
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 23 January 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Rainbow Project

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what funding it has given to the Rainbow Project and to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community; and what plans it has to allocate future funding to this Section 75 group. (AQW 2964/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): In July 2006, the then Secretary of State, Peter Hain MP, announced the award of a short-term fund to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) sector. This has been administered by the Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO). Actual funding to November 2008 amounted to £200,000.00. The remaining budget provision of £30,000.00 will be allocated by March 2009.

The Rainbow Project received £2,000.00 in November 2008 from this fund which contributed to the replacement of computer equipment for the organisation.

Decisions on future funding plans have not yet been taken.

Interface Violence

Mr A Maskey asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the programmes it funds, in relation to direct intervention and prevention of interface violence; and (ii) the cost of these programmes. (AQW 3485/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We remain fully committed to addressing the divisions in our society. Our priority is to build relationships which will be the basis for sustaining the developing peace which people living in interface areas as elsewhere are entitled to expect. We recognise the invaluable work which communities have undertaken to build sustainable relationships which have been the foundation for the relatively peaceful summers over recent years.

Our department works closely with a range of partners to deliver diversionary programmes focusing on young people at risk of becoming involved in interface violence over the summer months.

Our department also operated other initiatives including bonfire initiatives, and we also support a large number of initiatives targeted at challenging sectarian behaviours, youth-based activities targeting issues around sectarianism and racism, and integration of minority ethnic people into host communities. Our department's sponsorship of the Community Relations Council enables it to fund a broad range of regional and local activities and initiatives including the core-funding of interface workers and programmes; small grants for cross-community events; and research on good relations issues. We also fund all 26 District Councils to operate community relations based programmes such as small grants schemes for community groups engaged in cross-community activities.

Funding of £400,000 per annum is provided by OFMDFM to the Department of Education for the provision of a range of Summer Intervention Programmes, which are delivered by the Education and Library Boards. These Programmes are targeted at supporting work at interface areas and challenging those behaviours associated with interface violence. A further £100,000 was specifically used this year to address such issues in North Belfast.

Social Security Legislation

Mr R Beggs asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the Executive's Children's Sub Committee has discussed the need for additional child care services given the impact that new Social Security legislation will have, particularly on lone parents; and if there are proposals to address this issue. (AQW 3715/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Childcare is an issue which cuts across the remit of a number of departments. At the meeting of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People in September, childcare was identified as an urgent priority. The Sub-Committee agreed that a cross-departmental sub group would be established to focus specifically on this issue.

This group is currently undertaking a focused exercise and, on completion, will submit a report, identifying costed options for future provision, to the Ministerial Sub-Committee.

One-Off Fuel Payment

Ms A Lo asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans it has to introduce a one-off fuel payment for persons in receipt of incapacity benefit. (AQW 3722/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: On 15 December 2008, we announced that we intended to bring forward a Bill to provide permissive powers to take remedial action in response to any circumstances that the Executive agrees warrants rapid and effective intervention. In line with this commitment, we introduced a Financial Assistance Bill in the Assembly on 12 January 2009. The Bill will give us the necessary powers to determine that either exceptional circumstances, or unsatisfactory funding arrangements for tackling poverty, exist and that financial assistance should be provided. If the Assembly passes the Bill, it will provide the statutory basis to enable a scheme to be developed to provide a one off payment to alleviate fuel poverty.

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr T Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Planning Appeals Commission website, (i) how frequently it is updated with information about appeal cases; (ii) are there plans to increase the frequency of updates; (iii) what value the Commission places on the internet as a means of sharing information about appeal cases; and (iv) if the website is currently up to date. (AQW 3785/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Planning Appeals Commission is a tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its independent tribunal status, it is appropriate for its Chief Commissioner to provide a response directly to you, and we understand that she has written to you in the following terms:

"I have been asked to provide you with information requested in the above Assembly Question.

- (i) The website for the Planning Appeals Commission is updated on a daily basis, i.e. Monday to Friday with information relating to appeal cases;
- (ii) the Commission does not have any immediate plans to increase the frequency of its updates;
- (iii) the Commission places great value on the importance and usefulness of its website as it provides a wide range of information on issues such as appeals intake and decisions, hearings, allocations, publications, statistics, policies, procedures and the functions of the Planning Appeals Commission as well as a lot more valuable information. The website is a very good tool for the sharing of information to the public on all appeal cases;
- (iv) the information currently displayed on the website is up to date.

I would be happy to provide any further information you require arising out this response or to meet with you to discuss the matter if that would be more suitable."

Irish Diaspora

Mr P J Bradley asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if it will make an annual contribution to the registered organisations in the United States of America that provide for the elderly and live-alone members of the Irish Diaspora. (AQW 3813/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: There are several organisations in the United States that provide critical care-giving services for the elderly and live-alone members of the Irish Diaspora. Many of these organisations are funded by the Irish Government in conjunction with city and state appropriations in the US.

While we recognise the importance of this work, there is, at present, no funding line in our current budget provided for contributions to these organisations. We acknowledge the humanitarian potential of this type of aid program, and we will, therefore, give this proposal due consideration in evaluating international spending priorities for the next financial year.

Executive Meetings

Mr D McKay asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if it will consider holding Executive meetings outside of Belfast, similar to the pattern followed by the Scottish Executive. (AQW 3837/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Arrangements for Executive meetings, including potential venues, are kept under review and do not preclude meetings at locations outside Belfast.

Christmas Gifts

Mr T Burns asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail all Christmas gifts they sent and received. (AQW 3885/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The First Minister and deputy First Minister did not distribute Christmas gifts. They each received a stationery set.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what legislation it will bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3912/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We introduced a Financial Assistance Bill into the Assembly on 12 January. Future legislative requirements are under consideration and will be notified as required to the Assembly in due course.

Breach of the Ministerial Code

Mr D Kennedy asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the comments made by the Minister for Education on the 17th December 2008 about Bobby Sands, were in breach of the Ministerial code. (AQW 3964/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Section 28A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Ministers to act in accordance with the provisions of the Ministerial Code and any alleged breach of the Code could ultimately be determined as a matter of law.

You will, in addition, be aware that questions of confidence in Ministers relating to their observance of the Pledge of Office are specifically a matter for the Assembly under Section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Larne Veterinary Office

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many jobs will be lost at the Larne Veterinary Office when DARD Direct is introduced. (AQW 3798/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The DARD Direct service delivery model will offer a wider range of DARD services from a smaller number of locations. In order to provide this enhanced service DARD has already signalled that it intends to reduce the number of offices. This will inevitably mean that a number of offices will close. As a consequence some staff will have to be relocated to other offices.

There are currently around 28 DARD staff located in Larne Divisional Veterinary Office. Under the current proposals these staff would relocate. There are no plans for redundancy.

DARD has a further 19 Veterinary Service Portal Inspection staff located at Redland Road in Larne. These staff are not affected by the DARD Direct initiative due to their need to be located at Larne Harbour and will remain in Larne.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what legislation will her Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3812/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request at this time.

Seed Potato Industry

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding will be made available for marketing, trials and training programmes associated with the Seed Potato industry. (AQW 3815/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: DARD is supporting trials through funding from the seed potato levy (until the balance is disbursed) and through the Seed Potato Breeding Programme at AFBI Loughgall. DARD and Cafre will continue to develop and deliver further education, technology transfer and supply chain development programmes. There is also marketing development support available through the Agricultural and Forestry Marketing and Development Grant Scheme of the Rural Development Programme. This scheme will open for applications in February 2009.

Little Acre Open Farm

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what actions have been taken following the discovery of possible animal welfare issues at Little Acre Open Farm. (AQW 3861/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In May 2008, I commissioned an independent review of the actions taken following the discovery of animal welfare issues on a farm in Katesbridge, County Down. This review is at the final stage of completion. Once I have considered this review I will take its recommendations into account in considering the situation at Little Acre Open Farm.

In addition, I have met a wide range of animal welfare interest groups and considered an earlier DARD consultation exercise on animal welfare. To assess what new legislation is required I asked my officials to bring forward a detailed policy paper. This paper is due to be with me soon.

My Veterinary Service colleagues continue to monitor the situation at Little Acre Farm on a regular basis to ensure animal welfare standards are being maintained.

Spreading of Slurry

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to review the restricted period for the spreading of slurry. (AQW 3862/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department will be reviewing the closed spreading period for slurry in 2010 as part of the 4 year review of the Nitrates Action Programme.

The review will be carried out in conjunction with the Department of the Environment which has joint responsibility for the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of the Action Programme measures in improving water quality.

Research being carried out by the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute on the environmental impact of slurry spreading in February will be considered in the review.

Larne Veterinary Office

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the proposed closure of Larne veterinary office, what consideration will be given to the views of (i) clients who depend on the office; (ii) employees in the office; (iii) elected representatives; and (iv) local farmers and residents, before a decision is made. (AQW 3866/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The proposal to establish the DARD Direct service delivery model will provide a wider range of DARD services from a smaller number of locations. In order to provide this enhanced service DARD has already signalled that it intends to reduce the number of offices.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was carried out on the proposal. As part of the public consultation phase, 110 organisations representing key stakeholders, including customers, staff and Section 75 representative bodies, local councils and political parties were written to and invited to provide their views. A letter was also issued to members of the NI Assembly informing them of the commencement of the public consultation. In addition the EQIA was promoted through an advertisement placed in the north's main daily papers and local farming press and a press release issued. We also made the consultation document available to all staff and invited them to comment. I am content the EQIA is thorough and reflects the views and concerns of the industry, staff, equality groups and general public.

When I have had the opportunity to fully consider the EQIA report, the views expressed at the ARD Committee meeting on 2 December and various correspondences I have received, I will come to a decision on how I will progress the roll out of DARD Direct.

Any decision will be aimed at providing a high quality and accessible range of services to the maximum number of customers.

Contaminated Animal Feed

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the discovery of dioxins found in animal feed, pig meat and pig fat, to detail (i) how many samples of each type were taken; (ii) who took the samples and supervised the activity; and (iii) the names of the laboratories that completed the analysis. (AQW 3874/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) In relation to the dioxin problem, 22 samples of animal feed were obtained.
- (ii) These samples were taken by trained and experienced DARD feed inspectors, under the direction of their line managers.
- (iii) All samples were tested by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) for PCB markers and one sample is being tested by the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) for PCBs and dioxins.

No pigs produced in the north of Ireland received the contaminated feed and therefore no pig meat or pig fat was sampled.

Contaminated Animal Feed

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the samples of dioxins found in animal feed, pig meat and pig fat were split three ways to provide a prosecution, defence and referee sample, as provided for in the Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. (AQW 3875/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: All feed samples for PCB/Dioxin testing were split three ways with one sample sent to the laboratory, one left with the farmer and the third retained by DARD. No samples were taken of pig meat and pig fat.

Contaminated Animal Feed

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if (i) adequate programs for risk based sampling and analysis of animal feeds and food are in place; and (ii) sufficient funds are available for this work; (a) on a routine basis, at arms length from government; and (b) when an emergency arises. (AQW 3876/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Food Standards Agency is responsible for policy matters relating to feed and food safety, while DARD is responsible for the enforcement of feed legislation. I am therefore not in a position to comment on sampling and analysis of food.

- (i) DARD operates a risk based programme of inspections of feed businesses and implements a risk based sampling and analysis plan for animal feeds.
- (ii) I am content that there are adequate funds available for routine inspections and sampling and for emergencies.

Implementation of EU Animal feed legislation is subject to audits by the Food and Veterinary Office of the EU and the Food Standards Agency.

Contaminated Animal Feed

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what advice and information she sought from the Public Analyst for Northern Ireland, in relation to the problem with dioxins found in animal feed, pig meat and pig fat. (AQW 3877/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As the dioxin problem was primarily a food safety issue, associated with contaminated animal feed, advice was provided by the Food Standards Agency. Advice was not sought from the Public Analyst.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the money for the Farm Modernisation Scheme will be available. (AQW 3894/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I announced on the 12th January 2009 that the Farm Modernisation Programme will open on the 28th January 2009.

Contaminated Animal Feed

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department is actively seeking compensation from the Government of the Republic of Ireland as a result of the dioxin scare, and if so, how much compensation is being sought. (AQW 3901/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Executive has agreed to continue to press strongly for the southern Government to accept that producers and processors in the north should have access to the southern Compensation Scheme. Every effort will therefore continue to achieve this and to seek to recover the full costs incurred by producers and processors here as a consequence of the dioxin-contaminated feed incident.

Work to detail the full costs associated with these incidents is ongoing in conjunction with stakeholders and the full amount of compensation being sought from DAFF will only be known when this work is completed

Animals Due to be Culled

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many animals have been culled or are due to be culled as a result of the dioxin scare; and to outline the typical market value for these animals. (AQW 3902/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: At present no animals have been culled. In response to the Executive decision to agree a voluntary scheme for the removal and rendering of up to 7,000 cattle on affected farms, the details of such a scheme are being put in place. This scheme will pay for the slaughter and rendering of animals voluntarily surrendered.

Herdowners who relinquished live animals for sampling will receive payment for those animals.

Sustainable Schools Policy

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what contact has taken place between her Department and the Department of Education on the Sustainable Schools Policy and its possible impact on rural schools and the wider rural community. (AQW 3903/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has worked with the Department of Education during the development of this policy and I have discussed the issues associated with rural schools several times with the Minister for Education. My Department and the Department of Education co-funded the development of the "Striking the Balance" report produced by the Rural Development Council. This report examined the range of key policy and social factors that influence school provision as well as setting out a range of options to consider with regard to school provision in rural areas. This report was used to inform the development of the Sustainable Schools Policy and I am pleased to see that the final policy is based on a broad range of criteria to be applied when determining the sustainability of schools.

Satellite Vessel Monitoring System

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to provide financial assistance in the next few years, for the satellite vessel monitoring system. (AQW 4014/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has agreed to pay for extended warranties for vessel monitoring systems up to 31st March 2010. I have also agreed that the Department will bear the cost of calls made by these systems for a period of 24 months. This period will end in November 2010.

Departmental Direct Office

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration has been given to establishing a DARD Direct Office in the Upper Bann area. (AQW 4015/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The proposed DARD Direct office locations have been selected on the basis of accessibility for customers and staff, minimizing disruption for customers and staff, size of farming sector and potential for animal disease outbreaks in office catchment areas, geographic features, potential availability of suitable accommodation and budgetary considerations. Constituency boundaries did not form part of these criteria.

While there is no DARD Direct office proposed for location in the Lower Bann constituency, almost the entire area is within a 16 miles radius of either the proposed Dungannon, Armagh or Newry offices.

Cod Stocks

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her Department's assessment of the effects of climate change on cod stocks in the Irish Sea. (AQW 4017/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Irish Sea cod stock has been fished unsustainably since the late 1980s, with the spawning stock biomass declining tenfold since then. Recruitment of juveniles

to the stock has been below average for the past sixteen years and amongst the lowest on record in the six most recent years.

Whilst the largest reduction in spawning cod since the 1980s was due to fishing, scientists have noted that the major decline the number of cod being recruited to the spawning stock in the 1990s coincides with an overall trend in increased sea surface temperatures (SST) in the Irish Sea.

Cod recruitment varies from year to year and there is a tendency for strong recruitment events to coincide with years of lower sea temperature and weak recruitment with years when sea temperature is higher. This may suggest some link between sea surface temperature and recruitment but more studies are needed to be certain about this.

If raised sea temperature is found to be a cause of poor recruitment the recovery of Cod stocks can still occur but it would happen at a slower rate. This will have implications for the management of the stock and fishing effort on cod would have to remain low for a longer period.

Assistance for Farmers

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what are her plans to assist farmers to increase the farm gate value of their produce through marketing and packaging; and the promotion of farm co-ops and other kinds of farm collectives. (AQW 4030/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department will provide assistance and support through the Rural Development Programme and DARD's Supply Chain Development Advisers, to help farmers and growers work collaboratively and market their produce more effectively in order to increase the farm gate value of their produce.

Following a successful pilot in 2007/08, a Supply Chain Development Programme is due to open for applications early in 2009. This programme with a budget of £2m will facilitate co-operation and collaboration in supply chains between producers and processors, and help people develop ideas and initiatives that improve supply chains and create new ones.

A Market Development Scheme with a budget of £2m will open in late January and provide financial support for businesses to improve the marketing of agricultural and horticultural produce. This will include assistance for feasibility studies to identify new markets, and help for producer groups to collaborate and market their produce.

Pork Crisis

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effectiveness of the co-operation between her Department and the Government of the Republic of Ireland during the dioxin in pork scare in December 2008. (AQW 4039/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There has been regular and close communication between the relevant Departments and agencies North and South of Ireland in dealing with the dioxin-contaminated feed incident.

At Ministerial level there has been a number of direct communications between the Executive and the Southern Government which is ongoing.

However as with any significant incident we will be reviewing all aspects including how to improve the effectiveness of co-operation between relevant agencies.

At official level my Department has had regular engagement with DAFF and the Food Standards Agency here has maintained contact with its counterparts in the South to exchange information and update on developments.

Pork Crisis

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effectiveness of the co-operation between her Department and the Food Standards Agency during the dioxin in pork scare in December 2008. (AQW 4040/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Following notification from authorities in the South that potentially infected animal feed material was exported to the North, DARD officials and the Food Standards Agency acted immediately to address the issue. Both parties ensured that each other were kept abreast of the current situation and communication channels were most effective.

