownards | 927 | 51.9 | 447 | 52.0 |
| Omagh | 668 | 57.5 | 291 | 57.7 |

Ravenhill Reach Office Park Planning Application

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Ravenhill Reach Office Park Planning Application (Planning Reference Z/2008/0477/F), (i) to detail the progress with the application; (ii) if the application is likely to be on the Belfast City Council Town Planning schedule for 4 December 2008; and (iii) for Planning Service's assessment of the importance of the scheme in creating construction jobs, especially during the current economic downturn. (AQW 2400/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Planning Service has now received replies from all consultees and has completed its consideration of the application. Belfast City Council's Town Planning Committee will be consulted on 20 November 2008 with an opinion to approve the application. In processing the application Planning Service gave full consideration to the importance of the scheme in creating employment opportunities.

Removal of Trees

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment if his Department has determined that a case will be taken to prosecute the people responsible for the removal of trees at Myrtle Lodge, Bryansford Road, Newcastle, between 26 March and 28 March 2008. (AQW 2412/09)

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

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

Environmental Schemes

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what assistance his Department gives to landowners to retain land under environmental schemes, broken down by county. (AQW 2419/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The only environmental scheme operated directly by the Department of the Environment which provides assistance to landowners is the Management of Sensitive Sites (MOSS) scheme. This scheme is used exclusively to provide payments to landowners to manage Areas of Special Scientific Interest in an appropriate manner.

There are currently 102 MOSS agreements and the assistance provided to landowners in the current financial year on a county basis is as follows:

| County | Number of landowners | Total amount (£) |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Antrim | 14 | 88,196.99 |
| Armagh | 8 | 6,418.00 |
| Down | 30 | 92,612.80 |
| Fermanagh | 22 | 30,022.52 |
| Londonderry | 16 | 31,357.00 |
| Tyrone | 12 | 15,013.00 |

Waste Agriculture Plastic Film

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment what procedures are in place to ensure that waste agriculture plastic film, such as silage wrap, are recycled. (AQW 2456/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Waste Management Licensing Regulations (NI) 2006 prohibits farmers from burning or burying plastic waste on their farms without a licence/permit.

Discarded agricultural plastics are categorised as either packaging or non-packaging waste.

Packaging plastics, such as feed sacks and shrink wrap from goods pallets, are subject to Packaging Regulations, which impose the obligation on producers to recover and recycle packaging waste.

Non-packaging farm plastics, which include silage wrap and crop covers, do not fall under the remit of the Packaging Waste Directive and continue to be collected in successful voluntary schemes operating throughout Northern Ireland. There is no EU Directive requiring the UK to take any action. Farmers pay a fee to a collection company to pick up farm plastics from farms and transport it on to a reprocessor.

In addition, Duty of Care legislation requires all sectors of industry to deal responsibly with the waste they produce, that is, to use authorised waste carriers and send their waste, including waste plastics, to appropriate licensed sites.

Waste Agriculture Plastic Film

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment if local councils are under any obligation to provide a service to recycle waste agriculture plastic film to ensure European waste and recycling directives are met.

(AQW 2457/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Local Councils are not under any obligation to provide a service to recycle waste agriculture plastic film. Some Councils accept farm plastic film for a commercial charge at their Civic Amenity Sites. Fermanagh District Council accepts farm film without charge at its Drummeel, Lisnaskea and Irvinestown Civic Amenity Sites.

Culling of Badgers

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if he would oppose any proposals for a culling of badgers given their status as a protected species.

(AQW 2493/09)

The Minister of the Environment: I am keen to assist the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in its investigations into the role played by badgers in the transmission of Bovine TB and I have therefore issued a licence under the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 to enable it to carry out a comprehensive study of the prevalence of the disease in the Northern Ireland badger population.

Any subsequent cull of badgers would require a separate licence to be issued by the Department and would be addressed on its scientific merits.

Illegal Dumping

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of incidents of illegal littering/dumping in rivers reported to the Environmental Health Service/Northern Ireland Environment Agency in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the South Antrim constituency, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2505/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency is responsible for carrying out waste crime investigations on a commercial scale. While the Agency maintains information on incidents recorded by District Council area, the data does not differentiate between illegal dumping in water or on land.

Planning Applications

Mr Newton asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning applications Z/2006/0224/F and Z/2006/0305/LB, (i) to detail the progress of both applications, particularly responses from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Roads Service; and (ii) if both applications will be on the Belfast City Council's Town Planning schedule for 4 December 2008.

(AQW 2530/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Planning Service is still awaiting final consultation replies from both NIEA and Roads Service. Upon receipt of these replies Planning Service will be able to formulate its opinion on the applications. If the replies are received before 26 November it is possible that Planning Service will be able to consult Belfast City Council's Town Planning Committee on 4 December 2008. The next Town Planning Committee meeting after that will be 8 January 2009.

Ulster Farm By-Products

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1944/09, to detail (i) the exact nature of the 6 water pollution incidents; (ii) the tests carried out by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to determine the extent of the pollution; (iii) the action he is taking against Ulster Farm By-Products in relation to these incidents. (AQW 2535/09)

The Minister of the Environment: My officials responded to all six of the reports of pollution in the Glenavy River detailed in my answer AQW 1944/09. Four investigations did not find any sign of pollution and no evidence to suggest that there had been any polluting discharge from Ulster Farm By-Products. Of the two other reports, one came from Ulster Farm By-Products following an accidental release which was largely contained on site. After investigation, officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) did not find it necessary to take further action. In the final case, samples of effluent were taken for analysis and NIEA is considering the most appropriate enforcement action to take.

Ulster Farm By-Products Site

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment how many complaints his Department has received in relation to offensive odours emanating from freight traffic travelling to and from the Ulster Farm By-Products site in Glenavy, in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 2537/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency's regulatory responsibility is restricted to activities on the Company's site and therefore the Agency does not have control over transport to and from the factory on public roads. Consequently, whilst comments about odour from vehicles have been received, they are not recorded as complaints against the Company and no statistics are available.

Pollution on the Glenavy River

Mr Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the nature of the pollution incident that occurred in the Glenavy River during the weekend of 7 and 8 November 2008; and (ii) the tests carried out by his Department to determine the extent of the pollution; and to confirm if the pollution came from Ulster Farm By-Products, and if so, whether this represents a violation of the enforcement notice outlined in AQW 186/09. (AQW 2538/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Following a telephone report of pollution on the Glenavy River, on Sunday 9 November, an official visited the site and found no signs of pollution in the river. There was no evidence to suggest that there had been any polluting discharge from Ulster Farm By-Products. It was therefore not considered necessary to undertake any tests.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if a public inquiry will be held before a decision is made on whether planning permission will be granted for an extension of the runway at George Best Belfast City Airport. (AQW 2544/09)

The Minister of the Environment: A planning application accompanied by an Environmental Statement for an extension to the runway at the George Best Belfast City Airport was submitted to the Department on Friday 14 November 2008.

The application is likely to be designated as one of major importance under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. One option open to the Department through the Article 31 process is to hold a public inquiry.

Until such time as consideration of the proposal has taken place the Department is not in a position to confirm whether or not the application would be subject to a public inquiry. My officials in the Planning Service will progress consideration of the application as quickly as it is possible to do so.

Removal of Illegal Waste

Mr Gallagher asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 4518/08, (i) to provide an update on the progress of; and (ii) to outline the timeframe for, the removal of illegal waste from (a) the Slattinagh, Garrison, County Fermanagh; and (b) Trillick, County Tyrone. (AQW 2557/09)

The Minister of the Environment: Dublin City Council, as the competent authority for these matters in the Republic of Ireland, are committed to letting a contract for the removal of waste from the two sites in question and its disposal in a suitable facility in the Republic of Ireland. In parallel, officials from my Department have been involved in discussions with officials from the Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government over the last few months aimed at resolving the remaining issues surrounding the scope of the work, the methodology to be employed and the apportionment of costs.

I hope that the remaining issues can be resolved before the end of the year which will allow the contract procurement to proceed. The procurement is required to be carried under the EU Open Tendering process. It is therefore anticipated that it will be some 4-5 months before work on site commences.

Ministerial Correspondence

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 2246/09, to provide copies of all the correspondence listed in the answer. (AQW 2625/09)

The Minister of the Environment: As is the convention in such instances, I would refer the Member to Hansard in relation to the Assembly questions and answers. The remainder of the papers have been deposited in the Assembly Library.

Rose Energy Incinerator

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment if the proposed site for the Rose Energy incinerator at Ballygannon Road, Glenavy, is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (AQW 2646/09)

The Minister of the Environment: The proposed site for the Rose Energy incinerator does not lie within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Journeys Made by Civil Servants

Mr Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number; and (ii) the cost of tickets for (a) first class; (b) standard economy class, journeys made by civil servants, on the Enterprise train service between Belfast and Dublin, in each of the last five years. (AQW 1815/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): The information provided below relates to the Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP). Information held by other departments is not in the same format to that of DFP. Due to these variances I have provided the DFP information only and would respectively suggest that you contact other departments directly.

DFP STATISTICS ON USE OF THE ENTERPRISE TRAIN SERVICE BETWEEN BELFAST AND DUBLIN

| Financial Year | Volume First Class | Volume Economy | Value First Class | Value Economy |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 2004/05 | 7 | 0 | £413.00 | 0 |
| 2005/06 | 81 | 5 | £3,378.00 | £108.10 |
| 2006/07 | 131 | 5 | £6,729.80 | £175.00 |
| 2007/08 | 136 | 7 | £6,389.58 | £254 |

Official Car Pool

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if motor vehicles in the official car pool have been fitted with tracking devices; and if so (i) how much it cost; (ii) who took the decision; and (iii) are they fully operational. (AQW 2280/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: Vehicles in the official car pool used by senior officials and visitors are managed using a fleet management system. The fleet management system uses GPS tracking to locate vehicles to enable management to allocate the nearest available vehicle to newly received requests. This allows the vehicles to be managed in a more efficient and cost effective way.