I am pleased to say that the co-operation between DARD and the FSA was of a high and professional standard at all times.

However as with any significant incident we will be reviewing all aspects including how to improve the effectiveness of co-operation between relevant agencies.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Sports Grounds

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of safety levels at sports grounds; and what funds are available to increase these levels. (AQW 3867/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): Responsibility for assessing safety levels at sports grounds rests, in the first instance, with the owners and operators of the venues. However, the safety certification scheme being prepared under the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 will give District Councils powers to assess safety levels in any designated sports ground in their area.

Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), which is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding, is currently considering a number of safety projects. Funding for these will be considered in the context of capital allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11 which have not yet been confirmed.

Grant Aid for Sports Grounds

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what is the maximum amount of grant aid available to sports ground owners; and what percentage of costs can his Department provide to capital projects for Safety at Sports Grounds. (AQW 3925/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding. SNI administers a number of funding programmes to which sports ground owners can apply for assistance. The table below details the maximum amount of grant aid available from each programme and the percentage of costs that SNI provide to capital projects for safety at sports grounds:

Programme	Max Award Amount	Max Award %
Building Sport	No upper limit	85% of eligible construction costs & professional fees
Places for Sport – Surfaces	£245k	100% of eligible construction costs only
Stadia Safety Programme	£800k	85% of eligible construction costs & professional fees
Soccer Strategy Playing Facilities	Funding levels: £300k – UEFA £200k – IPL* £75K – PIL*	85% of eligible construction costs & professional fees

* IPL – Irish Premier League

PIL – Premier Intermediate League

Multi-Sports Stadium at the Maze Site

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the views of the relevant sports governing bodies in relation to alterations to the plans for a multi-sports stadium at the Maze site. (AQW 3942/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: No decision has been taken on the stadium issue. However I have advised the Assembly through Oral Questions on 12 January 2009 that I have come to my own conclusion on the matter. I also advised that I intend to present my conclusion to the Executive in the very near future.

As part of my consideration of the issue I did meet with the governing bodies of the sports involved. In those discussions the governing bodies indicated that should the project not go ahead at the Maze they would work with government and other stakeholders to find a solution which will provide long-term stability, acceptability and sustainability for their respective sports.

Ulster Scots and Gaeltacht Projects

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if there are sufficient funds set aside for Ulster Scots and Gaeltacht projects for the current calendar year to meet applications that are submitted. (AQW 3970/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Ulster-Scots and Irish language projects are generally funded from the agreed annual financial budgets for the North South Language Body, which comprises the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge, based on approved actions as defined in their respective business plans.

The Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast is funded directly by DCAL on the basis of an approved business case. The Department has not received any proposals for a similar project relating to Ulster-Scots.

Sports Grounds

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when he expects to have all sports grounds assessed and formal certification issued. (AQW 4102/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for assessing sports grounds for any purpose rests, in the first instance, with the owners and managers of the grounds. However, under The Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 local authorities in Northern Ireland will have power to determine the number of spectators that owners and managers of designated sports grounds may admit into their venues. Under the Order, local authorities will also be responsible for issuing safety certificates to owners and managers of designated grounds. The date on which safety certificates are issued to owners and managers of designated grounds will be a matter for respective local authorities to determine in the first instance.

Spectator Safety Standards at Sports Grounds

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the sports grounds identified by his Department or Sport NI that do not have the necessary spectator safety standards. (AQW 4103/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland has identified those sports grounds which, to varying degrees, do not meet the necessary spectator safety standards as set out in the Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (the Red Guide) published in 2007. Whilst defects at some grounds may be minor, such as inadequate toilet facilities or a lack of directional signage, these, as well as any major defects, will have to be addressed to satisfy the new certification scheme which will be applied by District Councils. The sports grounds identified by SNI are:

GAA – 6 County Grounds

- Antrim (Casement Park)
- Armagh (Athletic Grounds)
- Londonderry (Celtic Park)
- Down (Park Esler)
- Fermanagh (Brewster Park)

- Tyrone (Healy Park)
- **Rugby**
- Ravenhill
- **Soccer**
- All grounds within the top two tiers of the Irish League.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education and Skills Authority

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Education if there is any empirical evidence to suggest that the development of a large unitary authority, such as the Education and Skills Authority, will improve the educational outcomes of young people. (AQW 3705/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Is príomh chuid an réasúnaíochta ar Údarás nua Um Oideachas agus Scileanna a bhunú ná an gá d'fhócas soiléir ar chaighdeán a ardú, le freagrachtaí agus dualgais soiléire, le cumhachtaí oiriúnacha, agus tacaíocht riachtanach ar fud an chórais oideachais a sholáthar.

A key part of the rationale for the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority is the need for a clearer focus on raising standards, with clear responsibilities and duties, appropriate powers, and the provision of necessary support throughout the education system.

There is ample evidence to show that the current fragmented arrangements are not working, for example, the most common measure of a school's performance is the achievement by its pupils of 5 GCSEs at grade A* - C. The latest figures for non-grammar schools show that 45% (6844) children achieved 5 GCSEs at grade A* - C. However, within that headline figure, the variation in results across the education system point up the need for change. In Catholic-managed non-grammar schools, almost 49% (3510) of pupils gained 5 GCSEs at Grade A* - C. In controlled non-grammar schools, the figure was just 41% (3334).

These figures are not quoted to show the difference between the educational provision offered at Catholic managed non-grammar and controlled non-grammar schools, but merely to highlight the deeply unequal system in which our pupils are educated. The current fragmented system sees education administered by the 5 Education and Library Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. A single education authority is the best approach to addressing inequalities such as this, and ensuring a consistent approach.

Education and Skills Authority

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Education for her assessment as to whether the degree of change and disruption associated with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority will be justified by the benefits that will accrue to pupils, schools and the wider community. (AQW 3709/09)

Minister of Education: Bunaíodh an tÚdarás um Oideachas agus Scileanna le go mbeadh córas oideachais níos éifeachtaí ann, agus déantar éifeachtúlacht a thomhas sna téarmaí is tábhachtaí do pháistí agus do thuismitheoirí: gnóthachtaíil oideachasúil; agus lánacmhainneacht a chomhlíonadh.

The aim of the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority is to have a more effective education system, with effectiveness measured in the terms that matter most to children and parents: educational attainment; and the fulfilment of potential.

The case for change is emphasised by the current inequalities in the education system.

For example, the most recent statistics available show:

- 47% of young people did not achieve at least a Grade C pass in English and Maths, which equates to 12,000 pupils (2006/07);

- 70% (14391) of children not entitled to free school meals left school with at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C yet only 38% (1658) of school leavers entitled to free school meals had the same level of achievement (2006/07);
- 92% of Travellers have no GCSE's – compared with 4% of all school leavers (2001);
- 8.6% of minority ethnic pupils leave school with no GCSE's – compared to 3.9% of all pupils (2002-04).

For many of these children, their life chances are being unfairly limited.

The business case for the establishment of the ESA shows that, by the third year, in the first phase of this reform, £20 million per year can be redirected from bureaucracy to front line services. In subsequent phases I believe we can radically improve service delivery in a way which will release even further savings to schools and youth services.

Any disruption associated with the establishment of the ESA will surely be outweighed by the end of inequalities in educational provision across the different sectors.

New Schools Programme

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education what is the impact on the planned new schools programme arising from the recent High Court decision against her intention to establish a framework of builders.

(AQW 3719/09)

Minister of Education: De réir rialú na hArd-Chúirte de 19 Nollaig 2008 cuireadh an creat móroibreacha ar ceal. Ní féidir dul chun cinn le aon tionscadal eile tríd an chreat.

The High Court ruling on 19 December 2008 set aside the major works framework. No further projects can be progressed via the framework. Five projects already in contract via the framework shall continue. In the light of the High Court ruling, my Department aims to develop an alternative procurement method to bring projects to the market as quickly as available resources allow. The standard documents for this purpose are now complete and project managers have been instructed to prepare for competitions early in the New Year.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education what steps she is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork she sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009.

(AQW 3791/09)

Minister of Education: Agus doiciméid comhairliúcháin agus foilseacháin á ndáileadh, cloíonn mo Roinn leis na bealaí comhaontaithe dáilte chuig ionadaithe polaitiúla, teagmhálaithe parlaiminteacha, daoine aonair agus eagraíochtaí eile, de réir mar atá leagtha síos sna Treoracha OFMDFM um Dhailiúchán na bhFoilseachán Roinne agus na nDoiciméad Comhairliúcháin Roinne.

In distributing consultation documents and other publications, my Department follows the agreed distribution channels to political representatives, parliamentary contacts and other individuals and organisations, specified in the OFMDFM Guidance on the Distribution of Departmental Publications and Consultation Documents.

However, where possible, in order to minimise the number of documents issued, DE encourages other organisations and members of the public to access departmental publications and consultation documents on the Department's website, but will provide hard copies if requested.

To improve access to departmental information, DE's Publication Scheme, which specifies the classes of information provided by DE, was revised on 1 January 2009 in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner. In addition, where possible, the Department routinely issues key education documents to schools by e-mail.

Telephone Communication Masts

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Education what is the total revenue generated by land owned or leased by the five Education and Library Boards to facilitate the erection of telephone communication masts.

(AQW 3803/09)

Minister of Education: Is é an t-ioncam iomlán a fhaightear ó thalamh ar leis na cúig Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne é nó ó thalamh atá ar léas acu le tógáil crann cumarsáide gutháin a éascú, ná £1,430 in aghaidh na bliana.

The total revenue generated by land owned or leased by the five Education and Library Boards to facilitate the erection of telephone communication masts is currently £1,430 per annum.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education what legislation will her Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3810/09)

Minister of Education: Tá na riachtanais fhéideartha reachtacha don chuid eile den seisiún seo den Tionól sainaitheanta ag mo Roinn.

My Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request at this stage.

Schools in the South Antrim Constituency

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education pursuant to her answer to AQW 3625/09, to provide the same data for all schools in the South Antrim constituency. (AQW 3824/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh sna táblaí thíos.

The information requested is contained in the tables below.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2003/04

School Name	Total enrolment
St Joseph's Ps, Crumlin	759
Antrim Ps	602
Mossley Ps	600
Ballyclare Ps	567
St Bernard's Ps, Collinbridge	537
Fairview Ps	467
Templepatrick Ps	416
Mount St Michael's Ps	373
Ashgrove Ps	355
St Comgall's Ps, Massereene	347
Carnmoney Ps	325
St Mary's On The Hill Ps	312
Crumlin Ps	292
Parkhall Ps	280
Greystone Ps	279
Mossgrove Ps	278
St Joseph's Ps, Antrim	249
Randalstown Central Ps	247
Ballyhenry Ps	219

School Name	Total enrolment
Glengormley Integrated Ps	170
Thompson Ps	161
St Macnissi's Ps, Newtownabbey	160
St Oliver Plunkett's Ps, Toome	157
Loanends Ps	155
Earlview Ps	144
Roundtower Integrated Ps	124
Groggan Ps	120
Ballyduff Ps	112
Kilbride Ps	110
Rathenraw Integrated Ps	109
Doagh Ps	108
Ballycraigy Ps	108
Mallusk Ps	102
St Macnisius' Ps, Antrim	96
Straidhavern Ps	87
Creggan Ps	82
Straid Ps	81
Carlane Ps	74
Parkgate Ps	64
Creavery Ps	60
Moneynick Ps	53
Duneane Ps	40
Tír-Na-Nóg Ps	25
Maine Integrated Ps	16

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2004/05

School Name	Total enrolment
St Joseph's Ps, Crumlin	772
Mossley Ps	599
Antrim Ps	592
Ballyclare Ps	555
St Bernard's Ps, Collinbridge	529
Fairview Ps	475
Templepatrick Ps	410
Mount St Michael's Ps	381
Ashgrove Ps	360
Carmoney Ps	349
St Comgall's Ps, Massereene	345
Crumlin Ps	290

School Name	Total enrolment
St Mary's On The Hill Ps, Glengormley	286
Parkhall Ps	281
Mossgrove Ps	272
Greystone Ps	265
St Joseph's Ps, Antrim	249
Randalstown Central Ps	243
Ballyhenry Ps	213
Loanends Ps	169
St Oliver Plunkett's Ps, Toome	159
Thompson Ps	156
St Macnissi's Ps, Newtownabbey	154
Earlview Ps	150
Glengormley Integrated Ps	139
Ballynure Ps	137
Roundtower Integrated Ps	135
Groggan Ps	114
Ballyduff Ps	111
Kilbride Ps	109
Ballycraigy Ps	107
Rathenraw Integrated Ps	106
Mallusk Ps	105
Doagh Ps	96
Creggan Ps	96
Straidhavern Ps	89
St Macnisius' Ps, Antrim	88
Straid Ps	83
Tildarg Ps	72
Carlane Ps	62
Moneynick Ps	62
Parkgate Ps	60
Creavery Ps	59
Duneane Ps	33
Tír-Na-Nóg Ps	30
Maine Integrated Ps	28

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2005/06

School Name	Total enrolment
St Joseph's Ps, Crumlin	793
Antrim Ps	599
Mossley Ps	592

School Name	Total enrolment
Ballyclare Ps	534
St Bernard's Ps, Collinbridge	519
Fairview Ps	503
Templepatrick Ps	401
Mount St Michael's Ps	379
Ashgrove Ps	365
St Comgall's Ps, Massereene	342
Carnmoney Ps	341
Crumlin Ps	308
St Mary's On The Hill Ps, Newtownabbey	300
Mossgrove Ps	279
Parkhall Ps	264
St Joseph's Ps, Antrim	260
Greystone Ps	248
Randalstown Central Ps	234
Ballyhenry Ps	206
Loanends Ps	175
St Oliver Plunkett's Ps, Toome	160
Roundtower Integrated Ps	155
Thompson Ps	154
Earlview Ps	149
St Macnissi's Ps, Newtownabbey	147
Glengormley Integrated Ps	134
Kilbride Ps	113
Ballycraigy Ps	111
Mallusk Ps	110
Groggan Ps	107
Straidhavern Ps	106
Doagh Ps	98
Rathenraw Integrated Ps	98
Creggan Ps	97
Straid Ps	85
Ballyduff Ps	83
St Macnisius' Ps, Antrim	73
Tildarg Ps	70
Parkgate Ps	62
Creavery Ps	61
Moneynick Ps	56
Carlane Ps	52

School Name	Total enrolment
Maine Integrated Ps	42
Duneane Ps	31
Tír-Na-Nóg Ps	31

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2006/07

School Name	Total enrolment
St Joseph's Ps, Crumlin	831
Mossley Ps	603
Antrim Ps	601
St Bernard's Ps, Collinbridge	517
Fairview Ps	514
Ballyclare Ps	501
Templepatrick Ps	417
Mount St Michael's Ps	385
St Comgall's Ps, Massereene	372
Ashgrove Ps	360
Carnmoney Ps	339
Crumlin Ps	283
St Mary's On The Hill Ps, Glengormley	277
Mossgrove Ps	274
Parkhall Ps	244
Greystone Ps	229
St Joseph's Ps	226
Randalstown Central Ps	222
Ballyhenry Ps	185
Loanends Ps	183
St Oliver Plunkett's Ps, Toome	170
Roundtower Integrated Ps	165
Thompson Ps	154
St Macnissi's Ps, Newtownabbey	153
Earlview Ps	141
Glengormley Integrated Ps	133
Kilbride Ps	117
Ballycraigy Ps	115
Ballynure Ps	112
Groggan Ps	112
Mallusk Ps	104
Creggan Ps	101
Straid Ps	96
Rathenraw Integrated Ps	96

School Name	Total enrolment
Doagh Ps	94
Straidhavern Ps	90
St Macnisius' Ps, Antrim	74
Parkgate Ps	70
Maine Integrated Ps	70
Tildarg Ps	69
Creavery Ps	60
Moneynick Ps	59
Duneane Ps	35
Carlane Ps	35
Tír-Na-Nóg Ps	30
Ballyduff Ps	24

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2007/08

School Name	Total enrolment
St Joseph's Ps, Crumlin	833
Mossley Ps	609
Antrim Ps	598
St Bernard's Ps, Collinbridge	522
Fairview Ps	522
Ballyclare Ps	484
Templepatrick Ps	415
Mount St Michael's Ps	409
Ashgrove Ps	361
St Comgall's Ps, Masserene	360
Carnmoney Ps	343
St Mary's On The Hill Ps, Glengormley	286
Mossgrove Ps	259
Parkhall Ps	253
St Joseph's Ps, Farranshane	217
Randalstown Central Ps	212
Greystone Ps	212
Crumlin Ps	202
Roundtower Integrated Ps	195
Loanends Ps	187
Ballyhenry Ps	186
St Oliver Plunkett's Ps, Toome	165
St Macnissi's Ps, Newtownabbey	158
Thompson Ps	156
Earlview Ps	141

School Name	Total enrolment
Glengormley Integrated Ps	129
Ballynure Ps	124
Kilbride Ps	121
Creggan Ps	103
Ballycraigy Ps	98
Groggan Ps	95
Straid Ps	91
Maine Integrated Ps	88
Mallusk Ps	86
Rathenraw Integrated Ps	85
Doagh Ps	84
St Macnisiuis' Ps, Antrim	73
Parkgate Ps	70
Tildarg Ps	67
Straidhavern Ps	56
Creavery Ps	56
Moneynick Ps	55
Duneane Ps	36
Tír-Na-Nóg Ps	31
Carlane Ps	31
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach (1 Class Only)	19
Gaelscoil Éanna (1 Class Only)	12

Source: Annual school census

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

School Meals

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education what percentage of pupils at each secondary school in North Antrim received free school meals, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3838/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS AT POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY WHO WERE ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS 2003/04 – 2007/08

School Name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08
Ballycastle High School	29	28	24	21	21
Ballymoney High School	25	25	27	25	26
Cullybackey High School	15	14	11	13	13
Dunclug College	18	21	19	17	18
Dunluce School	22	21	20	20	18

School Name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08
Ballee Community High School	31	35	35	33	29
St Aloysius High School	35	33	31	34	34
Our Lady Of Lourdes High School	31	30	27	22	23
St Patrick's College, Ballymena	28	30	28	24	23
Cross And Passion College	23	23	21	19	17
Slemish College	13	12	11	13	12
Cambridge House Grammar School	5	5	5	5	4
St Louis Gs	4	5	5	4	4
Ballymena Academy	2	2	2	2	2
Dalriada School	5	4	3	4	3

Source: Annual school census

Lagan College

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education to explain why the building of a new school for Lagan College has been delayed; and when the building contract will be signed. (AQW 3892/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Lagan College páirteach i gnuastionscadal Comhpháirtíochta Príobháidí Poiblí (PPP) i dteannta Tor Bank Special School, Dún Dónaill.

Lagan College is in a Public Private Partnerships (PPP) clustered project along with Tor Bank Special School, Dundonald. The PPP project is to extend and refurbish Lagan College and provide a new school for Tor Bank Special School. There are some issues to be resolved before a preferred bidder can be appointed for this building project. The Department is working closely with those involved to allow the procurement process to move ahead.

Educational Psychologists

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education how many children attending schools in East Antrim are on waiting lists to see an educational psychologist (i) for up to one year; (ii) for up to two years; (iii) for up to three years; and (iv) for over three years. (AQW 3896/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt dom gur mar seo a leanas líon na bpáistí atá ag freastal ar scoileanna i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thoir atá ag fanacht le síceolaí oideachais a fheiceáil laistigh de na hamscálaí a iarradh:-

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board that the number of children attending schools in East Antrim who are waiting to see an educational psychologist in the timescales requested is as follows:-

Waiting for up to one year	224
Waiting for up to two years	66
Waiting for up to three years	24
Waiting for over three years	3

These figures include Stage 3 assessments and reviews, Stage 4 assessments, Stage 5 reviews, special testing and examination arrangements and assessments of pre-school children who are attending a nursery school or class, as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP).

Teaching Positions

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the answer to AQW 2889/09, why over 50% of recently retired teachers are still being re-employed in temporary teaching positions despite Departmental guidance stating that employers give preference to newly qualified, unemployed teachers and to experienced non-retired teachers who are seeking employment. (AQW 3899/09)

Minister of Education: Although the number of prematurely retired teachers who subsequently became re-employed has fallen by almost 30% since the 2005-06 financial year, I remain disappointed that employers continue to re-employ retired teachers on a temporary or substitute basis. However, the Department is not the employer of teachers, and the decision on whom to appoint to any teaching position in a school rests with the Board of Governors.

In addition to the guidance issued by the Department, a number of measures are in place which help to restrict the level of re-employment:

- The rules of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme militate against the employment of retired teachers, in that such teachers may suffer a reduction in pension as a result of earnings from employment as a teacher.
- Recent amendments to the Teachers' Premature Retirement Compensation Scheme have ensured that, from 2008-09, employers are responsible for the cost of any enhancement to pension awarded to teachers retiring prematurely. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of premature retirements and amendments planned for 2009 should bring about a further reduction.
- The level of central reimbursement for the employment of substitute teachers has been capped at point 4 of the main pay scale to encourage schools to employ newly and recently qualified teachers.

De dheasca na mbeart seo, tá mé ag súil le tuilleadh laghduithe bliain ar bhliain i líon na múinteoirí a chuaigh ar luathscor agus a fuair athfhostaíocht ina dhiaidh sin.

As a result of these measures I expect to see further year-on-year reductions in the number of prematurely retired teachers who subsequently become re-employed.

Buddy Bear School in Dungannon

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education what consideration she has given to seconding staff from the Buddy Bear School in Dungannon to other local schools. (AQW 3904/09)

Minister of Education: Bhuail mé le toscaireacht de thuismitheoirí agus páistí agus d'ionadaithe ón Buddy Bear Trust, a raibh Cathaoirleach an Trust i gceannas uirthi, ar 23 Eanáir 2008, le héisteacht lena gcuid buarthaí agus le plé a dhéanamh ar thograí cistithe maidir le todhchaí na scoile.

I met with a delegation comprising parents and children and representatives from the Buddy Bear Trust, led by the Chairperson of the Trust, on 23 January 2008, to listen to their concerns and to discuss funding proposals in relation to the future of the school.

Following consideration of the proposals I responded on 12 June, setting out the Department of Education's position in relation to the detailed consideration of the options presented by the Buddy Bear Trust and advising that the Department was unable to fund the options presented.

One of the options considered was a partnership with a grant-aided school or using and sharing the expertise built up by the staff in the Buddy Bear School with other special schools throughout the north of Ireland.

While it is a matter for the employing authorities to consider the employment of staff to meet the needs of children with special educational needs, and neither I nor my Department have a role in this process, officials sought the Education and Library Board's views on this type of option. The Boards have advised that if they were to employ a conductive therapist, they would have no means by which they could monitor or evaluate professional standards, since as educational professionals, they have no professional competence in relation to conductive therapy. They, therefore, would be unable to verify good practice and set appropriate professional standards for conductive therapy, which is outside their area of expertise, identify examples of best practice or take appropriate action if professional therapy standards were not met.

In recent correspondence, on 28th November 2008, the Buddy Bear Trust has presented its proposals differently and the Department of Education is currently in the process of considering these and seeking advice from the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety.

Job Evaluation Scheme

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education what funding her Department provided to Grant Maintained Integrated Schools to ensure funding was available to meet the requirements of the Job Evaluation Scheme for school caretakers. (AQW 3905/09)

Minister of Education: In March 2005 the Department provided additional funds to those schools in the grant-maintained integrated sector who had indicated that they wished to implement Job Evaluation for caretakers on precisely the same basis used by the Education and Library Boards for staff in controlled and maintained schools.

Leithdháileadh £110k san iomlán bunaithe ar an eolas a thug na scoileanna féin.

A total of £110k was allocated based on information supplied by the individual schools.

Job Evaluation Scheme

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education what funding her Department has provided to Grant Maintained Integrated Schools to ensure funding is available to meet the requirements of the Job Evaluation Scheme for school classroom assistants. (AQW 3906/09)

Minister of Education: Bhain an comhaontú ar thoradh an Phostmheastóireachta le Cúntóirí Ranga agus is iad na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne atá mar Údaráis Fostaíochta dóibh, agus i gcomhthéacs an eolais seo, ní bhaineann an comhaontú seo le fostaithe Údarás Fostaíochta eile.

The recent agreement on the outcome of the Job Evaluation was for Classroom Assistants for whom the Education and Library Boards are the Employing Authorities, and in this context this agreement does not have a direct read across to employees of other Employing Authorities. Any decision within grant-maintained integrated or voluntary grammar schools to implement rates of pay in line with the outcome of the Job Evaluation process in the Education and Library Boards in respect of particular categories of staff is a matter for individual schools' Boards of Governors as Employing Authorities to consider within the constraints of the total resources available to the school.

Although this is an issue for Boards of Governors as Employing Authorities, I have listened and taken on board the concerns raised by schools about the potential financial implications for grant-maintained integrated and voluntary grammar schools. Therefore, without prejudice I had sought additional resources in both the September and December monitoring rounds to help alleviate the impact on school budgets but in light of the overall constrained financial position at that time these bids were not successful. I will continue to use my best endeavours to secure additional resources.

Schools in the North Down Constituency

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 3625/09, to provide the same data for all schools in the North Down constituency. (AQW 3913/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh le fáil sna táblaí thíos.

The information requested is contained in the tables below.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2003/04

School Name	Total enrolment
Kilmaine Ps	653
Ballyholme Ps	614

School Name	Total enrolment
Bangor Central Ps	499
Rathmore Ps	447
Donaghadee Ps	425
Hollywood Ps	405
St Malachy's Ps, Clandeboye	404
Ballymagee Ps	396
Towerview Ps	373
Grange Park Ps	342
Bloomfield Road Ps	329
St Comgall's Ps, Bryansburn	300
Clandeboye Ps	287
St Patrick's Ps, Hollywood	243
Crawfordsburn Ps	186
Sullivan Upper School	178
Glencraig Ps	172
Kilcooley Ps	145
Millisle Ps	142
Redburn Ps	141
Bangor Grammar School	133
Ballyvester Ps	90
Glenlola Collegiate	78
Conlig Ps	53
St Anne's Ps, Donaghadee	43
Groomsport Ps	27

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2004/05

School Name	Total enrolment
Kilmaine Ps	648
Ballyholme Ps	593
Bangor Central Ps	532
Rathmore Ps	447
Donaghadee Ps	418
Ballymagee Ps	400
Hollywood Ps	382
Towerview Ps	379
St Malachy's Ps, Clandeboye	379
Grange Park Ps	351
Bloomfield Road Ps	331
St Comgall's Ps, Bryansburn	295
Clandeboye Ps	272

School Name	Total enrolment
St Patrick's Ps, Holywood	254
Glencraig Ps	187
Sullivan Upper School	178
Crawfordsburn Ps	177
Kilcooley Ps	146
Redburn Ps	145
Millisle Ps	138
Bangor Grammar School	138
Ballyvester Ps	86
Glenlola Collegiate	86
Conlig Ps	45
St Anne's Ps, Donaghadee	40
Groomsport Ps	21

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2005/06

School Name	Total enrolment
Kilmaine Ps	649
Ballyholme Ps	578
Bangor Central Ps	534
Rathmore Ps	461
Donaghadee Ps	405
Ballymagee Ps	403
Towerview Ps	377
St Malachy's Ps, Clandeboye	372
Hollywood Ps	367
Grange Park Ps	361
Bloomfield Road Ps	319
St Comgall's Ps, Bryansburn	289
Clandeboye Ps	253
St Patrick's Ps, Holywood	250
Crawfordsburn Ps	211
Glencraig Ps	211
Sullivan Upper School Prep. Dept.	180
Millisle Ps	142
Bangor Grammar School Prep. Dept.	136
Redburn Ps	135
Kilcooley Ps	134
Glenlola Collegiate Prep. Dept.	88
Ballyvester Ps	85
Conlig Ps	51

School Name	Total enrolment
St Anne's Ps, Donaghadee	38
Groomsport Ps	20

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2006/07

School Name	Total enrolment
Kilmaine Ps	654
Ballyholme Ps	591
Bangor Central Ps	561
Rathmore Ps	477
Donaghadee Ps	417
Ballymagee Ps	403
Towerview Ps	370
Grange Park Ps	364
St Malachy's Ps, Clandeboye	362
Hollywood Ps	355
Bloomfield Road Ps	314
St Comgall's Ps, Bryansburn	287
St Patrick's Ps, Holywood	252
Clandeboye Ps	227
Glencraig Ps	226
Crawfordsburn Ps	207
Sullivan Upper School Prep. Dept.	178
Millisle Ps	143
Kilcooley Ps	138
Bangor Grammar School Prep. Dept.	132
Redburn Ps	117
Ballyvester Ps	73
Glenlola Collegiate Prep. Dept.	71
Conlig Ps	46
St Anne's Ps, Donaghadee	34
Groomsport Ps	25

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2007/08

School Name	Total enrolment
Kilmaine Ps	654
Ballyholme Ps	600
Bangor Central Ps	562
Rathmore Ps	482
Donaghadee Ps	418
Ballymagee Ps	404

School Name	Total enrolment
Towerview Ps	385
Grange Park Ps	364
Hollywood Ps	332
St Malachy's Ps, Clandeboye	321
Bloomfield Road Ps	307
St Comgall's Ps, Bryansburn	286
St Patrick's Ps, Hollywood	237
Glencraig Ps	228
Crawfordsburn Ps	188
Clandeboye Ps	188
Sullivan Upper School Prep. Dept.	184
Millisle Ps	146
Bangor Grammar School Prep. Dept.	137
Kilcooley Ps	127
Redburn Ps	83
Glenlola Collegiate Prep. Dept.	76
Ballyvester Ps	67
Conlig Ps	43
St Anne's Ps, Donaghadee	34

Source: Annual school census

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

Schools Sited Near Overhead Power Cables

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the answer to AQW 2838/09, to name the schools in the Southern Education and Library Board that are within 200 metres of overhead power cables.

(AQW 3918/09)

Minister of Education: Is iad na 3 scoil i limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt atá suite taobh istigh de 200 méadar ó cháblaí leictreachais lastuas ná:

The 3 schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area sited within 200 metres of overhead power cables are:

- 5011602 Bleary Primary School, Lurgan
- 5032592 St Mary's Primary School, Dungannon
- 5046637 Gaelscoil Uí Néill, Coalisland

I am writing to NIE and requesting a report on what they plan to do about this.

Schools Sited Near Overhead Power Cables

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the answer to AQW 2838/09, how many schools in the Southern Education and Library Board will be within 200 metres of overhead power cables if the proposed route and construction of the Cavan- Tyrone Interconnector goes ahead as currently proposed by NIE.

(AQW 3919/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag NIE PLC don Roinn nach bhfuil scoil ar bith taobh istigh de 200 méadar ó bhealach beartaithe Idirnascaire an Chabháin-Thír Eoghain agus tá curtha in iúl acu fosta go bhfuil an scoil is gaire don Idirnascaire níos mó ná 700 méadar ar shiúl uaidh.

NIE PLC have, on request, informed the Department that no schools are within 200 metres of the proposed Cavan-Tyrone Interconnector route and that the nearest school is more than 700 metres away.

Children with Communication and Interaction Difficulties

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how many children are registered with speech, language and communication difficulties, in each Education and Library Board. (AQW 3973/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

CHILDREN RECORDED AS HAVING COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION DIFFICULTIES BY EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD – 2007/08

School level	ELB					Total
	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	
Nursery schools	149	129	167	209	57	711
Primary	939	1,334	1,016	1,228	1,240	5,757
Post primary	257	337	287	298	472	1,651
Special	535	492	675	672	349	2,723
Total	1,880	2,292	2,145	2,407	2,118	10,842

Source: Annual school census

Note:

1. Figures include children at Stage 1 – 5 on the SEN Code of Practice, with speech and language difficulties, autism or Asperger's.

Pupil Profiling

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on the development of pupil profiling and any subsequent training and support for teachers. (AQW 3995/09)

Minister of Education: The pupil profile was developed to provide a consistent format for the traditional annual report to parents. The cost of developing the pupil profile and of associated training and support for teachers has been some £581,000. It is as a result of this trialling and the associated training that we have been able to identify how best to modify the original proposals to meet the needs of schools and parents. That is why I am currently consulting on draft Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) Regulations (NI) 2009 that propose a standard coverage for reports but do not require a standard reporting format. However, the format will be available for any school that has worked with it and found it beneficial.

Is cuma cé acu a dtugtar próifilí dalta nó tuairiscí bliantúla chuig tuismitheoirí orthu, is é an bunchuspóir atá acu ná a chinntiú go bhfaigheann tuismitheoirí an t-eolas atá de dhíth orthu faoi dhul chun cinn agus faoi ghnóthachtálacha a bpáiste féin sa scoil i gcomhthéacs an churaclaim athbhreithnithe.

Whether we call them pupil profiles or annual reports to parents, the fundamental objective is to make sure parents get the information they need about their child's progress and achievements in school in the context of the revised curriculum. That is my focus and the purpose of the draft Regulations.

School Pupils Suspended or Excluded

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education how many school pupils were formally disciplined, suspended or excluded for sexual misconduct or sexual bullying, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4004/09)

Minister of Education: Ní choinníonn an Roinn an teolas a iarradh.

The Department does not hold the information requested.

The Department collects statistics annually from each of the Education and Library Boards on suspensions and expulsions. For statistical collection purposes, the reasons for such sanctions are grouped into broad categories for example, physical attack on staff, disruptive behaviour in class and stealing. Sexual misconduct and sexual bullying are not separately identified as reasons for suspension or expulsion.

The Department publishes this information on its website (www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils_parents-pg/pupils_parents-suspensions_and_expulsions_pg.htm) annually and the full list of reasons and the relevant data can be viewed for the last five school years on this site.

The table below shows the number of suspensions and expulsions in the last five years where bullying behaviour has been the reason.

	Suspensions for 'bullying of a pupil'	Total no. of suspensions	Expulsions for 'bullying of a pupil'	Total no. of expulsions
2003/04	341	9,512	0	71
2004/05	322	8,496	2	63
2005/06	339	8,918	3	54
2006/07	328	8,463	1	45
2007/08	312	8,194	2	25

Note: The information on suspension reflects the number of individual suspensions, as opposed to the number of pupils suspended.