Vehicles used to transport Ministers do not have a fleet management system installed.

The system is currently installed on six vehicles in the official car pool at a total cost £9,300 which includes all running costs, reinstalls if the vehicle is changed and updates for the next five years.

The decision to install the fleet management system was taken by officials within my Department who have day to day responsibility for managing the service.

The Fleet management system is fully operational on all the vehicles that are installed on the system.

Civil Service

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for the most up to date sickness absence levels in the Civil Service, broken down by religious background. (AQW 2470/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: To provide the information requested would be contrary to Section 4(4) of the Data Protection Act 1998 which requires data providers to observe the principle that personal data is used for a specified and lawful purpose and is not further processed in a manner incompatible with that purpose. The purpose of collecting community background information is to enable the Northern Ireland Civil Service to monitor the effectiveness of its policies on equality of opportunity. The examination of sick absence levels by community background is not relevant to this stated purpose and is not carried out. Consequently the further processing of community background data would not be consistent with the data protection principles.

Performance Efficiency and Delivery Unit

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the contact the Performance Efficiency and Delivery Unit has had with each Department. (AQW 2595/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: As part of the Department of Finance and Personnel, PEDU has had regular contact with other departments on a number of issues. In terms of DFP, specific work has been undertaken with LPS as regards rates collection levels.

In terms of other departments, as part of the request to departments by DFP for an update on progress against Public Service Agreement targets, PEDU has had contact either directly, or indirectly through other DFP colleagues, with all 11 Departments.

Similarly, PEDU has had contact with some departments in relation to the Delivery Plans for the Innovation Funding. The Departments concerned are DARD, DCAL, DE, DEL, DETI, DHSSPS and DOE. The aim of this exercise was to ensure that participating Departments have the plans and systems in place to spend the allocated funding and achieve the promised objectives and outcomes.

As a by-product of the Delivery Review of Planning Service, PEDU staff also had occasional contact with many parts of DOE as well as DRD and DARD in relation to their involvement in the consultation process of a planning application.

PEDU has also been in contact with DETI in relation to creating consistency in the processes used in managing Business Cases.

Performance Efficiency and Delivery Unit

Mr Cobain asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the targets set by the Performance Efficiency and Delivery Unit for each Department. (AQW 2596/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Performance Efficiency and Delivery unit has not set any targets for departments. The role of the Unit is to work with departments to assist them in meeting target set by the Executive in the Programme for Government.

Official Car Pool

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if there has been abuse of the official car pool; and, if so, what action was taken. (AQW 2712/09)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel has no record of any abuse of the official car pool.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Ambulances and Patient Care Services Vehicles

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the highest number of miles shown on (i) an A&E ambulance; and (ii) a patient care services vehicle, in each Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 1758/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has advised me that fleet data are maintained on the basis of its operational divisions which are aligned with Health and Social Services Board areas. The highest mileage for A&E ambulances and Patient Care Services vehicles in each division are shown in the table below.

| NIAS Division | A&E | PCS |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| East (City) | 191,417 | 139,157 |
| East (Country) | 227,178 | 137,656 |
| North | 268,403 | 299,426 |
| South | 245,397 | 200,316 |
| West | 218,363 | 259,718 |

I recognise the high mileage figures on some of our ambulance fleet. That is why on 1 October 2008 I announced my intention to invest some £100 million over the next ten years to enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. This includes an investment of £17.4 million capital funding over the CSR period 2008-2011 to modernise the ambulance service fleet, estate, equipment and IT infrastructure, including the purchase of some 60 new A&E ambulances, 60 Patient Care Services vehicles and 26 Rapid Response Vehicles.

Exposure to Wi-Fi

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment has been undertaken on Professor Olle Johansson's bio initiative report, that concludes that there is a risk of harm from exposure to wi-fi. (AQW 2247/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health Protection Agency (HPA) provides support and specialist advice to DHSSPS on a wide range of health protection matters including

radiation protection. The role of HPA in this regard includes maintaining an oversight of relevant international developments. The HPA statement on WiFi is available on the HPA website at: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/radiation>

HPA are aware of the BioInitiative report but have not produced a formal response. One reason for this is that other bodies have already responded. The report lacks the balance that would normally be associated with scientific review documents. It does not give any consideration to reviews and guidance produced by authoritative and competent scientific bodies such as the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), the European Commission Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) and the HPA.

Home Start

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if Home Start will continue to receive funding from his Department given that the budget allocation for 'ex Children's Fund' is to be discontinued by 2010. (AQW 2249/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department will continue to fund, until March 2009, all of those projects formerly supported by the Children's Fund that support the objectives and functions of DHSSPS, including the locally-based Home Start schemes. Decisions about which projects will continue to receive funding after this date will be based on a review of their performance, and the extent to which their activities contribute to key children's service planning priorities in their areas. Arrangements for this review are currently being put in place with Children and Young People's Committees in each Health & Social Services Board area. I am keen that the review is completed before the end of the year, and that projects are notified speedily thereafter of its outcome.

Young Adults with Learning Disabilities

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had in relation to the Reward System for young adults with learning disabilities in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2296/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As a result of the issue of the possible removal of the rewards system being brought to my attention, I met with the Chief Executive of the Western Health & Social Care Trust. Subsequently, the Trust has decided that payments will continue to adults with a learning disability attending day-care centres in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area.

Mental Health

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provisions are in place for tackling mental health problems in young people. (AQW 2322/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has seen an improvement in recent years, providing benefits which include:

- Specialist Consultant Psychiatrists for young people;
- Crisis intervention teams in each of the four Board areas to assist in the provision of appropriate timely clinical intervention for young people;
- Specialist Eating Disorder staff;
- A 24/7 regional crisis response helpline "Lifeline" and associated support services.
- 12 inpatient beds for adolescents (14 – 17 years) in the temporary Regional Adolescent Unit at Knockbracken.
- 15 beds for children (up to and including 13 years) in the Child and Family Centre at Forster Green.
- 4 additional beds are also available in the Belfast Trust as an interim measure pending the new build 18 bed adolescent unit at Forster Green.
- A number of non-statutory organisations also provide valuable counselling services to meet specific needs.

Mental Health

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to improve services for young people with mental health problems. (AQW 2323/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A number of improvements are being made in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in line with the recommendations of the Bamford Review. These include:

- Strengthening Crisis Intervention Teams;
- Enhanced Community Mental Health Teams
- Additional Specialist Eating Disorder staff;
- New in-patient eating disorder facilities;
- Increasing the number of Consultant Psychiatrists for young people;
- The provision of a new 18 bed in-patient adolescent unit and a replacement of the 15 bedded Child and Family Centre at Forster Green.

My Department's total new investment in mental health and learning disability services in support of Bamford amounts to £87m over three years, resulting in recurrent additional investment of £44m from 2010/11. Some of these funds will address the development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.

Musgrave Park Hospital

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if 20 orthopaedic beds are to be lost in Musgrave Park hospital, as reported in the media. (AQW 2342/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/1724 / 09.

Musgrave Park Hospital

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the impact on (i) medical care; and (ii) staffing levels, through the loss of 20 orthopaedic beds at Musgrave Park Hospital. (AQW 2343/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/1724 / 09.

Orthopaedic Patients

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Health Service patients referred to private health care in order to meet the Department's waiting time targets for orthopaedic patients. (AQW 2344/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In the 2006/07 and 2007/08 years the Belfast Trust and the Western Trust referred a total of 12368 and 2736 orthopaedic patients respectively to the independent sector for inpatient, daycase or outpatient services. The Northern, Southern and South Eastern Trusts did not refer any orthopaedic patients to the independent sector during this time.

Patients Travelling Abroad for Treatment

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients in the East Belfast constituency have had to travel abroad for treatment. (AQW 2359/09)

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

Health Provision

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has for an increased investment in health provision in the East Belfast constituency. (AQW 2361/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Under the Investment Strategy for NI my Department received some £3.3 billion in capital funding over the next 10 years. This funding is to address an identified investment need within health and social care of £7.8 billion.

In respect of your East Belfast constituency I am planning capital investment of some £62m in the CSR period to target key areas of health and social care. In addition, there will also be investment in regional facilities which the population of East Belfast will be able to access.

As regards revenue investment it is not possible to provide information on the increased investment in health provision on a parliamentary constituency basis. The four Area Boards are responsible for the allocation of resources at a local level. Investments made in one constituency may have benefits to those in neighbouring constituency or even at a regional level and its therefore impossible to quantify the extent and subsequent effect of investments at constituency level.

Patients Travelling Abroad for Treatment

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients in the North Down constituency, have had to travel abroad for treatment. (AQW 2388/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of patients in the North Down constituency that have had to travel abroad for treatment is not collected centrally by the Department. Provision of such data by Health and Social Service Boards and Health and Social Care Trusts would incur a disproportionate cost.

Health Provision

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his plans for increasing investment in health provision, in the North Down constituency. (AQW 2389/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In light of funding constraints I commissioned on 31 May 2008 a Review of Capital Priorities across the entire health and social care system over the next 10 years. The Review covered all Programmes of Care including Primary & Community Care infrastructure, which takes account of facilities such as health and care centres. The report has highlighted that some very difficult decisions will need to be taken in order that the limited funding available will be allocated to areas of highest need.

I am still considering the report and will be making announcements about projects over the coming weeks.

As regards revenue investment it is not possible to provide information on the increased investment in health provision on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Department's Staff Annual Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many of the Department's staff did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in their last reporting year. (AQW 2397/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: One member of staff did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report in the last reporting year.

Binge Drinking

Mr Simpson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the effectiveness of his Department's efforts to reduce binge drinking. (AQW 2399/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department takes the misuse of alcohol very seriously, particularly binge drinking and underage drinking. Current actions include the establishment of a binge drinking advisory group; the continuation of the binge drinking public information campaign and positive engagement with the drinks industry particularly local supermarkets. In addition further action is planned; I am due to issue an integrated young people's drinking action plan in the near future. The outcomes and outputs associated with these activities and initiatives together with available prevalence data are closely monitored to ensure progress is being maintained and targets met.

North Belfast City Learning Centre

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the funds his Department has allocated to the North Belfast City Learning Centre; and (ii) how this fits in with the Department's Statutory Duty of Opportunity and Equality. (AQW 2413/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: No funding is provided by my Department.

My Department has set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil its duties in respect of the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The scheme may be downloaded from the Department's Internet site at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/equality-scheme.pdf>

IVF Treatment

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what money has been made available for IVF treatment in the last 12 months. (AQW 2423/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In 2008/09 in excess of £1.5m was made available to the Regional Fertility Centre at the Royal Group of Hospitals by the Health and Social Services Boards for publicly funded specialised fertility treatments. This funding is used to provide a range of treatments, primarily IVF and Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), but also other specialised fertility treatments and related services such as counselling.

In addition to this I recently announced an extra investment of £800,000 which will allow an additional 200 women to be treated before the end of the financial year.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what legislation exists in Northern Ireland that is comparable to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (AQW 2433/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 makes provision for fire safety regulation which is broadly comparable with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in England and Wales. My Department is currently preparing regulations under the 2006 Order which will rationalise current fire safety procedures in Northern Ireland.

In the meantime, fire safety in non domestic premises in Northern Ireland is regulated through a system of inspection and certification under the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 and, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001, employers are expected to carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment of their premises.

'Adopting the Future' Consultation

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the outcome of the 2006 'Adopting the Future' consultation. (AQW 2434/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The outcome of the "Adopting the Future" consultation was detailed in the "Adopting the Future Consultation Report", published in January 2007. The consultation summary report is accessible on the Departmental website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/child_care/

adoption/adoption_review.htm. Both documents were issued under the Direct Rule administration and there are aspects of the policy to which I wish to give further consideration before finalising the content of new adoption legislation. In preparation for legislative reform, an additional £1m has been secured for adoption for 2008-11 to improve the quality of front line services. The funding will be used to develop a number of specialist regional services to secure the best choice of placements for children who need to be adopted and provide better support for everyone affected by adoption. Steps are already being taken to get these services in place as quickly as possible.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people his Department estimates suffer from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome); and how many of these people (i) live outside the Belfast City Council area and (ii) are below age 18. (AQW 2438/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information is not available on how many people suffer from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are employed within the Health Service on provision of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome services; and how many of them offer services to people resident outside the Belfast City Council area. (AQW 2439/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provides a consultant-led specialist service for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. This service currently has one (0.5 Whole-Time Equivalent) person employed solely to provide Chronic Fatigue Syndrome services. At this time referrals to this service are from the Belfast area only.

As Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may involve a range of symptoms and disabilities, people suffering from this condition may be treated by a number of different health and social care professionals, including GPs, community care, neurology, mental health and allied health professionals. These staff are not employed solely to provide services to people with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and it is not possible to identify separately the proportion of their time spent treating patients with this individual condition.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what Health Service provision is available in assisting diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome among children under 18; and what advice his Department is giving to schools on the matter. (AQW 2440/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Primary healthcare professionals should be familiar with, and be able to identify, the characteristic features of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). A child or young person who has symptoms suggestive of CFS should be referred to a paediatrician for assessment to exclude other diagnoses.

For people with CFS who are able to continue in or return to education, healthcare professionals should ensure, with the person's informed consent, that educational institutions have information on the condition and the agreed management plan.

On 31 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 chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis in adults and children. The NICE guideline can be found at <http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG53>.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what funding is available to the psychiatric treatment of persons suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, as a percentage of his Department's overall spend on the matter. (AQW 2441/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The breakdown of funding available to the psychiatric treatment of persons suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is not held and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what bids he has made for additional funding for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome services. (AQW 2442/09)

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 chronic fatigue syndrome. In determining their priorities for funding, 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.

Residential Care

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many elderly people require residential care in the North Down area. (AQW 2443/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust have advised that there are 191 elderly people in residential care in the North Down area at present. Two clients are currently awaiting a place in a residential home of their choice. In addition, a further 376 elderly people have been assessed as requiring nursing home care in the North Down area.

Nursing Home Care

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many elderly people require nursing home care in the North Down area. (AQW 2444/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust have advised that there are 191 elderly people in residential care in the North Down area at present. Two clients are currently awaiting a place in a residential home of their choice. In addition, a further 376 elderly people have been assessed as requiring nursing home care in the North Down area.

Residential Homes

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many residential homes there are in the North Down area. (AQW 2445/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At 30 June 2008, there were 22 residential homes and 19 nursing homes in the North Down area.

Nursing Homes

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing homes there are in the North Down area. (AQW 2446/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At 30 June 2008, there were 22 residential homes and 19 nursing homes in the North Down area.

Residential Care

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline if there is a shortage of nursing or residential care in the North Down area. (AQW 2447/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Trust has advised that there is no shortage of nursing or residential care places in the North Down area. There are currently two people waiting for a residential care place in their home of choice, but who could be accommodated elsewhere if necessary.

IVF Treatment

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many IVF treatments have been successful on the (i) first attempt; (ii) second attempt; and (iii) third attempt, over the last 5 years. (AQW 2466/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of IVF treatments that have been successful on the (i) first attempt; (ii) second attempt; and (iii) third attempt, over the last 5 years is not collected centrally by the Department. Provision of such data by the Regional Fertility Centre at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust would incur a disproportionate cost.

IVF Treatment

Mr Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have applied for IVF treatment in the last 12 months, broken down by hospital. (AQW 2467/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Public funded fertility treatment in Northern Ireland is provided by the Regional Fertility Centre at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. During the months of November 2007 to October 2008 inclusive, the Regional Fertility Centre received 571 referrals for public funded fertility treatment. Of this number, 372 referrals were received for In vitro Fertilisation (IVF), with 199 received for Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) treatment.

Health Centres in Strangford

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline (i) the plans for; (ii) timing of the construction of; and (iii) proposed investment in, new health centres in the Strangford constituency. (AQW 2473/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In light of the funding constraints I commissioned on 31 May 2008 a Review of Capital Priorities across the entire health and social care system over the next 10 years. The Review covered all Programmes of Care including Primary & Community Care Infrastructure, which takes account of facilities such as health and care centres. The Report has highlighted that some very difficult decisions will need to be taken in order that the limited funding available will be allocated to areas of highest need.

I am still considering the Report and will be making announcements about projects over the coming weeks.

Children with Autism

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline what steps his Department is taking to address the lack of service provision for children with autism in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2478/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) have advised me that in April 2008 it secured funding from the Western Health and Social Services Board for the development and expansion of a dedicated Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) team including the appointment of a Consultant Clinical Psychologist to lead the service.

Although difficulties have been experienced with recruitment, work to establish the full multi-disciplinary team continues. In the interim any slippage incurred will be reinvested in the team and towards ASD assessment and diagnosis.

The Trust have also put an action plan in place which is designed to reduce the waiting list and waiting times within the Trust area.

Children with Autism

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are currently working with children with autism, within the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2479/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Due to the number of different settings in which assessments can take place and the range of professionals involved, it is not possible to provide accurate details of the numbers of health professionals currently working with children affected by autism.

Children with Autism

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the current waiting time is for children awaiting a diagnosis for autism, in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2480/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not collected centrally, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Erne Hospital

Mr Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the post vacated by the recent departure of an anaesthetist at the Erne Hospital will be filled to allow the Pain Clinic to resume; and to outline a timeframe for this post being filled. (AQW 2481/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The recruitment and retention of medical staff at the Erne Hospital is a matter for the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

However, I can advise that it is the Western Trust's intention to fill this vacancy as early as possible and will advertise the post again early in 2009.

Until a suitable replacement is found the Trust is making use of trained staff from its other sites to ensure continuity of pain services.

Children with Autism

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children are currently on a waiting list for autism diagnosis in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2482/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not collected centrally, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Legislative Framework for Autism

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what engagement his Department has had with all other Department's in seeking a cross Departmental legislative framework for autism. (AQW 2483/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Part of the remit of the recent Independent Review of Autism Services included an examination of existing legislation to determine whether additional legislation might be necessary. The Independent Review concluded that no such need existed. I am not aware of any need for additional legislation in relation to autism, or in relation to the ability of my Department to work with other Departments in the delivery of services for people affected by autism.

Intensive Care Units

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many intensive care units there are in each Health and Social Services Board area. (AQW 2487/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total number of intensive care units in each Health and Social Services Board area is given below.

| Health and Social Services Board Area | Total number of Intensive Care Units* |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Eastern | 8 |
| Northern | 4 |
| Southern | 2 |
| Western | 4 |

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

* Comprised of Adult, Paediatric, Neonatal, Cardiac Surgery and Psychiatric Intensive Care Units

Alcohol Strategy

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the Health and Social Care Trusts that have an alcohol strategy in place. (AQW 2488/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs (NSD) contains a series of outcomes to reduce the harm related to alcohol and drug misuse at both regional and local levels. Much of this work is delivered at a local level, via action plans that have been developed by the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams (DACTs) within the four Health and Social Services Boards. All five local Health and Social Care Trusts are active partners within the relevant DACTs, and as such they fully contribute to the development and implementation of DACTs local Action Plans

In supporting the delivery of the regional strategy, five Health and Social Care Trusts also play an active role contributing to the structures and advisory groups created at a regional level by my Department.

Child Protection

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that adequate measures are in place to ensure that the fate which befell Baby P in the North London Borough of Haringey could not be replicated in Northern Ireland. (AQW 2489/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My staff are considering this case very carefully to see if there are any lessons which can be learned to improve further child protection services in Northern Ireland. In recent years we have invested heavily in child protection services and family support. This includes a reform of front line child protection services which involves the introduction of a uniform assessment model to be used by professionals when assessing the needs of individual children and their families.

We have also reviewed child protection structures and established Gateway Teams within each of the HSC Trusts to deal with child protection cases. Measures have been taken to improve supervision, recording and information exchange within child protection services in HSC Trusts and we have also invested heavily to improve Trust IT facilities. I am assured that our child protection services are both robust and professional. The new Safeguarding Board will include a duty on relevant agencies to co-operate to safeguard children.