Special Educational Needs Framework

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education how many children have been (i) placed in the Buddy Bear School; and (ii) financially supported by her Department through the special educational needs framework (AQW 4038/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) dom gur cuireadh páiste amháin chuig an Buddy Bear School sa bhliain acadúil 2008/2009 agus is é an ELB ábhartha a thugann tacaíocht airgeadais, trí tháillí scoile a íoc, le go mbeidh an páiste ábalta freastal ar an scoil.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that one child has been placed in the Buddy Bear School in the academic year 2008/2009 and is financially supported, by the payment of school fees, to attend that school by the appropriate ELB.

School Meals

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what progress has been made by her Department regarding provision of electronic access to the Department of Work and Pensions Customer Information System to facilitate the more efficient processing of free school meals applications and allow Boards to target those who do not apply for entitlement. (AQW 4058/09)

Minister of Education: The Department of Education has been working closely with the Department for Social Development and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to gain access to the latter's Customer Information System.

Tá meastachán mionsonraithe ar na costais forbartha ullmhaithe ag an DWP agus tá an Roinn ag breithniú an mheastacháin faoi láthair.

A detailed estimate of the development costs involved has now been prepared by DWP and this is currently being considered by the Department.

Transport Assistance

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many children are in receipt of transport assistance where a road safety hazard has been cited as an exceptional circumstance in each of the Education and Library Boards. (AQW 4059/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne go bhfaigheann na líonta páistí seo a leanas cúnamh airgid le haghaidh iompair scoile de thairbhe go bhfuil contúirt sábháilteachta bóthair ar a mbealach chuig an scoil:

The Education and Library Boards have advised that the following number of children are in receipt of school transport assistance due to a road safety hazard existing along their route to school:

Belfast Board	North-Eastern Board	South-Eastern Board	Southern Board	Western Board	Total
2	0	62	60	0	124

Child and Adolescent Psychology

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many graduates have enrolled for the doctorate degree in Child & Adolescent Psychology at Queen's University Belfast since 2006. (AQW 4060/09)

Minister of Education: Tá 24 céimí cláraithe don Dochtúireacht i Síceolaíocht Oideachais, Páistí agus Ógánach ag Ollscoil na Ríona, Béal Feirste ón bhliain 2006.

24 graduates have enrolled for the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at Queen's University Belfast since 2006. The next entry of 12 students will be in September 2009.

Child and Adolescent Psychology

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many student places are available for a doctorate degree in Child and Adolescent Psychology as a result of his Department's funding. (AQW 4061/09)

Minister of Education: Tá 12 áit ar fáil ar an Dochtúireacht i Síceolaíocht Oideachais, Páistí agus Ógánach ag Ollscoil na Ríona Béal Feirste le haghaidh iontrála sa bhliain 2009.

12 places are available on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at Queen's University Belfast for entry in 2009.

Child and Adolescent Psychology

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how much funding has been allocated to support the doctorate degree in Child and Adolescent Psychology. (AQW 4062/09)

Minister of Education: Is é an cistiú iomlán a leithdháil an Roinn Oideachais le tacaíocht a thabhairt don Dochtúireacht i Síceolaíocht Oideachais, Páistí agus Ógánach ag Ollscoil na Ríona Béal Feirste sa bhliain airgeadais reatha (2008/2009) ná £600k.

Total funding allocated by the Department of Education in the current financial year (2008/2009) to support the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at Queen's University Belfast is £600k.

Lagan College

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Education for an update on progress on the building project at Lagan College, Belfast agreed under the Public/Private Partnership Initiative in 2002. (AQW 4128/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Lagan College páirteach i gnuastionscadal Comhpháirtíochta Priobháidí Poiblí (PPP) i dteannta Tor Bank Special School, Dún Dónaill.

Lagan College is in a Public Private Partnerships (PPP) clustered project along with Tor Bank Special School, Dundonald. The PPP project is to extend and refurbish Lagan College and provide a new school for Tor Bank Special School. There are some issues to be resolved before a preferred bidder can be appointed for this building project. The Department is working closely with those involved to allow the procurement process to move ahead.

Lagan College

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Education (i) what are the reasons for the delay in the improvement and refurbishment of Lagan College, Belfast; and (ii) when her Department expects this work to be completed. (AQW 4170/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Lagan College páirteach i gcnuastionscadal Comhpháirtíochta Príobháidí Poiblí (PPP) i dteannta Tor Bank Special School, Dún Dónaill.

Lagan College is in a Public Private Partnerships (PPP) clustered project along with Tor Bank Special School, Dundonald. The PPP project is to extend and refurbish Lagan College and provide a new school for Tor Bank Special School. There are some issues to be resolved before a preferred bidder can be appointed for this building project. The Department is working closely with those involved to allow the procurement process to move ahead.

Teacher to Pupil Ratios

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to improve teacher to pupil ratios. (AQO 1723/09)

Minister of Education: Is é an Cóimheas reatha Daltaí le Múinteoirí (2007/2008) i mbunscoileanna thuaisceart na hÉireann ná 20.7. Tá an cóimheas seo níos airde ná an cóimheas in Albain (16.0), an cóimheas sa Bhreatain Bheag (19.9) agus an cóimheas i ndeisceart na hÉireann ach tá sé níos ísle ná an cóimheas i Sasana (21.6).

The current primary Pupil: Teacher Ratio (2007/08) for the North of Ireland is 20.7, this is higher than Scotland (16.0), Wales (19.9) and the South of Ireland (16.0) but lower than England (21.6).

The current post-primary PTR (2007/08) for the North of Ireland is 14.5, this is higher than Scotland (11.7) and the South of Ireland (12.7 in 2006/07) but lower than England (16.1) and Wales (16.5).

In the North of Ireland the current PTR (2007/08) for all schools is 16.8. This includes a Nursery PTR of 25.1, a Primary PTR of 20.7, a Special PTR of 6.0 and a Post-Primary PTR of 14.5.

PTR has a key role to play, in particular for teachers in schools with significant proportions of disadvantaged pupils to have smaller classes so that they can deal with the barriers to learning; give individual help to pupils; or work in small groups. That is why, for example, schools already receive additional funding via the LMS common funding formula when they have higher than average levels of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Other factors in raising standards and tackling underachievement is the quality of the teaching and leadership in a school. That is why our school improvement strategy, which we are currently finalising following consultation, has a clear focus on these.

In addition to this, I have made available extra funding, outside the formula, to ensure that, from September 2008, classroom assistants are provided for Foundation Stage pupils in all primary schools.

Pupil:Teacher ratios are a consequence of the decisions taken by individual schools on their teaching complements, under the LMS arrangements. School Boards of Governors and Principals are best placed to make decisions on the educational needs of all pupils in their schools and in determining their use of resources – including their most valuable resource, their teaching staff.

The prime determinant is therefore the availability of resources and members should recognise that more resources are needed. I maintain that the PTR is a key part of raising standards and improving schools, alongside leadership and quality teaching and would like to see a reduction in PTRs, should resources become available.

All parties should support my request for increased resources for education, which can be passed directly to schools.

Academic Selection

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the latest United Nations report on the 'Rights of the Child', and in particular its concerns over the continuation of academic selection in Northern Ireland. (AQO 1837/09)

Minister of Education: Cuirim fáilte mór roimh Thuairmí Deiridh Choiste na Náisiúin Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh.

I very much welcome the Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

I fully agree with their child centred approach and the need to strengthen efforts to tackle social disadvantage. I am also committed to ensuring that children have a voice in all policies that directly affect them.

I especially welcome the UNCRC recommendation that we:-

“put an end to the two tier culture by abolishing the 11+ transfer test and ensure that all children are included in admission arrangements in post primary Schools”

I continue to work for an education system which does not judge 10 and 11 year olds. All our children should have access to the best education we can offer.

I am also working to support vulnerable groups of children including those who belong to minority groups. The North/South Conference on Best Practice in Traveller Education is scheduled to take place in March this year and I am taking action to ensure that additional funding is being provided to schools based on the current reported number of Roma children.

Breach of the Ministerial Code

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Education how her statement on 17 December praising Bobby Sands can be reconciled with her Pledge of Office 'to promote the interests of the whole community represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly towards the goal of a shared future'. (AQO 1717/09)

Minister of Education: Níor sháraigh mé Gealladh na nAirí. Ba chóir mo thuairmí a léamh i gcomhthéacs na hóráide ina hiomláine. Leanfaidh mé orm ag cloí le Gealladh na nAirí.

I have not breached the Ministerial Pledge. My comments should be read in the context of my complete speech. I will continue to adhere to the Ministerial Pledge.

Breach of the Ministerial Code

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Education how her statement on 17 December praising Bobby Sands can be reconciled with her Pledge of Office 'to promote the interests of the whole community represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly towards the goal of a shared future'. (AQO 1713/09)

Minister of Education: Níor sháraigh mé Gealladh na nAirí. Ba chóir mo thuairmí a léamh i gcomhthéacs na hóráide ina hiomláine. Leanfaidh mé orm ag cloí le Gealladh na nAirí.

I have not breached the Ministerial Pledge. My comments should be read in the context of my complete speech. I will continue to adhere to the Ministerial Pledge.

Review of Irish Medium Education

Mr F Brolly asked the Minister of Education if the review of Irish Medium Education will take into account her Department's statutory obligations on the promotion and facilitation of the Irish language. (AQO 1815/09)

Minister of Education: Is cuid lárnach den chóras oideachais í an Ghaeilge anseo agus ní mór go léirítear é seo i ngach rud a dhéanann muid. Áirítear air seo comhlíonadh an dualgais reachtúil le forbairt na Gaelscolaíochta a chothú agus a éascú.

The Irish language is a vital part of the total education system and everything that we do, including the delivery of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education, must reflect that fact.

The Review had this at its heart. It also recognised and celebrated the fact that Gaelscoileanna are producing confident, capable, productive, dynamic and bi-lingual students every year and this is a wonderful contribution to our society.

The consultation on the Review, which ended on 10 January, was a wide-ranging one, and provided those with an interest in the sector the opportunity to influence how it will develop and grow in the future.

To ensure that as wide a range of views was gathered consultation events were held around the island in Derry, Portadown, Coalisland, Belfast, Downpatrick, Armagh, Ballycastle, Cookstown, Bettystown, Cork, Galway and Dublin.

Also, the Department is consulting with children and young people and this will end on 30 January 2009.

I will ensure that in considering the outcome and implementation of any policies arising from the Review, I and my Department will take full cognisance of the statutory duty.

Review of Irish Medium Education

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education if she has the resources to implement the Review of Irish Medium Education and the Early Years Strategy. (AQO 1696/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Straitéis na Luathbhlianta á dréachtú sa Roinn faoi láthair agus leagfar amach inti an fhís fhadtéarmach do sheirbhísí luathbhlianta go dtí 2020.

The Early Years Strategy which is currently being drafted by the Department will set out the long term vision for early years services to 2020. The Strategy will ensure that our energies and resources are wisely and coherently applied and funding is more cost effective in targeting priority front-line early years services, however it is too early to determine the resources that will be required to implement the draft proposals. This will be a matter for the action and implementation plan emanating from the Strategy to consider.

The consultation on the Review of Irish Medium Education ended on 10 January 2009. I will need to analyse the outcome of the consultation before announcing any policy decisions as a result of the Review. As with the Early Years Strategy it is therefore too early to determine the resources that will be required to implement the outworking of the Review.

Schools Modernisation Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the implications of the High Court ruling on her Department's Major Capital Works framework; and the subsequent suspension of the framework for the Schools Modernisation Programme. (AQO 1804/09)

Minister of Education: De réir rialú na hArd-Chúirte de 19 Nollaig 2008 cuireadh an creat móroibreacha ar ceal. Ní féidir dul chun cinn le aon tionscadal eile tríd an chreat.

The High Court ruling on 19 December 2008 set aside the major works framework. No further projects can be progressed via the framework. The five projects already in contract via the framework shall continue within the framework. In order to minimise the impact on the remainder within the schools programme, my Department is working up an alternative procurement method outside the framework to feed projects to the market as quickly as available resources will allow. The standard documents for this purpose are now complete and project managers have been instructed to prepare for competitions early in the New Year.

Integrated Schools

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education to outline the terms of reference for the review of the viability criteria for integrated schools. (AQO 1786/09)

Minister of Education: Is tábhachtach liom an dualgas reachtúil atá orm le forbairt an oideachais imeasctha a chothú agus a éascú.

I take my statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education very seriously. It was with this in mind that I agreed to carry out a review of viability criteria for integrated schools in the Department, within the context of existing policy and legislation.

This will be completed later this year.

Breach of the Ministerial Code

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Education how her statement on 17 December praising Bobby Sands can be reconciled with her Pledge of Office ‘to promote the interests of the whole community represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly towards the goal of a shared future’ (AQO 1709/09)

Minister of Education: Níor sháraigh mé Gealladh na nAirí. Ba chóir mo thuairmí a léamh i gcomhthéacs na hóráide ina hiomláine. Leanfaidh mé orm ag cloí le Gealladh na nAirí.

I have not breached the Ministerial Pledge. My comments should be read in the context of my complete speech. I will continue to adhere to the Ministerial Pledge.

Breach of the Ministerial Code

Mr I Paisley Jnr asked the Minister of Education if she considers her comments on Bobby Sands has breached the pledge she took to ‘serve all the people of Northern Ireland equally, and to act in accordance with the general obligations on government to promote equality and prevent discrimination’ (AQO 1806/09)

Minister of Education: Níor sháraigh mé Gealladh na nAirí. Ba chóir mo thuairmí a léamh i gcomhthéacs na hóráide ina hiomláine. Leanfaidh mé orm ag cloí le Gealladh na nAirí.

I have not breached the Ministerial Pledge. My comments should be read in the context of my complete speech. I will continue to adhere to the Ministerial Pledge.

Pupil Profiling

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what advantages the proposed pupil records reporting and assessment arrangements would have over pupil profiling for schools. (AQO 1801/09)

Minister of Education: Ceapadh an phróifíl dalta a ndearnadh úsáid aisti mar scéim phiólótach sa bhliain 2007/08 mar fhormáid chaighdeánach do thuairisciú bliantúil chuig tuismitheoirí.

The pupil profile that was piloted in 2007/08 was devised as a standard format for annual reporting to parents. It contained a broad range of information on pupils’ achievements, progress, interests, aptitudes, and participation in enrichment activities such as clubs, societies and sports opportunities.

The good news from the pilot was that the vast majority of parents found it easy to read and understand and thought it informed them of their child’s achievement. But I also received feedback that, by making every school produce its report in exactly the same format, the result was that some schools were providing less information than they used to do.

I have listened to the feedback from parents, teachers and principals on the Pupil Profile pilot, which has been useful in helping me to decide which elements to retain and which to improve. As much of the report was very positively received, I’ll be making very few changes to the detail of what should be covered in the annual school report. I am, however, proposing to go back to calling it an “annual report to parents” and to make sure that there is flexibility for schools to add in extra information that they think parents will find useful. And I’m consulting on these proposals to find out what parents, teachers and young people themselves think of them.

In view of the feedback from the pilot, my proposals do not require schools to use a standard format for reporting. However, the format trialled last summer will continue to be made available for the many schools that have found it beneficial.

Whether we call them pupil profiles or annual reports to parents, my key aim is to make sure parents get the information they need about their child's progress and achievements in school. That's my prime concern and that's the purpose of the proposals contained in the draft reporting Regulations.

Learning Communities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how area based plans and the work of the learning communities will be reconciled. (AQO 1841/09)

Minister of Education: Meastar go gcuideoidh an obair a dhéanann na Pobail um Fhoghlaim sa Cheantar (ALCanna) leis an Chleachtadh um Phleanáil Bunaithe sa Cheantar don Iarbhunscolaíocht.

It is anticipated that the work of the Area Learning Communities (ALCs) will inform the Area Based Planning Exercise for Post Primary Education. ALCs comprise schools from all sectors and have evolved across the North to plan collaborative 14-19 provision with a specific focus on delivering the Entitlement Framework (EF). They have already begun to consider and address the issues relating to the local delivery of the EF

The Area Based Planning Exercise for Post Primary Education was commissioned to produce a regional plan for the most efficient and effective arrangements to provide access to the Entitlement Framework for young people, from 2013. It is therefore likely that the ALCs will have a major input to the local area based planning process and should be well placed to make a submission to the Local Area Based Planning Groups.

However the process of making a submission to the Area Based Planning Exercise for Post Primary Education is an open and inclusive one, with submissions welcome from all interested parties and not restricted to ALCs.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Education when she expects her post primary transfer proposals to come into force. (AQO 1796/09)

Minister of Education: Tharraing mé moltaí anuas i mí Bealtaine 2008 agus é ar intinn agam go dtiocfadh reachtaíocht i bhfeidhm a ndéanfadh na moltaí a bhunú, in am don phróiseas aistriú iarbhunscolaíochta agus dóibh siúd a thosóidh iarbhunscóil i mí Bealtaine 2010.

I brought forward my proposals in May 2008 with the intention that legislation establishing these would take effect for the post-primary transfer process for those starting post-primary school in September 2010.

My proposals address a number of inequalities evident in the existing arrangements, in particular the role that disadvantage plays in constraining the life chances of children as they make the transition from primary to post-primary education. It is a damning statistic that while one in four children in our non-grammar schools is entitled to free school meals, the ratio in grammar schools is one in seventeen.