Pay and Conditions for Joiners

Mr McClarty asked Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why there is a disparity in pay and conditions for joiners in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 2498/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There is no disparity in pay and conditions for joiners. The Agenda for Change process requires that jobs are evaluated using a single Job Evaluation Scheme. Joiners like all other non-medical staff in the Health and Social Care have had their jobs banded using this system. The outcome of this exercise is that joiners have been graded at AfC pay band 3 or 4 depending on the level of responsibility required in their particular job.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has a specialist in place to diagnose (i) Autistic Spectrum Disorder; and (ii) Asperger's Syndrome. (AQW 2507/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trusts have advised me that services are available for all those referred to them with possible Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome. Specialist practitioners work in a variety of locations across Trust areas within a variety of professions to include Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric Medicine.

The ASD Strategic Action Plan, which is currently available for public consultation takes account of the long standing deficiencies in key areas of ASD services, including services for adults. The Action Plan has been developed to identify, quantify and address those deficiencies.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has a specialist in place to diagnose (i) Autistic Spectrum Disorder; and (ii) Asperger's Syndrome. (AQW 2508/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trusts have advised me that services are available for all those referred to them with possible Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome. Specialist practitioners work in a variety of locations across Trust areas within a variety of professions to include Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric Medicine.

The ASD Strategic Action Plan, which is currently available for public consultation takes account of the long standing deficiencies in key areas of ASD services, including services for adults. The Action Plan has been developed to identify, quantify and address those deficiencies.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has a specialist in place to diagnose (i) Autistic Spectrum Disorder; and (ii) Asperger's Syndrome. (AQW 2509/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trusts have advised me that services are available for all those referred to them with possible Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome. Specialist practitioners work in a variety of locations across Trust areas within a variety of professions to include Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric Medicine.

The ASD Strategic Action Plan, which is currently available for public consultation takes account of the long standing deficiencies in key areas of ASD services, including services for adults. The Action Plan has been developed to identify, quantify and address those deficiencies.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Western Health and Social Care Trust has a specialist in place to diagnose (i) Autistic Spectrum Disorder; and (ii) Asperger's Syndrome. (AQW 2510/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trusts have advised me that services are available for all those referred to them with possible Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome. Specialist practitioners work in a variety of locations across Trust areas within a variety of professions to include Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric Medicine.

The ASD Strategic Action Plan, which is currently available for public consultation takes account of the long standing deficiencies in key areas of ASD services, including services for adults. The Action Plan has been developed to identify, quantify and address those deficiencies.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has a specialist in place to diagnose (i) Autistic Spectrum Disorder; and (ii) Asperger's Syndrome. (AQW 2511/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trusts have advised me that services are available for all those referred to them with possible Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome. Specialist practitioners work in a variety of locations across Trust areas within a variety of professions to include Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric Medicine.

The ASD Strategic Action Plan, which is currently available for public consultation takes account of the long standing deficiencies in key areas of ASD services, including services for adults. The Action Plan has been developed to identify, quantify and address those deficiencies.

Department Budget

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the changes to his budget, in respect of both revenue and capital, that have been made resulting from (i) the increased flexibility to shift resources between budget headings; and (ii) the first call on £20m per annum in monitoring rounds, that were agreed as part of the Budget 2008-2011. (AQW 2515/09)

- (i) The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The increased flexibility awarded to DHSSPS under Budget 2008-2011 has allowed the Department to deliver on its respective commitments in the Programme for Government without seeking additional funds from the Northern Ireland Block over and above the £20m guarantee of first call on available in year monies. The Department has been able to reinvest monies to meet new, urgent pressures as and when they arise without seeking approval from the Centre in the formal monitoring rounds. This flexibility has meant that services have been maintained and improved with no detriment to the patient.
- (ii) The Department's plans for 2008-2011 assume that the additional £20m in year funding agreed as part of the Budget 2008-2011 will be made available in full. These monies have been used to take forward reform in services for those with long term conditions, children, cardiovascular and elective care access.

Clinical Clothing

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans for stricter enforcement for hospital doctors and medical staff, to wear appropriate clinical clothing at all times when on ward duty, to prevent cross infection. (AQW 2531/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In February 2008 I announced that my department had issued a Regional Dress Code Policy as part of a package of measures to improve patient safety and reduce the spread of healthcare associated infection.

The Regional Dress Code Policy applies to all Health and Social Care staff, including doctors and medical staff, in all healthcare settings and regardless of whether or not a uniform is worn.

HSC Trusts were advised by the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Nursing Officer that the policy should be implemented immediately and that my department requires HSC Trusts to monitor their staff's compliance with the Regional Dress Code Policy and report on this to the DHSSPS on an annual basis.

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation has taken place with patients and their relatives in relation to the proposed closure of villas one and two at St Luke's Hospital, Armagh. (AQW 2548/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Director of Mental Health and Disability in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has written to the patients, and relatives and carers of patients, in

Villas One and Two at St. Luke's Hospital in relation to future plans for the facility. Also, a twelve week period of public consultation on the resettlement of long stay mental health patients from Villas 1 and 2 will begin on 10 December 2008.

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the options put forward to patients and their relatives, other than that of being cared for at home, in relation to the proposed closure of villas at St Luke's Hospital, Armagh. (AQW 2549/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The options offered to the patients of the Villas at St. Luke's Hospital will be based on a person centred individual assessment. These are likely to include: Residential Homes, Nursing Home placements for general care needs, Specialist Nursing home placements such as units for Elderly Mental Infirm patients, and Supported Living Facilities with individually designed care and support packages as appropriate.

The Trust will be engaging with community based private providers and other stakeholders to ensure patients, carers/relatives and advocates are fully aware of the options available. No decisions will be taken until these consultations have been completed.

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many qualified nursing staff will be affected by the proposed closure of villas at St Luke's Hospital, Armagh. (AQW 2550/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust proposes to resettle 60 of the remaining 80 long-stay patients in St Luke's. Acute nursing services will also transfer to the Bluestone Unit, Craigavon. This will affect approximately 75% of nursing staff associated with these services and it is estimated that there will be a requirement for staff reduction and redeployment of 82 qualified nursing staff (73.7 Whole Time Equivalents).

These changes will be effected over a 3 year period and opportunities will be available to redeploy these staff in services re-provided in the community both locally and more widely across the Trust area. Proposals will be subject to consultation and no decisions will be taken until the consultation is completed.

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) house-keeping; (ii) portering; and (iii) auxiliary staff, will be affected by the proposed closure of villas at St Luke's Hospital, Armagh. (AQW 2551/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is impossible to accurately estimate the net effect of changes to services over the next 3 year period. At present, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust employs a total of 133 Support Service staff (88.9 Whole Time Equivalents) in a variety of roles including domestic services, catering, telephony, portering and other auxiliary services.

The St Luke's Hospital site will continue to be a location for the provision of a range of community mental health services. The Trust will also be locating a range of new area-wide specialist mental health teams on the St Luke's site, including new specialist teams for Personality Disorders, Addictions and Forensic Mental Health services.

Service developments will offer new employment opportunities, thus requiring the retention of a proportion of existing support services staff. Additionally, the site also provides accommodation for a number of management and support services, including the centralized offices for the Trust's payroll function. Further opportunities to develop this usage may also become available. Proposals will be subject to consultation and no decisions will be taken until the consultation is completed.

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the proposed closure of villas at St Luke's Hospital, Armagh, given that representatives from all political parties are calling for the retention of public sector jobs in Armagh, including Health Service jobs. (AQW 2552/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The St Luke's Hospital site will continue to be a location for the provision of a range of community mental health services. The Trust will also be locating a range of new area-wide specialist mental health teams on the St Luke's site, including new specialist teams for Personality Disorders, Addictions and Forensic Mental Health services.

Service developments will offer new employment opportunities, thus requiring the retention of a proportion of existing support services staff. Additionally, the site also provides accommodation for a number of management and support services, including the centralized offices for the Trust's payroll function. Further opportunities to develop this usage may also become available.

The proposed changes and new developments at St Luke's will therefore, provide an opportunity for the redeployment of staff, both for new services on site, and services in the community. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust is taking a corporate approach to the employment and redeployment of its staff. Proposals for the site will be issued for consultation in December 2008 and no decisions will be taken until completion of the consultation exercise.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to (i) detail what steps are being taken to recruit firefighters through the schools; and (ii) outline what agreements have been made with the Equality Commission to address issues relating to the under representation of firefighters from the Catholic community. (AQW 2553/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Catholics are not under-represented in the NIFRS. Earlier this year, it reported that, of the 1,782 Firefighters in NIFRS who are recorded as either Protestant or Catholic, 58.8% are Protestant and 41.2% are Catholic. The Northern Ireland Census 2001 shows 40.26% of the population as Catholic.

Under the terms of an agreement with the Equality Commission, NIFRS makes a Declaration of Commitment to ensuring fair participation of both communities in its workforce. It also ensures that its Equal Opportunities Policy is openly communicated to its workforce, potential applicants and the community.

Although NIFRS does not directly recruit Firefighters through a Schools recruitment programme, a number of Community Fire Safety programmes are specifically targeted towards young people to raise awareness of the work of the Fire & Rescue Service. The schemes have value in raising the profile of NIFRS and are inclusive of all groups in the community both on a religious and gender basis. This is particularly the case in both the Local Integrated Fire Education (LIFE) and Cadet schemes. The former involves a week of working with NIFRS learning news skills in a challenging environment and the Cadet schemes, of which there are 10 across Northern Ireland, give young people, irrespective of religion or gender, opportunities to sample the work of the fire service.

NIFRS regularly takes part in job fairs and careers events for young people and has written and produced its own Careers Information Guidance. In conjunction with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA), NIFRS continues to accommodate work experience as part of the Employability programme for designated teachers.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount of money spent by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on (i) hospitality; (ii) travel; and (iii) conference fees/accommodation, for delegates, in the last three years. (AQW 2554/09)

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

| | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Hospitality | £5,187 | £13,957 | £24,6851 |
| Travel | £202,448 | £226,983 | £306,6722 |
| Conference Fees and Accommodation | £1,4773 | £22,154 | £25,887 |

Notes

1. Includes £14,705 in respect of LIFE (Local Intervention Fire Education) Schemes.
2. Includes additional travel expenditure incurred by operational staff working Variable Crewing System (11 am to 11 pm Wholetime emergency response cover at Portadown, Dunmurry, Newtownards and Coleraine). This information is not separately identifiable.
3. NIFRS is unable to provide data for conference fees in relation to 2005/06 as specific information regarding conference fees was not uniquely recorded.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what plans his Department has to increase the number of female firefighters in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. (AQW 2555/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has a range of initiatives in place to ensure that a career in firefighting is fully available to females. These include:

- Engaging directly with Careers Advisors and the Education sector through its Schools Outreach programme, which identifies the range of career options within the Fire and Rescue Service. In doing so NIFRS challenges the stereotype that firefighting is a career option for males only.
- Offering work shadowing to teachers who participate in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's 'Education for Employability' programme. Feedback has been positive. Teachers are now aware that firefighting is a viable career choice for women.
- Raising awareness of vacancies, particularly in the Retained (part time) station areas, through the extensive use of press, radio and television the display of posters and distribution of leaflets featuring photographs of male and female Firefighters. The notable outcome of this approach has been increased applications for each vacancy and an increase in appointments of female Retained Firefighters.

NIFRS has increased the profile of existing female Firefighters by involving them in events such as the recent multi-cultural Belfast Mela (Summer Festival) at which 2 female Firefighters spoke about the career options within NIFRS. Its website features a section entitled "A Day in the Life of" which includes case studies of female firefighters. This high-visibility approach to raising awareness is now established as the template for future retained firefighter recruitment campaigns.

Hip Arthroscopy

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients are currently awaiting a hip arthroscopy. (AQW 2693/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There were four patients waiting for a hip arthroscopy at a Health and Social Care hospital in Northern Ireland at 30th June 2008, the last quarter for which official waiting time data are available.

People Registered as Blind

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 2421/09, to detail the available information on the number of people registered as (i) blind; and (ii) partially sighted, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2705/09)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Pursuant to my answer to AQW 2421/09, information on the number of people registered as (i) blind; and (ii) partially sighted is not collected centrally, but is recorded by each Health & Social Care Trust on the number of blind or partially sighted people.

Community Information Branch (CIB) requested information on the number of people registered as blind or partially sighted from the five HSC Trust Chief Executive's. The information provided by the five HSC Trusts is detailed in the table below.

NUMBER OF PERSONS REGISTERED AS BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED IN HSC TRUSTS (31 MARCH 2008) 1

| HSC Trust | (i) Blind Persons | (ii) Partially Sighted Persons |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Belfast HSC Trust | 1,149 | 488 |
| Northern HSC Trust | 1,520 | 818 |
| South Eastern HSC Trust | 386 | 909 |
| Southern HSC Trust | 604 | 358 |
| Western HSC Trust | 527 | 257 |
| Northern Ireland | 4,186 | 2,830 |

1 The information recorded by HSC Trusts is not a register of those blind or partially sighted, as people may refuse to have their names added to relevant HSC Trust records.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Roads Service

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide details of the reply given by the Roads Service in response to the consultation document on the planning application submitted for GAA pitches and related facilities, at Burrenbridge Road, Bryansford, Newcastle. (AQW 2263/09)

The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service responded on 28 April 2008, to a consultation from Planning Service of 3 April 2008, in respect of planning application R/08/0297 for GAA pitches at Burrenbridge Road, Bryansford, Newcastle.

In its response, Roads Service outlined its objections, based on traffic safety considerations which related to poor roads infrastructure. This was particularly with regard to the narrowness of the Burrenbridge Road, and the substandard junction of the latter with the A25, which is a protected route carrying approximately 6000 vehicles per day between Castlewellsan and Kilcoo, and on to Newry. Speeds on this road at the junction are in the region of 60mph and visibility standards are poor, because of a nearby crest and parked vehicles at an adjacent shop. The Burrenbridge Road is approximately 4.5m wide and it has no footways.

I can advise that further consultations between the developer and Roads Service are likely.

Strangford Ferry

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reasons for the failure of electronic signage for the Strangford ferry; and what action his Department is taking to rectify the problem. (AQW 2305/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there could be a number of reasons for the failure of the electronic signage for the Strangford ferry and has commissioned a consultant to report on the causes of failure, and to recommend actions to have these signs fully operational. Until the consultant's report is prepared, Roads Service will not know the actual cause of failure.

Roads Service are arranging for metal signs to be available, as a temporary measure, for use at the slipways at Portaferry and Strangford, in case of bad weather or other sailing difficulties.

Roads Service

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he is putting in place to address the further deterioration in the roads network, as highlighted in the recent Roads Service 2007-2008 Annual Report. (AQW 2329/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I would like to reassure the Member that the maintenance of road and footway surfaces, and their underlying structure, continues to be a high priority for my Department's Roads Service. However, there are many pressures on the resources available and the roads programme must compete for funding along with the many other Departmental spending programmes.

I can advise that the budget for roads structural maintenance, announced earlier this year, is set to rise over the budget period and in the three years to end March 2011, some £200 million will have been invested in the structural maintenance of our roads.

However, this still means that the budget allocation would be around £125 million less than the levels recommended by the Structural Maintenance Funding Plan across the budget 2007 period.

Maintenance priority will be given to the main strategic road network, which carries the greatest volume of traffic and on the local road network safety defects and the highest priority works will be addressed.

Narrow Water Bridge Project and A1/ A2 Southern Relief Road

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what funding will be available from his Department for (i) the Narrow Water Bridge Project; and (ii) the A1/ A2 Southern Relief Road, south of Newry. (AQW 2346/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: As previously indicated, in my reply to AQO 959/09, the proposal for a bridge at Narrow Water is being taken forward by Louth County Council and their Consultant, Roughan O'Donovan. My Department's Roads Service has no direct involvement in this project or has been asked for any commitment to contribute funds to this scheme.

Roads Service is, at present, undertaking a feasibility study for a Newry Southern Relief Road, which would provide improved access between the A2 Warrenpoint dual carriageway and the A1 Belfast to Dublin road and the funding made available for this study amounts to £785,000. The study will consider whether this scheme is feasible and provides Value for Money, and the priority which it would attract compared to competing demands for other important road improvements schemes elsewhere in the north.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the estimated costs of the previous Water Service proposals to upgrade waste water and sewer treatment in the (i) Ballystrudder; (ii) Ballycarry; (iii) Whitehead, and surrounding areas over the last 10 years; and to list all expenditure. (AQW 2369/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that a number of previous proposals were considered over the past 10 years for providing treatment of wastewater discharging into Larne Lough either individually or collectively from Ballystrudder, Ballycarry and Whitehead. The estimated capital costs of various proposals ranged from £250,000 to £1.9 million but work was not progressed due to competing priorities and financial constraints. The cost of investigating these options was £170,000.

Scoil na Fuiseoige's Primary School

Mr Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if Scoil na Fuiseoige's primary school in Twinbrook will be connected to the main sewerage system in Dunmurry, given the problems with new developments and the Dunmurry Waste Water Plant; and (ii) if Roads Service will approve access to the school from the Gardenmore Road, Twinbrook; and to provide a timescale within which Northern Ireland Water and Roads Service will make decisions in relation to this matter. (AQW 2376/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that, in June 2004, it responded to a planning consultation, relating to a proposed primary school for Scoil na Fuiseoige, Twinbrook. At this time NIW advised that a water supply and also foul and storm water sewers were available to serve the School. Planning Service subsequently granted approval in October 2007 to the proposed development and NIW will permit the school to be connected to the public sewerage system.

In relation to the access to Scoil na Fuiseoige's Primary School, Twinbrook, I can confirm that my Department's Roads Service would look favourably on a proposal to access the school from Gardenmore Road, provided that the necessary road access design standards are met and these are acceptable to Planning Service.

As part of Roads Service's consultation response to Planning Service in June 2008, it identified the need for the applicant to address issues relating to vehicular and pedestrian movement. Once Roads Service has received a response in relation to these issues, it will provide a recommendation to Planning Service.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) how much Northern Ireland Water has spent; and (ii) the companies it used, for consultancy, since its inception. (AQW 2392/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the associated fees and other costs of external consultancy firms employed from 1 April 2007 to 30 September 2008 are as detailed below. The costs are exclusive of VAT and do not include consultancy relating to the design and build of capital projects.