An examination of the areas that children live in as they make this transition also paints a picture of inequality, with children located in areas of disadvantage unable to enjoy equal access to a grammar school education if that should be their preference.

The case for change is also amply illustrated by statistics that record the extent of underachievement in the existing system, with 47% of young people not achieving at least a Grade C pass in English and Maths, which equates to 12,000 pupils (2006/07). Examine the statistics further to see how that underachievement relates to children from different backgrounds – Protestant, Catholic, Traveller, ethnic minority – and a clear picture emerges which strongly links disadvantage to underachievement.

This is the first cohort for whom the existing legislative framework for admissions and transfer will lapse. Despite a paper of May 13, 2008 and a legislative bid for my proposals the Executive has not engaged with them. The operative date for my proposals, of Transfer 2010, is clearly subject to this important engagement.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

University of Ulster

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning given the success of the pilot schemes involving the University of Ulster and young people in parts of Derry/Londonderry and Belfast, will he work in partnership with the University of Ulster to ensure that disadvantaged pupils in South and East Antrim can benefit from an extension of this approach and enhance their prospects of entering third level education.

(AQW 3763/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Step-Up programme is one of a number of initiatives for which my Department provides funding to widen participation in higher education by students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst the scope of the programme is essentially for the University itself to determine, my Department will consider any proposals for the further expansion of Step-Up, presented to it by the University. However, this will require the submission of a formal business case by the University which will need to be considered by the Department and formally approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel, in the context of competing budget priorities.

My Department's policies on widening participation should be judged in the round. In the current academic year, my Department is providing approximately £2.45 million to the four Higher Education Institutions in the form of a widening participation premium and funding for special projects such as Step-Up.

I am also continuing to work with Executive colleagues on the development and implementation of an integrated strategy for Widening Participation in higher education in Northern Ireland. This will include the appointment of a Regional Co-ordinator for Northern Ireland, answerable to a cross departmental steering group, who will drive the development and delivery of the strategy. It will also include the co-ordination of existing departmental and stakeholder initiatives to ensure efficiency and better targeting of resources, and the development of new collaborative partnerships to widen participation in higher education. Given the success of the Step-Up programme, it will continue to be an important part of the development of this strategy.

Telephone Communication Masts

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the total revenue generated by land owned or leased by the (i) Northern Region College; (ii) Southern Regional College; (iii) South Eastern Regional College; and (iv) North West Regional College to facilitate the erection of telephone communication masts.

(AQW 3797/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: No revenue is generated by any of the named colleges in relation to leasing land or property to facilitate the erection of telephone communication masts.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork he sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009.

(AQW 3830/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department's Green Policy states that "Where possible, the use of hard copies for external contacts and customers should be avoided if forms and/or publications can be distributed by email or CD-Rom, or downloaded via the corporate website".

In addition, my officials take full account of the requirements of the NICS-wide "Guidance on Distribution of Departmental Publications and Consultation Documents". This document prescribes who should receive various categories of publications, as well as the format and the number of copies to be issued.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what legislation will his Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3846/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request.

University of Ulster

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what courses are available at the Magee campus of the University of Ulster in (i) 2008/9; and (ii) 2009/10, at undergraduate and post-graduate level. (AQW 3865/09)

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

Redundancies in East Antrim

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department is taking, or proposing to take, to assist individuals affected by the recent announcement of redundancies in East Antrim. (AQW 3898/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The staff in the Jobs and Benefits Office are working with companies which have declared redundancies in East Antrim including Ryobi, FG Wilson and Brett Martin. They have established multi agency partnerships with the relevant Borough Councils in order to ensure that the maximum help and support is given to all who are facing redundancy. A tailored response is being put in place to meet on the individual needs of the company and those facing redundancy.

Further Education Colleges

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to breakdown, by age and gender, enrolment in further education colleges for the current academic year and the five previous academic years; and to outline how he plans to address any imbalances, in light of the funding cuts to community education. (AQW 4046/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Validated Further Education (FE) enrolment statistics for the current year are not available, as the 2008/09 academic year is still in progress. The latest available validated data pertaining to total enrolments in the Northern Ireland FE sector is for the 2006/07 academic year. Enrolment information, by Age Group and Gender, for the 2001/02 to 2006/07 academic years, is detailed in the table below:

Academic year	Gender	Age Group Total				Total
		19 & under	20 to 25	26 to 59	60 & over	
2001/02	Female	35,889	13,530	63,958	22,217	135,594
	Male	37,003	8,399	26,538	8,132	80,072
	Total	72,892	21,929	90,496	30,349	215,666
2002/03	Female	35,624	14,117	62,041	21,432	133,214
	Male	37,662	9,445	27,759	7,670	82,536
	Total	73,286	23,562	89,800	29,102	215,750
2003/04	Female	43,391	15,412	63,042	21,195	143,040
	Male	44,608	11,555	30,967	8,210	95,340
	Total	87,999	26,967	94,009	29,405	238,380

Academic year	Gender	Age Group Total				Total
		19 & under	20 to 25	26 to 59	60 & over	
2004/05	Female	42,895	16,251	64,247	22,380	145,773
	Male	44,978	11,786	32,710	8,728	98,202
	Total	87,873	28,037	96,957	31,108	243,975
2005/06	Female	43,030	17,244	61,324	20,950	142,548
	Male	45,485	12,433	31,821	7,995	97,734
	Total	88,515	29,677	93,145	28,945	240,282
2006/07	Female	41,239	16,443	53,970	18,121	129,773
	Male	47,791	12,020	29,031	6,834	95,676
	Total	89,030	28,463	83,001	24,955	225,449

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

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

In general, any imbalances in the figures presented follow the traditional pattern of enrolment within the FE sector. For example, traditionally in post compulsory education females participate in larger numbers than males. This is the case, consistently, for those over 20 years of age across the period for which validated data is available. The patterns of enrolments, in terms of age and gender, are largely consistent across the five year period, although there has been an increase in the number of enrolments from younger age groups and a slight reduction in the number of learners from older age cohorts.

The majority of community education funded by my Department is delivered by FE Colleges through their network of approximately 750 outreach centres. My Department has made no cuts to the Community Education it funds through the FE Sector, and across the five year period in question the total FE budget increased year on year.

In addition, over the next three years the Department is funding a new £3 million per year Learner Access and Engagement Pilot Programme. Through this programme, which commenced in the current academic year, FE colleges will contract with third party organisations, to provide learner support to 'hard to reach' adults who are economically inactive, are disengaged from the labour market, and have few or no qualifications.

Repayment Thresholds for Loans

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has held with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and his Executive colleagues to increase the salary threshold for graduates in relation to the paying back of loans. (AQW 4176/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which collects payments on income contingent repayment loans on Government's behalf, has made it clear to my Department (and the other Devolved Administrations) that it cannot operate a UK-wide collection system with different repayment thresholds. My Department could not, therefore, increase the repayment threshold unless the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in England and the other Devolved Administrations were to do similar.

I have recently indicated my intention to raise this matter with Ministerial colleagues in the other Administrations and I will inform the House when I receive a response.

Concessions for Further Education Courses for Over 60s

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he has sought advice from the Minister for Regional Development on the introduction of concessions for further education courses for those over 60. (AQW 4178/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I have not asked the Minister for Regional Development for advice on the introduction of concessions for further education courses for those over 60. As incorporated bodies, Further Education Colleges are responsible for setting the level of fees, including concessionary fees, for the

courses they provide. In establishing their fees policies, colleges have to take account of relevant legislation. They have to comply with Employment Equality (Age) Regulations which came into operation in October 2006. These Regulations mean that colleges are no longer able to offer concessionary fees to learners solely on the basis of their age.

Goods, facilities and services do not fall within the scope of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations. This is why pensioners can be offered, for example, access to free transport, while it is not possible to offer college fee concessions on the basis of age.

Apprentices

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprentices have been made redundant in the (i) construction, (ii) automotive and (iii) engineering sectors since 1 April 2008; and how many in each category have availed of contingency arrangements put in place by the Department as a response to the economic downturn. (AQO 1799/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Management Information collected by the Department in relation to apprentices who have left training provision is included in a broader “early leaver” destination category. Consequently, the Department cannot say categorically whether these apprentices have left due to redundancy. Nevertheless, from 1st April 2008, the following numbers of apprentices have been recorded as being “early leavers” in the sectors requested:

- Construction – 266
- Automotive – 54
- Engineering – 97

I would emphasise that the Department’s work in this area is ongoing, and that contingency arrangements were only introduced on 1st December 2008. These arrangements allow for a 3 week period in which the apprentice can look for an alternative employer, before transferring onto the Steps for Work initiative, or continuing training under Training for Success. This 3 week period, coupled with the Christmas holidays, means that a clearer picture on the uptake of contingency arrangements will emerge over the next few weeks.

West Belfast Employment Service Board

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the 500 people moved into substantive employment and 4000 referrals and whether this confirms the success of the West Belfast Employment Service Board (ESB); and what plans he has to identify additional funding to enable ESB to develop its work. (AQO 1798/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I am very encouraged to see that so many people from West Belfast and Greater Shankill have moved into substantive employment as a direct result of my Department’s provision. The Local Employment Intermediary Service programme (LEMIS) and the previous pilot Targeted Initiatives operate in Belfast, Londonderry and Strabane and results have been positive in all areas.

My Department does not core-fund organisations. It purchases services from Providers which are focussed on assisting clients. Additional funding to enable the ESB to fulfil its “Wider Task Force Remit” is a cross Departmental issue and I welcome the fact that the DEL Committee has recently acknowledged this by writing to the other Departments seeking their views on the issue. The ESB’s administration facilitates the LEMIS Belfast Citywide Stakeholders Forum in its monitoring of LEMIS and generally in assisting DEL in the delivery of the service in Belfast. They currently receive £88k per annum for this and are contracted to deliver this service until March 2010.

I appreciate the Employment Services Board’s contribution in this partnership between the Department, local communities and Providers. I also value the local providers on the ground, who actually engage and mentor the participants, and the work of my own officials who develop and oversee the service.

Review of STEM

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the review of STEM will be completed and how quickly he anticipates the Department being able to respond to its recommendations. (AQO 1805/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The final draft of the STEM review is due to be presented to the Minister of Education and me in the near future. After that my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Education, will make a prompt response to the report subject, of course, to the details of the recommendations and any resource implications it may contain.

Redundancies at AVX

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what response his Department has made to the recent redundancies at AVX in Coleraine. (AQO 1692/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Immediate contact was made with the Company when the redundancies were announced offering help and advice on employment, education, training, reskilling, jobsearch, and arranging for benefits advice from the Social Security Agency. Under a multi-agency approach, facilitated by the local Council's Economic Development Team, we will target directly those in AVX facing redundancy.

Redundancies in South Down

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what response his Department has made to the recent redundancies in South Down. (AQO 1697/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has provided information and advice to those made redundant in South Down to help them find alternative employment or identify opportunities to retrain under the Department's employment and training programmes. In a number of cases the Jobs & Benefits staff were able to deliver on-site clinics directly to those who had received notices of redundancy.

STEM Courses at Universities

Mr E Poots asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many additional places will be available for STEM courses at universities in 2009. (AQO 1785/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The allocation of places for particular courses is a matter for each of the universities in Northern Ireland. I am, however, very keen to work with the universities to determine if any additional places are required in specific subject areas. This will be particularly relevant in the context of the forthcoming STEM review which will contain a range of recommendations, including actions for government.

Educational Guidance Service for Adults

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the importance of the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) in the current economic climate. (AQO 1840/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Education and Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) is currently funded to support my Department in providing educational guidance to adults and introducing adults to learning, with particular emphasis on essential skills. I consider this to be an important role particularly in the current economic climate.

Stranmillis-Queen's Merger Business Case

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the consideration of the Stranmillis-Queen's merger business case will be complete. (AQO 1695/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The consideration of the Stranmillis-Queens Merger business case will be complete once a sequence of approval processes have been satisfactorily addressed. The business case is firstly considered by my Departmental economists to determine if it meets Treasury 'Green Book' standards; work has begun already on this. Subsequently, it will be examined by my Department's Finance Division before being submitted to the Permanent Secretary for approval. If my officials are satisfied with the business case, it will then be submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) for scrutiny. If DFP approval is granted, I will at that time give the business case my full consideration.

Research Assessment Exercise

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assessment his Department has made of the performance of the two universities in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. (AQO 1694/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) show that in Northern Ireland the proportion of research graded at the highest level has increased since the last RAE in 2001. Half the assessed research in Northern Ireland is either internationally excellent or world-leading with more than 98 per cent of researchers working in disciplines where world leading research is taking place. I am delighted with the performance of our two universities and their improvement in overall placing within the UK.

Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the quality of research undertaken by Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. (AQO 1794/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) show that in Northern Ireland the proportion of research graded at the highest level has increased since the last RAE in 2001. Half the assessed research in Northern Ireland is either internationally excellent or world-leading with more than 98 per cent of researchers working in disciplines where world leading research is taking place. I am delighted with the performance of our two universities and their improvement in overall placings within the UK.

Educational Guidance Service for Adults

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration he has given, in addition to the increase in staff at Jobs and Benefits Offices, to guarantee funding for organisations like the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) given its proven ability to support persons both facing redundancy and long term unemployment. (AQO 1803/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department provides specific services in redundancy situations and to the long term unemployed, in partnership with other organisations, including EGSA. With the exception of EGSA, all of this work is carried out on a contract basis and funding is guaranteed until the contract end date. EGSA is funded by my Department to provide educational guidance and introduce adults to learning. Funding is agreed on an annual basis. Work is currently progressing in relation to tender action and EGSA will have an opportunity to compete.

Further Education Facilities

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans his Department has to increase the provision of further education facilities and courses in the West Tyrone constituency. (AQO 1792/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: South West College's state of the art campus for further education was opened in Omagh in November 2005. A wide range of Further Education and Higher Education provision is available at this campus, including Foundation Degrees. Provision can be enhanced even further, subject to local demand.

North West Regional College is considering proposals to provide a new build facility at its Strabane campus. Work is currently scheduled to begin in 2012 with a completion date in 2014.

North West Regional College expanded the number of full time and part time courses at its Strabane campus at the start of the 2008/09 academic year. The College intends to offer an even wider range of provision in Strabane for the 2009/10 academic year following the completion of refurbishment of the campus' facilities.

December Monitoring Round

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide details of monies returned by his Department in the December Monitoring Round. (AQO 1838/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department declared a total of £25.9 million in reduced requirements in the December 2008 Monitoring Round made up as follows:

	£ millions		
	Admin	Resource	Total
Closure of Training Programmes		-0.3	-0.3
Employment Programmes -Lower Demand		-16.2	-16.2
Employment Rights - Lower Caseload		-0.2	-0.2
Enterprise Ulster - Closure Costs		-0.2	-0.2
European Social Fund - Slower start to Programme than anticipated		-1.0	-1.0
Foreign Direct Investment Employer Support - Easement		-1.4	-1.4
Delays in Further Education Projects		-2.1	-2.1
Springvale Training Ltd - Easement		-0.3	-0.3
Staff Vacancies	-1.6		-1.6
Student Loans and Grants - Lower Demand		-2.7	-2.7
	-1.6	-24.3	-25.9

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

District Council Projects

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the amount of financial assistance toward projects in each district council, in the last two years; and (ii) the amount and percentage of this financial assistance compared to the total amount that was applied for, in each district council. (AQW 3630/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):

- (i) Information for the last two financial years is set out in the attached table.
(ii) This information is not available as it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost

DETI FINANCED PROJECTS

District Council Area	2006-2007 Total amount of financial assistance towards projects in each DC £000's	2007-2008 Total amount of financial assistance towards projects in each DC £000's
Antrim	3,485	3,372
Ards	1,574	889
Armagh	6,971	1,866
Ballymena	3,657	4,144

District Council Area	2006-2007 Total amount of financial assistance towards projects in each DC £000's	2007-2008 Total amount of financial assistance towards projects in each DC £000's
Ballymoney	504	587
Banbridge	3,229	1,060
Belfast	41,791	38,165
Carrickfergus	255	413
Castlereagh	589	4,023
Coleraine	915	6,243
Cookstown	1,559	2,785
Craigavon	8,555	3,878
Derry	10,646	12,975
Down	526	1,253
Dungannon & S Tyrone	2,865	9,453
Fermanagh	6,685	3,336
Larne	605	3,594
Limavady	1,236	571
Lisburn	4,550	4,063
Magherafelt	1,002	2,810
Moyle	298	692
Newry & Mourne	4,583	6,946
Newtownabbey	9,276	2,825
N Down	1,701	2,766
Omagh	1,039	4,030
Strabane	1,775	1,116
Financial Assistance related to more than one DC	3,653	7,407
Totals	123,524	131,262

Notes:

- Information requested for part (ii) of the question is not readily available and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.
- Invest NI offered an additional £7.2m (£2.5m in 2006/07, £4.7m in 2007/08) for which this level of detail is not available.
- In addition, £2.3m (£1.1m in 2006/07, £1.2m in 2007/08) was offered through the Start a Business Programme which is provided by Invest NI in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland. This assistance is offered to individuals who are not part of Invest NI's client base but have the potential to become Invest NI clients.
- The figures above include applications for assistance made in earlier years. For example, applications for assistance by District Councils for funding of Local Economic Development action plans under the Building Sustainable Prosperity programme were made in 2002 in respect of the 2000-2006 programme period.
- The figures provided include amounts paid to Derry City Council in relation to claims against the 'Wireless Council' and 'Wireless Walls' Broadband Flagship projects, applications for which were submitted in 2004. The total amounts applied for under each project are £174,353 and £110,209 respectively to which DETI contributed 75%. The full amount due to the Council for both projects had been paid by early December 2007.
- The Figures provided include a wide range of other NITB initiatives to support the development of tourism, initiatives include International Development Fund (primarily in Londonderry), The Tourism Development Scheme - £1.5m per annum and other Signature Project specific initiatives.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what support and assistance is available to small and medium sized enterprises that are struggling to survive as a result of the economic downturn. (AQW 3773/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There are a number of initiatives underway to assist businesses during the downturn. The Finance Minister and I met representatives of the local banks in December 2008 to discuss their lending policies to businesses, and how they might make more use of the UK wide lending initiatives announced by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report to help small businesses. My Department and Invest NI are also continuing to work with the UK Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the banks and businesses to ensure that Northern Ireland takes full advantage of the UK-wide Small Business Finance Scheme which is due to be launched during January.