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Achievers | £495 |
| Adjust Procurement Solutions | £7,232 |
| Alexander HR | £20,217 |
| Alvarez & Marsal Europe | £10,934 |
| Anna Shiels | £3,743 |
| ASM | £4,800 |
| Austin Hunter | £800 |
| AV Browne Advertising Ltd | £3,780 |
| BCM Services | £760 |
| BDO Stoy Hayward | £17,275 |
| Black & Veatch Ltd | £47,487 |
| BT Plc | £1,370 |
| BTW Shiells | £6,272 |
| Building Design Partnership | £5,957 |
| Business Publications Company | £128,415 |
| Capita Business Services Ltd | £4,773 |
| Central Procurement Directorate | £268 |
| Changing Chains | £42,063 |
| Cjjm Partnership | £65,954 |
| CLN Solutions | £92,313 |
| Consult NB1 Ltd | £34,850 |
| Contracting Out LLP | £313,477 |
| Dept of Finance & Personnel | £14,118 |
| Dundas & Wilson CSLLP | £146,348 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| E McMullan Ltd | £1,400 |
| EIM | £49,618 |
| Eleven Thirty Design | £990 |
| Empathy Ratings Syndicated Research | £4,200 |
| Ernst & Young | £10,044 |
| Frontier Economics | £136,381 |
| Fujitsu | £32,614 |
| Glen Water | £33,320 |
| Government Actuary Department | £20,390 |
| Halcrow Management Science Ltd | £83,295 |
| HCL Communications | £1,390 |
| Helm Corporation | £311,695 |
| Independent Occupational Health Ltd | £21,013 |
| Insideredge | £42,500 |
| Interim Management Assignments (NI) Ltd | £199,641 |
| Jacobs Uk Ltd | £91,224 |
| John Smyth | £61,040 |
| Kirkwood Management Consultants | £56,800 |
| KPMG | £20,650 |
| Love PR | £4,320 |
| Martin Cowley Media | £26,320 |
| McAdams Design | £273,478 |
| McClure Watters | £6,250 |
| MCG Services | £10,880 |
| Mercer Human Resource Consulting Ltd | £36,828 |
| MOTT MacDonald Group | £2,069,404 |
| MWH Ltd | £100,585 |
| NI Statistics | £17,846 |
| Nick Owen Associates Ltd | £1,922 |
| Ntuition Ltd | £112,456 |
| Nueda | £7,460 |
| Odour Assessment | £6,700 |
| Peter Graham Consultancy Ltd | £5,400 |
| Practical Planning Limited | £79,560 |
| Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP | £6,742,657 |
| Prime Transformation Ltd | £4,500 |
| RMS Enterprises Ltd | £8,400 |
| Robinson Consulting | £31,926 |
| Rospa (Health & Safety Audit) | £31,310 |
| Sackers & Partners | £8,831 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Stakeholder Communications Ltd | £14,290 |
| Strategic Planning | £3,600 |
| The Event -Ful consultancy | £22,450 |
| Water UK Information & Learning | £798 |
| Weber Shandwick | £50,270 |
| Total | £11,830,347 |

Northern Ireland Water

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development what are the energy costs to Northern Ireland Water in relation to (i) water treatment plants; (ii) water pumping stations; (iii) waste water pumping stations; and (iv) waste water treatment plants; and what amount of energy is provided to these installations from renewable sources. (AQW 2415/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that since its inception in April 2007 up to the end of September 2008 the company's energy costs were £29.4 million for the water and sewerage installations requested. These costs are broken down as follows:-

| | 1 April 07 - 31 March 08 (£ million) | 1 April 08 - 30 Sept 08 (£ million) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Water Treatment Plants | 6.6 | 4.0 |
| Water Pumping Stations | 2.9 | 1.5 |
| Wastewater Pumping Stations | 2.8 | 1.4 |
| Wastewater Treatment Plants | 6.6 | 3.6 |

During the 2007/2008 financial year, almost 8% of the total electricity used by Northern Ireland Water was supplied from renewable sources.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Regional Development, given that Northern Ireland Water has publicly stated that it is investing £1 million per day in modernising water and sewerage infrastructure, if this includes upgrading and replacing lead piping to older established housing and developments. (AQW 2459/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that some properties built before 1970 may be connected to the public water mains by a lead service pipe. The part of the service pipe from the customer's tap to the property boundary, which is known as the supply pipe, is the responsibility of the customer while responsibility for the part of the pipe from the property boundary to the water main, which is known as the communication pipe, rests with NIW.

Under its current policy, NIW will, at the request of a customer, replace the communication pipe free of charge provided that the customer replaces the supply pipe.

NIW currently replaces over 1,000 lead communication pipes each year at a cost of around £600,000.

Directional Road Signs

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his Department's policy on replacing lights on directional road signs. (AQW 2486/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service's policy for the operation and maintenance of illuminated traffic signs, including directional signs, comprises of a programme of night-time

inspections to identify faulty or defective lights. These inspections are carried out once a fortnight during the winter, and every four weeks during the summer.

Reports of outages and defects may also be received from other members of Roads Service staff, or from members of the public or public representatives. In all cases, the reports are programmed into the next planned maintenance operation for repair, which normally takes place 3 working days after the inspection, unless the nature of the report indicates that an urgent repair is necessary.

Derry/Londonderry to Coleraine Line

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development what is his Department's preferred option for the location of a passing loop on the Derry/Londonderry to Coleraine line. (AQW 2500/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: The work undertaken to date by Translink would indicate that a passing loop is required in the general area of Carrowreagh, which is approximately 1.5 miles from Bellarena Halt. This being the case, it would appear that the land at Ballykelly would not be required. Some detailed design work must be completed before Translink can determine the precise location. Additionally, there may also be geographical or land acquisition issues that would need to be considered.

Aviation Traffic

Mr Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for his assessment of the amount of aviation traffic and passengers being lost to Dublin Airport from (a) Belfast International Airport; and (b) George Best Belfast City Airport; and (ii) to outline what steps he is taking to address this problem. (AQW 2503/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: Accurate survey data is not available to me to make such an assessment.

Air passengers from the North benefit from having a choice of services offered by competing airports including access to the range of international destinations served by flights from Dublin airport.

Competitiveness of the Belfast airports may be assisted by better road and public transport access. A number of schemes to improve access are contained in current transport plans. Further improvement of these links will be considered as part of the forthcoming review of the Regional Transportation Strategy.

Traffic in Waringstown

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to tackle traffic congestion in Waringstown. (AQW 2522/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, in common with similar locations, traffic in Waringstown experiences delays at peak times.

Following your previous request for traffic signals at the Mill Hill junction in Waringstown, Roads Service has confirmed that, following assessment of the location, it has been concluded that traffic signals would not be appropriate.

Roads Service has no plans to introduce further traffic management measures in Waringstown. However, this will be kept under review and should a scheme be identified, that would be beneficial to traffic in the area, it will be delivered through the Local Transportation and Safety Measures Programme.

Traffic in Waringstown

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an estimate of the daily volumes of traffic through Waringstown. (AQW 2523/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a traffic survey was carried out on the A26 Banbridge Road, close to the junction with the Claire Road, between the 15 August

2007 and 24 August 2007. The survey recorded an average daily traffic volume of 7682 vehicles passing through Waringstown.

Blair Mayne Road

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he held with businesses prior to agreeing that the Blair Mayne Road in Newtownards be closed for ten weeks, at the height of the Christmas shopping period. (AQW 2585/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, as the Ards Shopping Centre is the major business affected by the temporary road closure of Blair Mayne Road South, discussions were held with the Centre Manager to explain the reasons for the closure and to inform that all entrances/exits to the Centre would remain open for the duration of the works.

All other procedures to inform the public of a temporary road closure have been carried out.

Only a small number of residents in Newtownards are affected by this temporary road closure and the subsequent effect on businesses in Newtownards is minimal. For this reason, it was not considered necessary to contact any other individual businesses in the area.

Essential Roads Maintenance

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of essential roads maintenance being dependent on money from the December monitoring round; and what steps he is taking to guarantee funding for roads maintenance. (AQO 1390/09)

The Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has sufficient funding in place to ensure that the roads network is kept in a safe condition. Roads Service complete regular inspections to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed as necessary.

I can confirm that Roads Service will continue to make strong bids for additional structural maintenance funds as part of the in-year monitoring process.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average timescale from interview to the completion of work under the Warm Homes scheme for (i) 2006; and (ii) 2007. (AQW 2223/09)

The Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The average timescale from survey to the completion of work under the Warm Homes Scheme for 2006 and 2007 is set out in the table below.

| | 2006 | 2007 |
|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Insulation Only | 9 weeks | 6 weeks |
| Heating Only | 17 weeks | 14 weeks |
| Combined Jobs | 18 weeks | 20 weeks |

New Build Housing Programme

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the projected new build housing programme in the (i) Dungannon; (ii) Cookstown; and (iii) Magherafelt districts, for the next four financial years; and which Housing Associations have registered an interest in these programmes. (AQW 2291/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The attached tables detail the Social Housing Development Programme for the above Council areas for the next four financial years and, where applicable, indicates the Housing Associations which have expressed an interest:-

1. DUNGANNON BOROUGH COUNCIL

| 2009/2010 | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Housing Association | Scheme Name | Dwellings |
| Dungannon Housing Association | Gortmerron Link Road, Dungannon | 16 |
| North & West Housing Association | Granville Primary School, Derryveen, Dungannon Phase 2 | 15 |
| Oaklee Housing Association | Dungannon Orlit Replacement | 2 |
| | Cloneen Phase 2 | 30 |

| 2010/2011 | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Housing Association | Scheme Name | Dwellings |
| Dungannon Housing Association | Annaghbeg Park North, Donaghmore | 6 |
| Dungannon Housing Association | Union Place, Dungannon | 12 |
| | Augher | 6 |
| | Castlecaulfield | 8 |
| | Coalisland Site 1 | 20 |
| | Cloneen, Phase 3, Dungannon | 24 |
| | Roskeen Road, Moygashel, Dungannon | 6 |
| Oaklee Housing Association | Edfield Way, Fivemiletown | 8 |
| | Coalisland Phase 1 (Travellers) | 12 |

| 2011/2012 | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Housing Association | Scheme Name | Dwellings |
| BIH Housing Association | 6 Castle Hill, Dungannon | 8 |
| Dungannon Housing Association | The Diamond, Moy | 12 |
| | Coalisland New Site 2 | 12 |
| | Killyman, Dungannon | 6 |
| | Moygashel | 6 |
| | Dungannon Mental Health | 10 |

| 2012/2013 | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------|
| Housing Association | Scheme Name | Dwellings |
| Clanmil Housing Association | Oaks Park, Phase 1, Dungannon | 30 |
| | Ballygawley | 6 |
| | Benburb | 4 |
| | Bush, Dungannon | 6 |
| | Armagh & Dungannon Phase 1 Learning Disabilities | 14 |

2. COOKSTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

| 2009/2010 | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Housing Association | Scheme Name | Dwellings |
| | No Schemes planned | - |
| 2010/2011 | | |
| | No Schemes planned | - |
| 2011/2012 | | |
| | Cookstown South | 25 |
| | Stewartstown, Cookstown | 6 |
| 2012/2013 | | |
| | Cookstown North | 10 |
| | The Rock, Cookstown | 6 |
| | Frail Elderly, Cookstown South | 25 |