Invest NI has developed a programme of initiatives designed to enable its clients to tackle the impact of a sustained economic downturn. At the end of September, the £5 million 'Accelerated Support Fund' was launched providing fast track advice and assistance to client companies to help them respond to the effects of the downturn.

The agency has held seven seminars on the theme of "Navigating through Challenging Times". These have attracted over 500 attendees from 440 of Invest NI's Client Companies and feedback to date has been extremely positive. As a follow-up to these events, Invest NI is offering up to five days of free consultancy support on a range of key business areas.

Invest NI has also continued to increase its focus on export support to exploit the current weaknesses in the exchange rate and has initiated additional trade missions to Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States & Europe as well as developing a new export mentoring programme.

For those businesses that are not Invest NI clients, a "Beat the Credit Crunch" section has been added to the nibusinessinfo website which provides practical tools and guides on key business activities such as managing Finances and securing extra sales. Invest NI has also brought together other economic development partners to launch a series of seminars offering practical advice and support to non Invest NI client companies. A pilot seminar was held in Omagh in December 2008 and a further nine seminars will be held across Northern Ireland during January and February 2009.

All Northern Ireland businesses can also access the Carbon Trust's Interest Free Loan Scheme which aims to maximise energy efficiency. To date 24 applicants have received a total of £3.2m funding under this scheme, and 95 free energy efficiency surveys completed.

Both DETI and Invest NI continue to proactively work with the companies and entrepreneurs whose business strategies and investment decisions are essential to progressing towards the targets contained in the Executive's Programme for Government.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what regulatory powers and duties does her Department have with regards to the Presbyterian Mutual Society.[R] (AQW 3789/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Presbyterian Mutual Society is a registered society under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. Under that Act, my Department is responsible for the office of the Registrar, who undertakes specified statutory functions in respect of all societies on the current register. These functions relate to the registration status and non-commercial aspects of a society's operations:

- Registration, name and maximum shareholding
- Provisions as to rules
- Cancellation, suspension or refusal of registration of society or rules
- Membership and special provisions affecting membership
- Accounts, Officers, registers, books
- Amalgamations and transfers of engagements
- Dissolution

All registered societies are also required under section 48 of the Act to submit an annual return within seven months of its respective financial year-end. The annual return must contain the revenue account and balance sheet prepared in accordance with section 37 (provisions as to the accounts and balance sheets of registered societies). The annual return comprises part of the public file on each society held by the Registry.

The Registrar does not have any prudential supervisory role in relation to industrial and provident societies.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with Her Majesty's Treasury about guaranteeing investments in the Presbyterian Mutual Society. (AQW 3790/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I have not had any discussions with the Treasury about guaranteeing investments in the Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS). However, following the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report announcement of the planned review of the Northern Ireland mutuals sector, officials from my Department met with Department for Finance and Personnel and Treasury officials to discuss the scope and timescale for the review which will consider, among other things, how to prevent this situation being repeated in the future, and look at proposals for depositor protection.

At its meeting on 15 January, the Executive also considered the PMS issue and it was agreed that the FM and dFM should seek to raise with the Prime Minister the issue of help to the members of the PMS and to impress upon him the need for the UK government to provide support to them in terms of depositor protection. This is currently being actioned.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork she sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3792/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and its NDPBs have a statutory duty in respect of certain publications, e.g. Annual Reports and Accounts, to provide hard copies of documents. However, whenever possible and acceptable to recipients, publications, including consultations, are made available in electronic format.

Geothermal Heating

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what research her Department has done on geothermal heating and how it could be successfully exploited. (AQW 3800/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has carried out research on geothermal energy in Northern Ireland through projects involving Action Renewables and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI). Studies were completed into the potential for both shallow and deep geothermal energy in 2005. A follow-up study, funded by DETI, was carried out in 2008 which matched the best areas of deep geothermal energy potential to planned developments in the domestic, public and commercial sectors throughout Northern Ireland.

These studies have all concluded that there is considerable potential for the exploitation of both deep and shallow geothermal energy to produce low-carbon heat energy in Northern Ireland. GSNI is undertaking further research projects designed to enhance the knowledge of the deep geological and geothermal characteristics in areas of Northern Ireland. The aim of this work is to reduce the risks associated with deep geothermal exploration and thus to encourage private sector investment in this sector.

GSNI is also a partner in the EU-funded GeoThermal Regulation - Heat project (2006-09). The project will use the experience of partner countries with well-developed geothermal energy markets and efficient regulatory frameworks, to propose new legislation for those partner countries, such as Northern Ireland, where these do not yet exist.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what legislation will her Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3808/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request.

Global Point Business Park

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on the development of Global Point Business Park, Newtownabbey. (AQW 3858/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In January 2008, Invest NI received planning approval which enabled it to offer serviced sites for sale to client companies at Global Point Business Park. Work on the latest phase of the internal infrastructure, which is releasing over 30 acres of land suitable for Invest NI clients, is due for completion by end January 2009.

Design for improvements to the Corr's Corner roundabout and an attenuation scheme, both required as a result of the planning approval, are at an advanced stage. Invest NI is actively engaged with Roads Service and Rivers Agency to ensure these designs are acceptable and to ensure that any immediate sales are not delayed pending the implementation of the final solutions to meet the planning conditions.

Invest NI is actively marketing Global Point Business Park to both existing and prospective client companies (there are 6 recorded interests for a total of 29 acres of land) although given current economic conditions, any site sales are likely to be challenging.

Invest NI continues discussion with Newtownabbey Borough Council concerning the transfer of the linear park to its care.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when a tourism strategy for the Strangford Lough area will be developed by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. (AQW 3860/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Strangford Lough area is recognised as one of Northern Ireland's key tourism assets and the development and promotion of such an asset is already captured at a strategic level within The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's draft corporate plan (2008-2011). As such, an overarching strategy exists.

Within this, NITB has identified key product areas as the focus for product development, management and marketing over the next 2 years. Underpinning these will be Northern Ireland's superb natural assets, its unspoilt landscapes, coastlines and environment which includes Strangford Lough. These product areas will be the key to developing the tourism experience across Northern Ireland and particularly will drive investment and development in regional areas such as Strangford.

In addition, the wider Strangford constituency area will also benefit from the development and promotion of the St Patrick and Christian Heritage Signature Project which stretches from Armagh to Bangor. The trail passes through Downpatrick, linking Inch Abbey and Saul before travelling on down the Ards peninsula where it follows Strangford Lough and visits the impressive Cistercian Abbey at Greyabbey on its way North.

Rise in Unemployment

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how does the rise in unemployment compare with the remainder of the United Kingdom, in the last six months. (AQW 4002/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The official measure of unemployment is sourced to the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS) and there has been little change in the unemployment rate over the six month period to August-October 2008.

However, the more recent seasonally adjusted claimant count measure of unemployment in Northern Ireland has risen by 9,000 or 35.9% in the last six months to 34,100 in November 2008. In that period the rate as a percentage of the workforce has risen by 1.0 percentage points to 3.9%.

In the same period the level of unemployment in the UK has risen by 30.0%. The unemployment rate has increased by 0.7 percentage points to 3.3%.

Northern Ireland had the third highest percentage increase in unemployment levels (35.9%) with only the South East (41.4%) and the South West (47.5%) showing higher percentage increases.

Persons of EU and Non EU Nationality Resident in Northern Ireland

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many (i) EU; and (ii) non EU foreign national have been residents in Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4034/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Labour Force Survey estimates for the number of persons of EU and non EU nationality who were resident in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2008 are shown in the table below.

RESIDENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY EU AND NON-EU NATIONALITY¹, 2004-2008.

Year	EU Nationality	Non-EU Nationality
2004	1,666,000	18,000
2005	1,687,000	11,000
2006	1,691,000	24,000
2007	1,709,000	20,000
2008	1,721,000	25,000

¹ EU Nationality – Figures for 2004-2006 refer to EU25 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Figures for 2007-2008 refer to EU27 countries: EU25 plus Bulgaria and Romania.

Please note that these estimates are subject to sampling error.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2 (April-June) of each year.

Programme for Government

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the targets in the Programme for Government that relate to the value added nature of prospective FDI, with the commitment to create a minimum of 6,500 jobs with 85% or above of these to be in the private sector. (AQO 1859/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The provisional data for those inward investment projects approved between 1st April and 31st December 2008 indicates that 2,053 new inward investment jobs have been promoted to date, 1,258 of which will have salaries above the 2008 Northern Ireland Private Sector Median. A number of the projects have not yet been announced and might well now be delayed until more favourable economic conditions arise.

Invest NI remains committed to securing high value jobs as measured by salary but as I have stated in response to a previous question, the pipeline for prospective new FDI clients is not favourable, reflecting the general deterioration in business confidence.

The economic situation remains too volatile to predict with any precision how it will look in the future. However, the project sales cycle for inward investment can take 18 to 24 months to complete and Invest NI is

confident that, in the medium to longer term, Northern Ireland will benefit from the opportunity that the USNI conference afforded to position the Northern Ireland business

Achieving the FDI targets in the Programme for Government will become increasingly challenging as the economic downturn continues. However I remain cautiously optimistic that new opportunities may emerge and, when they do, Northern Ireland businesses will be well placed to exploit them.

Review into Electricity Prices Increases

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how her Department intends to respond to the findings of the independent review into electricity prices increases. (AQO 1846/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I welcome the independent report into the electricity price setting process commissioned by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation which was recently completed, and its conclusions that there were no anomalies or shortcomings within the process followed by the Utility Regulator. Wider issues raised in the report will be considered in the context of the Department's ongoing review of the Strategic Energy Framework.

Proposed Review of Department and Invest NI

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the planned review of her Department and Invest NI will examine the current suitability of the economic targets in the Programme for Government. (AQO 1852/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: To date, performance on operating plan targets for 2008/09 has been generally positive. However, given the global downturn, there are obvious concerns relating to falling demand for locally produced goods and services and for potential investment opportunities. The combination of these factors suggests that targets for 2009/10 and 2010/11 will need to be monitored carefully.

In addition to internal reviews that my officials will be conducting, I have asked the Review Panel to provide an independent assessment of my Department's economic goals and targets. The Terms of Reference have been expanded to reflect this.

Private Sector

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to help the private sector in light of the global economic downturn. (AQO 1830/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Members will already be well aware of the £45 million package of assistance announced by the Finance Minister in December, underlining the Executive's commitment to supporting our local businesses during the downturn.

Following on from this, I along with the Finance Minister, met representatives of the local banks last month to discuss their lending policies to businesses, and how they might make more use of the UK wide lending initiatives announced by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report to help small businesses.

In partnership with Enterprise NI, District Councils and the NI Chamber of Commerce we have also now developed a further programme of business information seminars specifically focused at non Invest NI clients. This was piloted in Omagh last month and a further nine events will be rolled out across Northern Ireland during the remainder of January and in February.

In addition, the new "Beat the Credit Crunch" section of the nibusinessinfo website will be particularly helpful as it offers practical tools and guides on a wide range of key business activities.

All Northern Ireland businesses can also access the Carbon Trust's Interest Free Loan Scheme which aims to maximise energy efficiency. To date 24 applicants have received a total of £3.2m funding under this scheme, and 95 free energy efficiency surveys completed.

These initiatives are being undertaken in conjunction with the range of activity developed by Invest NI to assist its clients, including the fast track advice and support available through the £5m Accelerated Support Fund package, an increased on export support to exploit the current weaknesses in the exchange rate.

We therefore continue to work proactively our local companies and entrepreneurs to help minimise the impact of the current economic downturn and we will continue to develop further methods of support and assistance as necessary.

Proposed Review of Department and Invest NI

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration she has given to bringing forward the completion date of the proposed review of her Department and Invest NI in light of the current economic crisis. (AQO 1850/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: As I indicated in my statement to the Assembly on the 1 December 2008, I expect the Independent Review Panel to provide a report to me by early summer 2009.

Members should recognise the scale of work involved in a Review of this nature. Moreover, the focus of the Review is not to provide a response to the current short-term pressures facing local companies as a result of the global economic slowdown. The Executive is already taking measures to help businesses cope with these pressures.

However, we also need to concentrate on the medium to longer term priorities for the economy that are set out in the Programme for Government. That is the focus of the Review. I will continue to ensure that the Panel has the necessary resources to produce a detailed and evidence based report within the timeframe I have already announced.

Help for Businesses

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what help she will provide to businesses that are being hit by the economic downturn. (AQO 1829/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Members will already be well aware of the £45 million package of assistance announced by the Finance Minister in December, underlining the Executive's commitment to supporting our local businesses during the downturn.

Following on from this, I along with the Finance Minister, met representatives of the local banks last month to discuss their lending policies to businesses, and how they might make more use of the UK wide lending initiatives announced by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report to help small businesses.

In partnership with Enterprise NI, District Councils and the NI Chamber of Commerce we have also now developed a further programme of business information seminars specifically focused at non Invest NI clients. This was piloted in Omagh last month and a further nine events will be rolled out across Northern Ireland during the remainder of January and in February.

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Telecommunications Provision

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the Western Economic Strategy Team (WEST) report into telecommunications provision in Tyrone and Fermanagh. (AQO 1847/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The report highlights a number of issues that are relevant to the WEST region and also to many rural and dispersed communities, not only in Northern Ireland but across Europe. We are already taking steps to address those matters, focusing our efforts on the business sector with the resources available to my Department under the Programme for Government. For instance, an application to our recently launched Broadband Fund resulted in an excellent project that will bring forward a range of broadband services, at the higher speeds businesses demand, to many areas in the WEST region. Furthermore, we have just put in place a new 3 year contract ensuring the continued availability of broadband services across all of Northern Ireland. This is particularly important for those living and working in remote and rural areas.

Private Sector

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her plans to help the private sector in light of the global economic downturn. (AQO 1828/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Members will already be well aware of the £45 million package of assistance announced by the Finance Minister in December, underlining the Executive's commitment to supporting our local businesses during the downturn.

Following on from this, I along with the Finance Minister, met representatives of the local banks last month to discuss their lending policies to businesses, and how they might make more use of the UK wide lending initiatives announced by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report to help small businesses.

In partnership with Enterprise NI, District Councils and the NI Chamber of Commerce we have also now developed a further programme of business information seminars specifically focused at non Invest NI clients. This was piloted in Omagh last month and a further nine events will be rolled out across Northern Ireland during the remainder of January and in February.

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We therefore continue to work proactively our local companies and entrepreneurs to help minimise the impact of the current economic downturn and we will continue to develop further methods of support and assistance as necessary.

Economic Development Policies

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what emphasis will be placed on the green economy in the review of Northern Ireland's economic development policies written by Professor Richard Barnett. (AQO 1849/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Terms of Reference for the Independent Review have already been shared with Members in the context of my statement on 1 December 2008. They have also been placed on a dedicated website that has been developed as part of the Independent Review.

The Terms of Reference are wide ranging and include the need to make recommendations on the policy options to stimulate economic growth & productivity, and to build a larger and more wealth-creating private sector.

I expect that Review will refer to high growth-potential sectors, including the green economy.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how the Northern Ireland Tourist Board plans to develop and promote Lough Neagh as a tourism resource. (AQO 1848/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Lough Neagh's main tourism strength lies in the range of water-based sports and activities that it has to offer. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) is working to develop the Lough as a key element of its Sports Activities and Waterways product.

Partnership is the best way forward for successful tourism development and delivery and the Lough Neagh Partnership has played a leading role in the Lough's development. NITB actively engages with the Lough Neagh Partnership in developing the tourist and leisure potential of the Lough.

NITB has responsibility for marketing in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. It employs websites, publications, targeted campaigns and its Tourism Information Centre and an office in Dublin to promote tourism growth in Northern Ireland as a whole. Lough Neagh and its attractions are included in these marketing formats. Information on Lough Neagh is also available from partner organisations and their websites such as the Regional Tourism Partnerships, the Lough Neagh Partnership and the Countryside Access and Activities Network.

NITB will continue to work with relevant partners to ensure continued progress in the development and promotion of Lough Neagh as a tourist destination.

Proposed Review of Department and Invest NI

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she can give a definitive completion date for the proposed review of her Department and Invest NI. (AQO 1853/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: As I indicated in my statement to the Assembly on the 1 December 2008, I expect the Independent Review Panel to provide a report to me by early summer 2009.

Members should recognise the scale of work involved in a Review of this nature. Moreover, the focus of the Review is not to provide a response to the current short-term pressures facing local companies as a result of the global economic slowdown. The Executive is already taking measures to help businesses cope with these pressures.

However, we also need to concentrate on the medium to longer term priorities for the economy that are set out in the Programme for Government. That is the focus of the Review. I will continue to ensure that the Panel has the necessary resources to produce a detailed and evidence based report within the timeframe I have already announced.

Programme for Government

Mr A McFarland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when remedial action will be proposed for at risk targets in the Programme for Government that fall under her remit. (AQO 1851/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: To date, performance on operating plan targets for 2008/09 has been generally positive. However, given the global downturn there are obvious concerns relating to falling demand for locally produced goods and services, and for potential investment opportunities. The combination of these factors suggests that targets for 2009/10 and 2010/11 may need to be monitored carefully.

It should be recognised that the Programme for Government (PfG) and DETI's Corporate Plan indicated that targets were framed in the context of the then predicted economic downturn. Furthermore, they also explained that targets would be continually tracked and monitored against changing markets and, where appropriate, amended over the PfG period.

My Department has developed detailed Delivery Agreements which outline the actions to be taken to deliver on the targets and commitments contained in the PfG. Robust monitoring procedures have also been established to track performance. These will continue to be used to identify areas of concern where remedial action may be required.

Impact of the Economic Downturn on Agriculture

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development about the impact of the economic downturn on agriculture. (AQO 1854/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and I have met to discuss a wide range of agri food related matters.

We have both met delegations from the Northern Ireland dairy sector and have given our support for the case for the re-introduction of export refunds. My Department also continues to be represented on the Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy, which is chaired by the Agriculture Minister, and is committed to working with DARD to achieve the full economic potential of rural Northern Ireland.

In recent months, I have sought to focus on actions that can help alleviate the impact of the economic downturn on Invest NI's clients. These include a number of food processing companies.

In this regard, Invest NI has put in place a number of initiatives including a new £5 million Accelerated Support Fund; a series of Credit Crunch seminars (which 33 food companies have attended since September 2008); guidance on how to increase new sales in export markets; and ongoing promotion of R&D. Invest NI is also proactively seeking out international best practice which could be applicable to the NI food industry and is taking a broad section of the agri-food industry to New Zealand this month.

At the Breakfast Food Branding conference in November, I had the opportunity to hear first-hand from many of the 75 companies that attended of the issues they are currently facing. I have also had meetings with a number of individual companies and representatives from the food and agriculture sectors, including the Ulster Farmers' Union, the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association and Dairy UK (NI) to discuss a wide range of economic issues.

Renewable Technologies

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the recent investment of 500m Euro by the Republic of Ireland's government in renewable energy technologies, and the Scottish Executive's aim to become a world leader in marine technologies, to outline what specific large scale policy initiatives are in place to ensure a partnership in the development of renewable technologies with those two regions. (AQO 1858/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland has an ongoing relationship with the other administrations in the United Kingdom including the Scottish Executive, and proactively seeks to help the UK meet Member State obligations in renewable energy. Northern Ireland also works with the Republic of Ireland on energy matters and has done so for many years. This co-operation is based on delivering practical results that are mutually beneficial for the economies and consumers on both sides of the border. I have met Energy Ministers from both Scotland and the Republic on a number of occasions and renewable energy remains a key part of the shared agenda, particularly in the context of the EU focus on developing regional energy markets.

Two ongoing examples of effective co-operation with both regions are:

- Northern Ireland is a full partner in the Biomara project with both Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. This €6 million project will pioneer innovative research into the production of renewable energy from seaweeds and marine algae from shared seas.
- Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland are also undertaking a project (the Isles project) to examine the feasibility of constructing an offshore electricity transmission network linking potential offshore sites for the generation of renewable electricity in the coastal waters of Western Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland – this will be key in developing offshore resource.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Colin Glen Trust

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of the Environment when the land lease issue with Colin Glen Trust in West Belfast will be addressed. (AQW 3675/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): The land lease issue with Colin Glen Trust is already being addressed.

A case for a 99-year lease to Colin Glen Trust of Colin Valley Golf Course and adjacent lands linking the Course to Black's Road was prepared by my Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). DFP recently advised NIEA that a 99-year lease would be acceptable in principle, provided it could be justified by a full economic appraisal addressing social, economic and environmental issues. Compiling such appraisals is complex and this one will require input from bodies external to my Department. If the case set out in the appraisal is accepted by DFP, the 99-year lease will be expedited by NIEA, with input from the solicitors of both the Department and Colin Glen Trust. As essential steps in the process are outside the control of my Department, I cannot give a completion date, but NIEA will continue to give high priority to this case.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1050/09, what assessment the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has made of the suitability of proposals by Northern Ireland Water for sewage treatment and disposal at Ballystrudder, Ballycarry and Whitehead, based on details of the marine modelling for the proposed discharge into this environmentally sensitive area. (AQW 3716/09)

Minister of the Environment: Following initial marine modeling, Northern Ireland Water (NIW) proposed to discharge untreated screened effluent via an outfall pipe. This modelling however showed that a large section of coastline would be impacted with high bacterial levels by such a discharge and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) did not consider this to be acceptable.

NIEA has since asked NIW to model two options namely; the discharge with primary treated effluent and the discharge with secondary treated effluent. The primary treatment model will be available in early February, at which point NIEA will meet with NIW to discuss the results in order to establish if it is necessary to model for the second option of secondary treatment.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 1050/09, (i) what levels of water and sewage treatment the Northern Ireland Environment Agency deems suitable for the coastal district of Ballystrudder, Ballycarry and Whitehead; and (ii) to list all local and EU regulations on which the Agency bases its consent to discharge standards that it deems appropriate for the area. (AQW 3717/09)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Environment Agency will assess an application/proposal for a discharge consent, taking account of the relevant legislation and guidelines applicable to the area and taking account of issues such as the local population equivalent (p.e.) to establish the appropriate treatment or disposal system.

The proposed discharge location at Cloghfin Bay must comply with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive which requires appropriate treatment as there are no designated bathing or shellfish waters in the vicinity. In England and Wales, secondary treatment is a policy requirement for all works discharging to coastal waters serving a p.e. of greater than 2000. In the absence of this policy for Northern Ireland, NIEA produced a guidance document called the Northern Ireland Estuarine and Coastal Waters Classification Scheme. This policy affords protection to all water users and fulfils our requirement to protect public health under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

- (ii) The Agency takes account of the following when considering a discharge consent application in this area:-
- The Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999;
 - The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive; and
 - The Northern Ireland Estuarine and Coastal Waters Classification Scheme.

Visitors Centre at the Giants Causeway

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the planning application for a publicly funded Visitors Centre at the Giants Causeway. (AQW 3726/09)

Minister of the Environment: The planning application for a publicly funded visitors centre at the Giants Causeway has been assessed by my officials in the Planning Service and a report and recommendation is currently with me for consideration.

I have had no meetings other than those with planning officials as is normal practice. I have not received any correspondence on either of the planning applications.

Visitors Centre at the Giants Causeway

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to list (i) all the meetings he has held about both applications for a Visitors Centre at the Giants Causeway; and (ii) all those who have corresponded with him regarding the applications. (AQW 3727/09)

Minister of the Environment: The planning application for a publicly funded visitors centre at the Giants Causeway has been assessed by my officials in the Planning Service and a report and recommendation is currently with me for consideration.

I have had no meetings other than those with planning officials as is normal practice. I have not received any correspondence on either of the planning applications.

Kitchen Waste

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to list which Councils recycle some kitchen waste; and (ii) which Councils recycle all kitchen waste including meat, fish and vegetables. (AQW 3729/09)

Minister of the Environment: I understand that:

- (i) Omagh District Council recycles some kitchen waste; and
- (ii) Armagh City & District Council, Banbridge District Council, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council, Magherafelt District Council and Newry & Mourne District Council recycle all kitchen waste including meat, fish and vegetables.

Planning Service

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of the Environment how much it has cost the Planning Service to send out invalid planning applications. (AQW 3735/09)

Minister of the Environment: The cost of returned applications cannot be identified as no separate postal costs are kept for invalid applications. However, we can advise that since April 2007 to date a total of 18572 applications have been returned as invalid.

River Pollution

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment how many river pollution incidents occurred in (i) the South Antrim constituency; and (ii) all of Northern Ireland, in the calendar year 2008. (AQW 3745/09)

Minister of the Environment: Water pollution statistics compiled by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) are not recorded by parliamentary constituencies. However, statistics recorded in respect of river basins in South Antrim for 2008 show that:

- 216 separate pollution investigations were carried out, and
 - 106 of those incidents have, to date, been verified.
- (ii) During 2008, for all of Northern Ireland, pollution statistics compiled by NIEA show that :
- a total of 2164 pollution investigations were carried out, and
 - 1111 of those incidents have, to date, been verified.

The investigation of a number of incidents which occurred in the latter part of 2008 is still continuing during the initial part of 2009. In some cases this includes awaiting the results of scientific analysis of samples which

may prove or disprove the occurrence of pollution in specific instances. Therefore, while the total number of incidents investigated during 2008 will not change, the number of confirmed incidents of pollution quoted must at this stage be regarded as 'interim'.

Road Safety Council

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment how much the 2008 review of the Road Safety Council cost. (AQW 3767/09)

Minister of the Environment: Following a tendering process, the Department commissioned PA Consulting Group, a major international organisation with extensive experience in the field, to carry out a review of the Road Safety Council. The cost of the contract was £22,500 (excluding VAT).

Kitchen Waste

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what his Department (i) has done and (ii) plans to do to promote Bokashi Composting, to give householders the opportunity to compost all of their kitchen waste and significantly reduce the amount of kitchen waste going to landfills. (AQW 3788/09)

Minister of the Environment: District councils play a key role in encouraging householders to recycle and compost their waste and through membership of the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), my Department will continue to provide technical support and advice to the councils in the provision of improved services to householders on all aspects of recycling and composting. However, my Department currently has no plans to promote Bokashi composting as a means of recycling kitchen waste.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork he sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3793/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department follows the statutory requirement to provide hard copies of documents to certain organisations, including political representatives, parliamentary contacts and Legal Deposit and other libraries. Where there is no statutory requirement in place, my Department seeks to reduce the amount of paperwork sent to constituency offices and other organisations by following guidance issued by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. This states that departments may write to recipients and stakeholders advising that a document is to be launched or is about to be published and is available in electronic format. Such correspondence also provides the option for a hard copy to be made available if this is requested by the recipient, but normal practice is to use electronic versions where possible. My Department will continue to follow this guidance during 2009 or until it is superseded.

Divisional Planning Enquiries

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the effectiveness of the NI Direct telephone call handling arrangements for divisional planning enquiries made by elected representatives. (AQW 3804/09)

Minister of the Environment: In order to improve its responsiveness to customers, the Planning Service, through NI Direct, introduced revised telephone call handling procedures for divisional planning offices with effect from 31 October 2008.

When designing the revised procedures it was recognised that the revised arrangements would not be appropriate for all callers and arrangements were put in place for calls from elected representatives to be offered the option of assistance by the NI Direct agents or for the call to be put through to the relevant case officer.

Unfortunately, there were initial technical telephony and process problems experienced by NI Direct which resulted in elected representatives and others being delayed in getting through to Planning Service. However,

these initial problems have been resolved and I understand the revised system is now functioning effectively for all callers, including elected representatives.

Hydro-Electric Turbines

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many planning applications were received by his Department for the installation of hydro-electric turbines in rivers including the number (a) granted approval; (b) refused; and (c) pending; and (ii) if his Department has any plans to review the present policy. (AQW 3807/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has received 7 planning applications for hydro-electric turbines between 1st April 2002 and 30th September 2008. 5 approvals have been issued and 2 planning applications are under consideration. The breakdown of applications is as follows:

Reference No	Proposal	Status
X/2005/0786/F	Installation of a micro-hydro generator house lake intake and penstock and a revised route for the outflow	Approved 7th November 2005
E/2006/0396/F	Hydro-electric scheme – installation of water turbine	Approved 10th July 2007
R/2006/0705/F	Micro hydro-electric turbine generation chamber with feed pipe through Donard Forest	Approved 15th January 2008
J/2007/0072/F	Hydro-electric turbine, housed in a replica flax mill building	Approved 9th May 2007
K/2007/0035/F	Hydro-electric generation station to provide power for Omagh College	Approved 14th November 2007
Q/2007/0758/F	Rebuilding of traditional mill water turbine house with 2No 55Kw water turbines	Pending
B/2008/0324/F	Construction of a hydro-electric renewable energy system on Tircreven Burn	Pending

The current policy for assessing hydro-electricity development is Policy PSU 12 of the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland published in September 1993.

Draft Planning Policy Statement 18 ‘Renewable Energy’ (PPS 18), was published for public consultation in November 2007. Draft PPS 18 provides updated policy on the provision and siting of all forms of renewable energy. In addition, it also contains technical information and best practice guidance specific to hydro electricity schemes. My Department aims to publish PPS18 in final form before the end of March 2009.

These figures have been extracted from a live database which is continuously updated and validated. They should therefore be regarded as indicative only at this point in time and should not be compared with any previous figures published by the Agency.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what legislation will his Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3809/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request.

Recycling Materials

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the markets relating to recycling materials and to confirm that there is adequate storage space available to deal with the amounts of recycling material being collected. (AQW 3816/09)

Minister of the Environment: My officials have advised me that they believe the current very low prices internationally for recyclable materials will be temporary and the market will recover. In Northern Ireland, a slowdown and difficulties in obtaining revenue for recyclates are being reported. However, goods are currently still moving albeit at a reduced rate for some materials and the things which householders here are being asked to identify, separate and place in the recycling bins and boxes are still being sent for recycling.

The 3 Northern Ireland Waste Management groups are in regular contact with their contractors in respect of the prevailing situation and are keeping it under constant review. The Groups currently have no plans to stockpile material or send it to other alternative disposal routes such as landfill.

Climate Change Act

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if he has had any meetings with Environment Ministers from Scotland, Wales and Westminster about the Climate Change Act and if so, what were the issues discussed. (AQW 3822/09)

Minister of the Environment: There have been no such meetings of Ministers since my appointment.

Ulster Farm By-Products

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail how much money was budgeted by his Department for monitoring the Ulster Farm By-products operation and enforcing his Department's duty under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, each year since 2003. (AQW 3825/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has regulated Ulster Farm By-Products under the Pollution Prevention and Control (NI) Regulations 2003 since November 2005. Under these Regulations, the costs of enforcing authorities are recovered through a charging scheme which includes an annual subsistence charge designed to cover the costs of monitoring compliance with permits and taking appropriate enforcement action. The subsistence charges for the Ulster Farm By-Products operation since November 2005 are set out below:

Year	Subsistence Charge
November 05 – March 06	£ 451.67
April 06 – March 07	£1,355
April 07 – March 08	£1,424
April 08 – March 09	£4,575

Ulster Farm By-Products

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the extent to which the costs incurred by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in its monitoring and enforcement of the Ulster Farm By-products operation under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 are met by the annual financial charges levied upon Ulster Farm By-products as part of its PPC permit. (AQW 3826/09)

Minister of the Environment: Charges levied upon Ulster Farm By-Products were listed in AQW 3825/09.

The costs incurred in regulating the company (and other rendering operations) were not differentiated from the total cost of regulating all companies prescribed for control under the Regulations until 1 September 2008. Consequently the cost of regulating the company prior to that date cannot be calculated separately.

Between 1 September 2008 and 31 December 2008, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency estimates that regulation of the company has cost approximately £15,000. The annual subsistence fee charged for the period April 2008 to March 2009 was £4,575.

Climate Change Act

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if he proposes to meet with Environment Ministers from Scotland, Wales and Westminster to discuss the implementation of the Climate Change Act and what position will he take at those meetings. (AQW 3827/09)

Minister of the Environment: No meeting has been proposed at this stage. Implementation of the Climate Change Act is being taken forward by a number of working groups drawn from Whitehall and the Devolved Administrations, at which my department is represented.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how many working hours officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have spent monitoring and enforcing their duty to oversee the operations of Ulster Farm By-products under the Pollution and Prevention Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, each year since 2003 and (ii) the total cost of these monitoring and enforcement operations, each year since 2003. (AQW 3828/09)

Minister of the Environment: Pursuant to my answers to AQW 3825/09 and 3826/09,

- (i) The hours spent regulating the company (and other rendering operations) were not differentiated from the total hours spent regulating all companies prescribed for control under the Regulations until 1 September 2008. From 1 September to 31 December 2008, NIEA spent 195 hours on regulating the company.
- (ii) For the reasons given above, the historical costs of regulating Ulster Farm By-Products cannot be calculated separately.

PPS21

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment when will PPS21 be in place so that applications in process may be lodged. (AQW 3850/09)

Minister of the Environment: I issued Draft PPS 21 for consultation and with immediate effect on 25 November 2008. It is therefore to be accorded substantial weight in the determination of any planning application received after 16 March 2006.

PPS21

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment if planning applications under PPS21 will be processed more quickly for new houses now that there are extra staff and a 20% reduction in applications. (AQW 3869/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has given priority to reassessing planning applications currently deferred under draft PPS 14. It is hoped this would be substantively complete by June 2009.