3. MAGHERAFELT BOROUGH COUNCIL

| 2009/2010 | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----|
| | No Schemes planned | - |
| 2010/2011 | | |
| BIH Housing Association | Magherafelt Town Phase 1 | 39 |
| | Gulladuff | 6 |
| | Knockloughrim | 10 |
| 2011/2012 | | |
| | Bellaghy | 10 |
| | Maghera | 30 |
| | Swatragh | 6 |
| North & West Housing Association | PSNI Site, Draperstown | 12 |
| 2012/2013 | | |
| | Ballymaguigan, Magherafelt | 6 |
| | Draperstown | 18 |
| | Clady, Portglenone | 6 |
| | Inishrush, Magherafelt | 6 |
| | Magherafelt Town Phase 2 | 80 |
| | Frail Elderly, Magherafelt | 25 |
| | Magherafelt YPLC | 10 |

Total Budget and Expenditure

Mr Cobain asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the total budget and expenditure for each of the last three financial years; (ii) areas of underspend in each of these years; and (iii) to where underspend was reallocated within her Department. (AQW 2292/09)

The Minister for Social Development: Details of the Department's final budget allocations for each of the last three financial years, together with information on expenditure and underspends, are set out in the

table below. Year-end underspends cannot be reallocated within the Department and are held centrally by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

| Department for Social Development (£'000) | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| | 05/06 | | | 06/07 | | | 07/08 | | |
| | Final Budget | Final Outturn | Underspend (-)/ Overspend (+) (%) | Final Budget | Final Outturn | Underspend (-)/ Overspend (+) (%) | Final Budget | Final Outturn | Underspend (-)/ Overspend (+) (%) |
| Social Security & Child Support Programme | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Security Administration | 192,448 | 179,769 | -12,679 | 185,808 | 178,745 | -7,063 | 182,105 | 179,136 | -2,969 |
| Child Support Agency (NI) Administration | 17,046 | 15,718 | -1,328 | 17,106 | 15,775 | -1,331 | 16,447 | 15,953 | -494 |
| Department for Work & Pensions Admin Agency Services | 923 | 791 | -132 | 785 | 658 | -127 | 385 | 597 | +212 |
| | 210,417 | 196,278 | -14,139 (6.7%) | 203,699 | 195,178 | -8,521 (4.2%) | 198,937 | 195,686 | -3,251 (1.6%) |
| Housing Programme | | | | | | | | | |
| NI Housing Executive | 212,978 | 209,054 | -3,924 | 156,242 | 144,415 | -11,827 | 224,831 | 223,115 | -1,716 |
| Housing Associations | 135,932 | 123,385 | -12,547 | 134,387 | 126,994 | -7,393 | 173,279 | 172,851 | -428 |
| | 348,910 | 332,439 | -16,471 (4.7%) | 290,629 | 271,409 | -19,220 (6.6%) | 398,110 | 395,966 | -2,144 (0.5%) |
| Urban Regeneration/Community Development Programme | | | | | | | | | |
| Urban Regeneration/Community Development | 83,315 | 51,635 | -31,680 | 66,614 | 67,417 | +803 | 91,909 | 99,483 | +7,574 |
| EU Peace Programme | 9,547 | 8,460 | -1,087 | 6,759 | 5,862 | -897 | 1,369 | 1,348 | -21 |
| | 92,862 | 60,095 | -32,767 (35.3%) | 73,373 | 73,279 | -94 (0.1%) | 93,278 | 100,831 | +7,553 (8.1%) |
| Total | 652,189 | 588,812 | -63,377 (9.7%) | 567,701 | 539,866 | -27,835 (4.8%) | 690,325 | 692,483 | +2,158 (0.3%) |

Traveller's Sites

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1603/09, if the Housing Executive is obliged by law, to provide Traveller's sites in a geographical area identified by the Travelling community; or if another available site can be offered as an alternative. (AQW 2318/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is under no obligation to provide Traveller's sites in a geographically identified area unless it considers that it is appropriate.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Travellers

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answers to AQWs 1602/09 and 1603/09, to detail the legal status of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Travellers. (AQW 2319/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has no statutory obligation to undertake a Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Travellers However, the "Promoting Social Inclusion" report

on Travellers recommended that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive should undertake a comprehensive strategic needs assessment of current and projected accommodation requirements of all Travellers. This is to be “carried out in consultation with Traveller organisations, members of the Traveller Community and District Councils.”

Traveller’s Sites

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1601/09, if Traveller’s sites must be provided as a statutory duty or if they must be provided in the exact places requested by Travellers. (AQW 2320/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The legal framework which governs the provision and location of Traveller’s sites by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is to be found in Article 28A of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, as amended, which provides as follows:-

“28A. – (1) The Executive –

- (a) shall provide such caravans sites as appear to it to be appropriate for the accommodation of caravans of members of the Irish Traveller community,”

In considering whether it is appropriate to provide a Traveller site in any particular location all relevant factors must be taken into account. In drawing up a programme of schemes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive will give consideration to greatest need, land availability and in consultation with individuals, families and the wider community.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to ensure that all Departments implement their commitments in relation to Neighbourhood Renewal. (AQW 2380/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My Department currently funds services in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas which fall within the functional responsibilities of other Departments. These Departments have a role to play in providing financial support for these services in the longer term. That role, in relation to existing individual projects, is currently the subject of negotiations with the relevant Department or statutory body. I expect to comment further on the future of these projects before the end of this financial year.

I have agreed with Departments a set of targets aimed at reducing differentials, in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, in relation to health, education, employment, skills, economic growth and crime. These Departments have committed to work towards the achievement of the targets and to report progress to me annually.

Department’s Staff Annual Report

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how many of the Department’s staff did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in their last reporting year. (AQW 2395/09)

The Minister for Social Development: A total of twenty one staff in the Department for Social Development did not achieve an acceptable mark in their annual report, in their last reporting year.

Housing Executive

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development if there has been a reduction in the funding available to the Housing Executive Grants Office in Dundonald. (AQW 2418/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive Grants Office in Dundonald has a funding provision of £2.58m for 2008/09 compared to an original allocation of £3.3m in 2007/08.

Decisions on individual allocations and grants is a matter for the Housing Executive.

Housing Executive

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the criteria used to assess the maintenance carried out by contractors for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. (AQW 2436/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The criteria used to assess the maintenance carried out by contractors for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is as follows:-

| Value of Completed works | Required action |
|--|-------------------------|
| less than £100 | 6% telephone inspection |
| between £100 and £750 | 50% onsite inspection |
| Over £750 | 100% onsite inspection |
| All change of tenancy work (any value) | 100% onsite inspection |
| All adaptations (any value) | 100% onsite inspection |
| All policy items (any value) | 100% onsite inspection |

Housing Executive

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the criteria used to select maintenance contractors for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. (AQW 2462/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Response Maintenance tenders are procured under the Restricted Procedure of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. The criteria for being invited to tender is as follows:-

- (i) Eligibility of applicants. (Regulation 23)
- (ii) Economic and financial standing. (Regulation 24) – to ensure the financial capability of tenderers.
Applicants must have:-
 - (a) registration with Constructionline or equivalent
 - (b) in each of the last 3 years have an annual turnover of at least equal to £1 million and a status of "Active"
 - (c) have a notation of at least 20% of the estimated value for Building (Social Housing) or working in Occupied premises or Building (General)
- (iii) Technical ability (Regulation 25) – an assessment of the Applicant's management, staffing etc and technical experience, health and safety, environmental etc, including applicants must:
 - (a) not have had any works contract(s) terminated by the client for breach of obligations and/or poor performance by the applicant
 - (b) have a Health and Safety Policy approved by a 3rd party accreditation body or equivalent
 - (c) have experience of similar works
 - (d) demonstrate an adequate Company Management structure – details will be included in Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)
 - (e) Contract Management Capability for the contract applied for - details will be included in the PQQ
 - (f) have an environmental policy
 - (e) have a system for monitoring waste management
 - (f) show how the applicant will meet the Housing Executive's environmental targets

The criteria for awarding the contract are

- Quality 30%
- Price 70%

Housing Executive

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people currently on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive waiting list who are deemed to be homeless, broken down by (i) total; (ii) constituency; and (iii) council area. (AQW 2517/09)

The Minister for Social Development: At 30 September 2008 there were 9,547 housing applicants on the social housing waiting list deemed to be homeless and with 'Full Duty Applicant' status.

The attached table details the number of housing applicants with 'Full Duty Applicant' status by District Council area. The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency area.

| Council Area | Total |
|----------------|-------|
| Belfast | 3053 |
| Antrim | 233 |
| Moyle | 70 |
| Ballymena | 494 |
| Ballymoney | 109 |
| Carrickfergus | 223 |
| Coleraine | 298 |
| Larne | 87 |
| Newtownabbey | 427 |
| Armagh | 130 |
| Banbridge | 176 |
| Dungannon | 167 |
| Fermanagh | 183 |
| Craigavon | 231 |
| Newry & Mourne | 420 |
| North Down | 455 |
| Castlereagh | 239 |
| Down | 364 |
| Lisburn | 799 |
| Newtownards | 377 |
| Cookstown | 51 |
| Derry | 682 |
| Limavady | 77 |
| Magherafelt | 120 |
| Omagh | 31 |
| Strabane | 45 |
| Outside NI | 6 |
| Total | 9547 |

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the amount of funding allocated to each of the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2520/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The information requested is contained in the tables below. Table 1 provides details of the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund allocation to Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, in each of the last three financial years. Table 2 provides details of the amount of funding provided to each Neighbourhood Partnership, in each of the last three financial years.

TABLE 1: FUNDING ALLOCATIONS TO NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL AREAS 2005/06 TO 2007/08

| Neighbourhood Renewal Area | 2005/06 £k | 2006/07 £k | 2007/08 £k |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Outer West Belfast - Colin | 859 | 1,270 | 1,219 |
| Upper Ardoyne | 105 | 155 | 149 |
| Ligoniel | 131 | 194 | 186 |
| Greater Shankill | 1,035 | 1,530 | 1,469 |
| Inner East Belfast | 1,075 | 1,590 | 1,527 |
| Outer West Belfast - Lenadoon | 474 | 701 | 673 |
| Upper Springfield/Whiterock | 606 | 895 | 860 |
| South West Belfast | 339 | 500 | 481 |
| Inner North Belfast | 717 | 1,059 | 1,017 |
| Inner South Belfast | 340 | 503 | 483 |
| Lower Falls/Clonard | 863 | 1,276 | 1,225 |
| Tullycarnet | 115 | 170 | 164 |
| Crumlin/Ardoyne | 742 | 1,096 | 1,053 |
| Rathcoole | 409 | 605 | 581 |
| Andersonstown | 393 | 582 | 559 |
| Triax | 922 | 1,364 | 1,310 |
| Outer North | 809 | 1,196 | 1,149 |
| Outer West | 488 | 722 | 693 |
| Strabane | 369 | 545 | 524 |
| Waterside | 463 | 685 | 658 |
| Limavady | 151 | 223 | 214 |
| Coleraine East (Ballysally) | 198 | 293 | 281 |
| Coleraine West (Churchlands) | 133 | 197 | 189 |
| Ballyclare | 51 | 75 | 72 |
| Downpatrick | 275 | 407 | 391 |
| Newry | 534 | 790 | 759 |
| Bangor | 150 | 222 | 213 |
| Armagh | 241 | 357 | 343 |
| Omagh | 148 | 219 | 210 |
| Dungannon | 41 | 61 | 59 |
| Lurgan | 514 | 760 | 730 |
| Portadown | 139 | 206 | 197 |
| Ballymena | 245 | 363 | 348 |
| Brownlow | 352 | 521 | 500 |
| Coalisland | 98 | 144 | 139 |
| Enniskillen | 156 | 231 | 221 |

TABLE 2: FUNDING PROVIDED TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIPS 2005/06 TO 2007/08

| Neighbourhood Renewal Area | 2005/06 £k | 2006/07 £k | 2007/08 £k |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Outer West Belfast - Colin | - | 53 | 30 |
| Upper Ardoyne | - | 19 | 19 |
| Ligoniel | - | 18 | 18 |
| Greater Shankill | - | - | - |
| Inner East Belfast | - | 8 | 17 |
| Outer West Belfast - Lenadoon | - | 10 | 1 |
| Upper Springfield/Whiterock | - | 25 | - |
| South West Belfast | - | - | - |
| Inner North Belfast | - | 8 | 7 |
| Inner South Belfast | - | - | - |
| Lower Falls/Clonard | - | 9 | 9 |
| Tullycarnet | - | 9 | 13 |
| Crumlin/Ardoyne | - | 20 | 20 |
| Rathcoole | - | 22 | 22 |
| Andersonstown | - | - | 37 |
| Triax | 92 | 75 | 83 |
| Outer North | 21 | 57 | 57 |
| Outer West | 2 | 50 | 44 |
| Strabane | 18 | 48 | 29 |
| Waterside | 16 | 42 | 36 |
| Limavady | 2 | 5 | 20 |
| Coleraine East (Ballysally) | - | 1 | 68 |
| Coleraine West (Churchlands) | - | 1 | - |
| Coleraine Borough Council (supporting both Ballysally and Churchlands) | 4 | 29 | 37 |
| Ballyclare | - | 5 | 4 |
| Downpatrick | - | 21 | 19 |
| Newry | 1 | 61 | 7 |
| Bangor | - | 20 | 18 |
| Armagh | 8 | 55 | 22 |
| Omagh | - | 3 | 4 |
| Dungannon | - | - | 28 |
| Lurgan | - | - | - |
| Portadown | - | - | - |
| Ballymena | - | 16 | 41 |
| Brownlow | 23 | 54 | 61 |
| Coalisland | - | - | 7 |
| Enniskillen | - | - | 7 |

Housing Executive

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development how many vacant Housing Executive units there are, broken down by (i) total; (ii) constituency; and (iii) council area. (AQW 2525/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The total number of vacant Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties at 31 October 2008 was 2,873. The attached table details this by District Office area. The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency area.

| Council area | Total |
|---------------|-------------|
| Belfast | 640 |
| Ballymena | 154 |
| Antrim | 208 |
| Newtownabbey | 253 |
| Carrickfergus | 76 |
| Larne | 114 |
| Moyle | 8 |
| Ballymoney | 12 |
| Coleraine | 62 |
| North Down | 204 |
| Newtownards | 130 |
| Castlereagh | 143 |
| Lisburn | 118 |
| Down | 33 |
| Banbridge | 59 |
| Newry | 48 |
| Armagh | 44 |
| Craigavon | 144 |
| Dungannon | 47 |
| Fermanagh | 24 |
| Derry | 178 |
| Limavady | 19 |
| Magherafelt | 18 |
| Strabane | 39 |
| Omagh | 86 |
| Cookstown | 12 |
| Total | 2873 |

Sale of Land at Ballee

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1477/09, what she means by a 'variety of reasons' as to why the sale of land at Ballee, Ballymena, has not yet taken place. (AQW 2532/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The sale of land at Ballee, Ballymena has not taken place yet because my Department has been unable to reach agreement with the other parties in the changed economic climate.

Redevelopment of Queens Parade, Bangor

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the redevelopment of Queens Parade, Bangor. (AQW 2542/09)

The Minister for Social Development: My Department issued a development brief for Queen's Parade, Bangor to Karl Greenfarm Limited and a response was due on 30 September 08. The developer requested additional time to consider his response given recent financial markets volatility and this has been agreed.

Housing Executive

Mr Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications have been submitted to the Housing Executive Grants office in Dundonald for (i) replacement work; (ii) minor works; (iii) extensions for people with disabilities; and (iv) other works, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 2562/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. The table below details the number of preliminary enquiries received by the Dundonald Grants Office in each of the last three years. A preliminary enquiry is the initial expression of interest for grant aid.

| | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Preliminary Enquiries received:- | 878 | 752 | 857 |

Carers Allowance

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the process by which receipt of carers allowance is reduced when the person being cared for is admitted to hospital. (AQW 2632/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The rules governing entitlement to Carers Allowance stipulate that it is payable to someone who is caring for a disabled person (this is defined as a person getting Attendance Allowance, the middle or highest rate of care component of Disability Living Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance). When the disabled person has been in hospital for more than 28 days (84 days if the disabled person is under 16) payment of these particular benefits ceases. Consequently payment of Carers Allowance stops at the same time. When this occurs a notification is sent to the Carers Allowance recipient informing them of this.

Carers Allowance

Mr Simpson asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have had their entitlement to carer's allowance cut due to the hospitalisation of the person cared for and what was the total amount of money involved, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2633/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The IT system used to administer Carers Allowance holds data on current recipients only. Information is not held on the number of people whose entitlement ceased because the person being cared for was admitted to hospital.

Town Centre Regeneration

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development what money her Department has spent on town centre regeneration in each constituency, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2650/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The Department does not hold information in the precise categories requested for all its funding areas. However, information is available in relation to the three main development areas, and this is set out in the table below.

URBAN REGENERATION SPEND FROM 2003 TO 2008

| | 2003/04 £m | 2004/05 £m | 2005/06 £m | 2006/07 £m | 2007/08 £m |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| (i) Belfast | 10.54 | 12.69 | 11.91 | 18.6 | 23.40 |
| (ii) North West | 14.06 | 16.81 | 2.66 | 4.14 | 6.29 |
| (iii) Regional Cities & Towns | 2.17 | 0.51 | 2.15 | 3.61 | 24.11 |
| (iv) Total | 26.77 | 30.01 | 16.72 | 26.35 | 53.80 |

Housing Executive

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to provide figures of people on the waiting list for (i) social housing; and (ii) complex needs accommodation to meet their disability needs, in each district of Craigavon and Banbridge. (AQW 2697/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The table below details the latest information as at 30 September 2008.

| | Waiting List | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| | Social Housing | Complex needs accommodation |
| Craigavon | 1334 | 9 |
| Banbridge | 713 | 24 |

The figures relate to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Lurgan/Brownlow District Office (which covers the Craigavon area) and the Banbridge District Office.

Housing Executive

Mr Savage asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) companies; (ii) consultants; and (iii) other bodies, involved in the compilation of the questionnaire for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive condition surveys; and the amount of money that was paid for that work. (AQW 2698/09)

The Minister for Social Development: The work to compile the questionnaire for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive stock condition survey was carried out by the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate, on behalf of the Department for Social Development. Central Procurement Directorate provides a dedicated service to the Department's Housing Division and undertook the specific task of compiling the pre quality questionnaire which is required under EU contracting rules. No companies, consultants or other bodies were employed for this exercise.

ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Plastic Cups**

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission if the plastic cups provided for Members outside the Assembly chamber are recycled; and if not, to detail the action is being taken to ensure they are recycled or re-used. (AQW 2275/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): In line with one of the recommendations in the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat Review Report, the Assembly Commission aims to become an exemplar organisation in respect of sustainability.

The Commission aims to have waste recycled wherever possible and Parliament Buildings joined the Stormont Estate recycling initiative in 2006.

In order to facilitate the recycling of plastic cups 'becca' bins were provided beside each of the water fountains in the building. These bins are emptied into recycling bags and left out for collection by Sita, our waste collection supplier, to be recycled. Sita take all plastic material to Limestone Road for baling following which it is sent to J & A Young in Loughborough for recycling.

Unfortunately, on occasion the bins are contaminated with other waste such as coffee cups or chewing gum, in which case all of the contents have to be disposed of as general waste and cannot be recycled.

In order to encourage participation in recycling initiatives and to increase awareness of the recycling processes available, regular details of amounts recycled and amounts sent to landfill sites are posted on the Assembly intranet, Assist.

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