New applications under PPS 21 will be processed as quickly as possible. The council will be consulted in the normal manner with the Department's opinion on the proposal. Rural houses fall within the intermediate category of applications and performance to date this business year indicates that 65% of these applications were processed within the PS target of 31 weeks with 70% achieved in the month of November.

There are no extra staff in Planning Service which continues to have a number of vacancies at Professional and Technical and Administrative grades.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to provide the most up-to-date level of carbon dioxide emissions; and what percentage reduction this is compared to levels in 1990. (AQW 3917/09)

Minister of the Environment: The latest Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (1990-2006) was published on 18th September 2008. It indicates that carbon dioxide emissions in Northern Ireland have reduced by 1.5% from 1990 levels to 2006. The same report indicates that there has been a 6.0% decrease in overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Councillor Training

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment what training will he be offering councillors in advance of planning powers being transferred to local councils. (AQW 3922/09)

Minister of the Environment: The transfer of the majority of planning functions to district councils, along with the major planning reform programme that is underway, will represent a significant change for all involved in the planning system. The Department is working with local government, through the RPA implementation structures, to explore issues such as capacity building, with a view to ensuring readiness for the changes that will arise. The Capacity Building Working Group, which is part of Policy Development Panel C, is considering training and capacity issues for all aspects of RPA, and this will include those relating to planning. Planning Service officials also continue to engage with councillors on a range of issues, including capacity building, through the joint NILGA Planning Working Group.

National Parks

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment what are his plans for the establishment of one or more national parks; and if the Causeway Coast is being considered for one. (AQW 4032/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am considering National Parks very seriously and will wish to discuss the issue with my Executive colleagues. If it is decided to proceed with National Parks the first step would be new enabling legislation. At this stage I have no plans for any specific area.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Rate Rebate Applications

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of rate rebate applications remaining to be processed, broken down by the month in which the claims were made, in this financial year. (AQW 2512/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): As shown in the following table, a total of 29,633 applications for Rate Rebate were processed by Land & Property Services between 1 April and 31 December 2008, leaving some 1,577 applications outstanding as of 31 December. This number includes 69 applications for Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA) for which further information is required from applicants, and 86 applications for Disabled Persons Allowance for which further information is required from applicants/ medical practitioners before the claims can be finalised. Land & Property Services has increased the staff allocated to Housing Benefit/Rate Relief applications so that all outstanding cases for which full information has been provided are fully cleared by 31 March 2009.

TABLE SHOWING APPLICATIONS FOR RATE REBATE COMPLETED, AND APPLICATIONS STILL OUTSTANDING (O/S) FROM APRIL 2008 TO DECEMBER 2008

Month	Housing Benefit/Rate Relief		Lone Pensioner Allowance		Disabled Persons Allowance		Total	
	Complete	O/S	Complete	O/S	Complete	O/S	Complete	O/S
April	1,083	23	0	7	84	0	1,167	30
May	1,047	42	0	12	210	0	1,257	54
June	170	66	150	6	271	0	591	72
July	173	87	696	7	255	1	1,124	95
August	797	101	5,246	5	166	1	6,209	107
September	1,100	141	6,190	4	159	0	7,449	145
October	1,463	186	2,910	4	129	6	4,502	196
November	1,831	292	1,213	9	133	24	3,177	325
December	3,182	484	936	15	69	54	4,187	553
Total	10,846	1,422	17,341	69	1,476	86	29,663	1,577

Note 1: Processing of Lone Pensioner Allowance did not begin until the end of June 2008 because of the need to develop, implement and test the new IT functionality required for this new allowance.

Note 2: Housing Benefit/Rate Relief processing decreased in June, July and August because of the need to prepare for a changeover to a new module of the IT system.

Government Buildings in Larne and Carrickfergus

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in the event that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department for Social Development relocate staff from Government buildings in Larne and Carrickfergus, (i) which Department will have to pay for the maintenance of the vacant offices; (ii) the amount of funding that has been spent on each of these offices, in the past five years; and (iii) his assessment of the quality of accommodation of these offices currently. (AQW 3718/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: DARD and DSD currently occupy three buildings in Larne and Carrickfergus:

1. Portal Inspection Office -Redlands Road, LARNE,

BT40 1AH (occupied solely by DARD)

2. Crown Buildings, 59 Pound Street, LARNE BT40 1SH

(DARD share this accommodation with DSD – it is both a Jobs & Benefits Office and a Divisional Veterinary Office)

3. Carrickfergus Jobs & Benefits Office, 1 Davy Street,

Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, BT38 8TJ.

(occupied solely by DSD)

In the event that any Department decides to vacate a property then the vacating department must meet the accommodation costs of the property until it can be re-occupied or disposed off.

The amount of funding that has been spent on each of these offices, in the last five years is as follows:-

	Resource	Capital
Carrickfergus JBO	£213,011	£1,704,000
Larne JBO/DVO	£ 358,040	£2,035,000
Larne Portal Office	£ 137,000	£31,000

The three buildings are considered to be in good repair.

Workplace 2010

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what assessment has been made of the (i) number of jobs that could be safeguarded or created in the construction and support services sectors if the proposed Workplace 2010 procurement were to be accelerated; and (ii) extra infrastructure investment and employment opportunities that could be financed from the expected capital receipt from Workplace 2010.

(AQW 3771/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Under Workplace 2010, construction and support services would be delivered by the successful contractor or their service partners. It is unlikely that additional jobs would be created in support services as these services are currently being provided through different means.

Although, it is likely that additional jobs would be created in the construction industry in the early years of the contract, I am not in a position to quantify the extent of these additional jobs as this would be a matter for the winning contractor.

The expenditure of any capital receipt generated through the Workplace 2010 contract is a matter for the NI Executive to consider within the context of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what legislation will his Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009.

(AQW 3844/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: In addition to the annual Budget Bills my Department intends to bring forward a Financial Provisions Bill during the present session. A Rates Amendment Bill will also be brought forward to the Assembly subject to consideration by the Executive.

Energy Performance Certificates

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many fines have been issued to house vendors for failure to provide an energy performance certificate.

(AQW 3890/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There have been no fines issued to house vendors for failure to provide an energy performance certificate.

Energy Performance Certificates

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what measures are taken by his Department to ensure the vendor of a premises provides an energy performance certificate prior to the purchase of a property.

(AQW 3891/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Since making the regulations requiring energy performance certificates, officials have been proactive in bringing the requirements to the attention of property professionals, the legal profession and the general public. In turn the professional bodies have advised their members of the requirements. Officials have promoted the requirements in a number of ways including:

- press releases, adverts, radio and television interviews and a series of public information seminars attended by approximately 1700 people, mainly property professionals and members of professional organisations such as the Construction Employers Federation, the Law Society etc.;
- mailshots and follow-up visits to estate agents and letting agents;
- distribution of information leaflets on the requirements for dwellings to all MLAs and to district councils for onward transmission to libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Consumer Council offices etc.; and
- a dedicated website at www.epb.dfpni.gov.uk where detailed information and further guidance may be accessed online.

Officials will continue to promote awareness by means of a poster campaign in estate agents, letting agents and solicitors' offices, targeted classified advertising and editorials in the press, features in forthcoming local council magazines and follow-up visits with property agents.

In addition, any specific complaints from a prospective buyer or tenant that an energy performance certificate has not been made available will be investigated fully by officials and enforcement action, including the issue of a penalty charge notice, taken as appropriate

Workplace 2010 Programme

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Workplace 2010 Programme. (AQW 3921/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Procurement activity for the Workplace 2010 contract was suspended on 31st October 2008 as a result of continuing speculation that both Workplace 2010 Bidders could come under common ownership. This was confirmed on 8th January 2009, when Land Securities announced that agreement had been reached for the sale of their Trillium business to Telereal. The Department is now considering this latest development before making recommendations on how best to proceed.

Civil Service

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel have there been any appointments at Staff Officer grade in the Civil Service in the greater Newry area in the last eight years; and to provide the location of each of these appointments. (AQW 3929/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table shows appointments made at the Staff Officer grade in the Newry and Mourne District Council area during the last 8 years. Appointments made in the complete calendar year 2008 are not yet available.

Year	Number of appointments during the year	Location of each appointment
2001	3	Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry
2002	1	Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry
2003	3	Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry
2004	3	2 at Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry 1 at Crown Buildings, Newry Street, Kilkeel
2005	1	Phoenix House, Bridge Street, Newry
2006	0	
2007	1	Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry
2008	0	

Civil Servants

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Servants are getting tax payer funded assistance with their rent; and what the total cost is for this initiative, per year. (AQW 4016/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no initiative to provide Northern Ireland Civil Servants with tax payer funded assistance with their rent.

There are circumstances in which a number of allowances are payable to Northern Ireland Civil Servants who are required to carry out official business away from their homes. Reimbursement is only appropriate when an additional expense has incurred.

Salary Sacrifice Childcare Vouchers Scheme

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel will he make a statement detailing when the Salary Sacrifice Childcare Vouchers Scheme will be implemented for Northern Ireland Civil Service employees.

(AQW 4029/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The scheme was launched on Monday 19 January and those staff who are eligible and wish to do so may now avail of it. The first vouchers will be available along with the February pay.

Deaths Due to Drug Poisoning

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many deaths there have been as a result of heroin overdoses in (i) 2005; (ii) 2006; (iii) 2007; and (iv) 2008, broken down by (a) individual totals; and (b) Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4079/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table gives the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland by year, 2005 to 2007, due to drug poisoning¹ where heroin or morphine² was mentioned on the death certificate by Health and Social Care Trust. Data for 2008 will not be available until late Spring 2009.

1. International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes:

F11-F16, F18-F19 - Mental and behavioural disorders related to drug use.

X60-X64 - Intentional self-poisoning by drugs.

X40-X44 - Accidental poisoning by drugs.

X85 – Assault by drugs.

Y10-Y14 - Undetermined and other poisoning by drugs.#

2. As heroin (diamorphine) breaks down in the body into morphine, the latter may be detected at post mortem and recorded on the death certificate. Therefore a combined figure for deaths where heroin or morphine was mentioned on the death certificate have been included.

TABLE: NUMBER OF DEATHS DUE TO DRUG POISONING WHERE HEROIN OR MORPHINE WAS MENTIONED ON THE DEATH CERTIFICATE BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST, 2005-2007

Health and Social Care Trust	Registration Year		
	2005	2006	2007
Belfast	3	4	1
Northern	2	2	5
South Eastern	3	1	1
Southern	1	1	1
Western	-	4	2
Northern Ireland	9	12	10

Clostridium Difficile

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people died in 2008 as a result of Clostridium difficile, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4116/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table gives the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland between 1 January 2008 and 30 September 2008, with Clostridium difficile mentioned on the death certificates by the Health and Social Care Trust area the deceased died in. The figures relate to all deaths where Clostridium difficile was mentioned on the certificate, regardless of whether it was recorded as the primary or secondary cause of death. Data for the final quarter of 2008 will be available in March 2009.

TABLE: NUMBER OF DEATHS REGISTERED WITH CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE MENTIONED ON THE DEATH CERTIFICATE BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST, 1 JANUARY 2008 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2008P

Health and Social Care Trust (Place of Death)	2008 ^P (Jan - Sept)
Belfast HSC Trust	45
Northern HSC Trust	50
Southern Eastern HSC Trust	27
Southern HSC Trust	15
Western HSC Trust	8
Total	145

P Provisional Data.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire Stations

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the general condition of the fire stations. (AQW 3671/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The condition of fire stations is a matter for the Chief Fire Officer and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board. The Chief Fire Officer's assessment of the condition of Northern Ireland fire and rescue stations is that they are adequate for the immediate needs of the Fire & Rescue Service. However, within its business case for strategic infrastructure development, which is currently being considered by my Department, the Fire and Rescue Service has identified the need to replace or refurbish a total of 26 fire stations across Northern Ireland over the next 10 years to meet the needs of a modern fire and rescue service.

Neurology Unit at Forster Green Hospital

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Neurology Unit at Forster Green Hospital will be moved to a new facility at Musgrave Park Hospital in June 2009. (AQW 3685/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is intended that the neurology services will move from Forster Green Hospital to new facilities at the Musgrave Park Hospital site.

However, due to unforeseen circumstances further design work has proven necessary and therefore it is anticipated that it will be 2010 before the move may take place.

Assembly Questions

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) written; (ii) oral; and (iii) part input questions he has answered since taking up office. (AQW 3687/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

From May 2007 to 31 December 2008 I have answered:

- (i) 2649 written Assembly Questions (of which 525 were Priority Written questions);
- (ii) 259 Oral questions (including 3 Private Notice questions) and;
- (iii) 69 Part Input questions.

This amounts to a total of 2977 questions answered in this period.

Rights of a Patient

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the rights of a patient to obtain a second opinion on a diagnosis or treatment plan made by their GP and provide the correct procedure for same; and (ii) to clarify if a second opinion requires to be financed by the patient in a private capacity. (AQW 3694/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: If a patient is dissatisfied with the diagnosis or treatment plan proposed by a particular GP in the GP Practice that they are registered with, they can ask for an appointment with any other GP in the same practice. Alternatively the patient has a choice of de-registering with their current GP Practice and registering with a different GP Practice.

If a patient wishes to remain with their current GP Practice and does not wish to consult a partner in the same practice then they may seek an appointment with another GP Practice on a private fee paying basis.

Clostridium Difficile Isolation Wards

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail which hospitals have Clostridium Difficile isolation wards; and to identify the ward name or number, in each hospital. (AQW 3695/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All patients who are identified as having Clostridium difficile associated diarrhoea are managed in isolation rooms. In the event that side room capacity is exceeded, an isolation unit or ward is designated to manage these patients. All Trusts have escalation plans for such an event.

ISOLATION WARDS PER TRUST.

Trust	Hospital	Ward
Belfast	Belfast City Hospital	Ward 6 South
	Mater Hospital	Ward F
Northern	Antrim Area Hospital	Ward A1
South Eastern	Ulster Hospital	Ward 12 New dedicated cohort area is under construction (Ward 4)
Southern	Craigavon Area Hospital	Ward 2 (Medical)
Western	Tyrone County Hospital	Wards 1 & 2
	Erne Hospital	Ward 10
	Altnagelvin Area Hospital	Ward 7

Alcohol Consumption

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the total number of alcohol consumption related incidents where ambulances were called to attend; and (ii) the number of persons admitted to hospital because of excessive alcohol consumption, on 24, 25, 31 December 2008 and 1 January 2009. (AQW 3696/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service does not record data about possible consumption of alcohol by patients when responding to emergency incidents.

Admissions to Health and Social Care Hospitals with an alcohol related diagnosis on 24, 25, 31 December 2008 and 1 January 2009 are as follows:

Date of Admission*	Number of Admissions
24 December 2008	12

Date of Admission*	Number of Admissions
25 December 2008	9
31 December 2008	<5
1 January 2009	7

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

*Note: As these dates are recent, all data may not yet be available. The table may not, therefore, include all admissions due to alcohol related illness.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the residential homes for the elderly that are currently proposed for closure, by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3701/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 3401/09.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the residential homes for the elderly that are currently proposed for closure, by the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3702/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 3401/09.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the residential homes for the elderly that are currently proposed for closure, by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3703/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 3401/09.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many residential homes for the elderly are proposed for closure by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3710/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 3401/09.

Fire Health and Safety Regulations

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the recent New Year's Eve nightclub fire in Bangkok, to detail what steps his Department is taking to ensure all premises with an entertainment licence meet all fire health and safety regulations. (AQW 3730/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All premises with an entertainment licence in Northern Ireland are regulated through a system of inspection and certification under the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. The Order requires the owners or occupiers of places of entertainment to obtain a fire certificate issued by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board following an initial inspection of the premises.

I shall shortly be announcing a public consultation on regulations relating to improved fire safety, which will bring Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK and ensure full compliance with EU directives on fire safety.

Doctors Disciplined for Misconduct

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) nurses; and (ii) doctors were disciplined for misconduct, broken down by type and frequency; and what disciplinary action was taken, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3743/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information sought is not collected routinely by my Department. Current Trusts have been able to provide full information for the last financial year only. In the 2007/08 year there were 27 nurses and 2 doctors employed in six health and social care organisations disciplined for various levels of misconduct. Each of these cases were robustly dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedures but given the sensitive nature of disciplinary cases I am not in a position to provide more detail.

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust of staff sickness levels, for the last financial year. (AQW 3746/09)

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

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to the Southern Health and Social Care Trust of staff sickness levels, for the last financial year. (AQW 3747/09)

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

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust of staff sickness levels, for the last financial year. (AQW 3748/09)

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

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust of staff sickness levels, for the last financial year. (AQW 3749/09)

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

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to the Western Health and Social Care Trust of staff sickness levels, for the last financial year. (AQW 3750/09)

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

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) residential homes for the elderly; and (ii) nursing homes, are run by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3751/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of 30 September 2008, there were 317 residential care homes and 252 nursing homes in Northern Ireland, including 42 statutory residential care homes for the elderly. The following table gives a breakdown of these homes by Trust:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of statutory Residential Homes
Northern	11
Southern	5
Western	8
South Eastern	11
Belfast	9
Total	42

In addition the Belfast and Southern Trusts operate one nursing home each, although these are not for the elderly.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) residential homes for the elderly; and (ii) nursing homes, are run by the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3752/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of 30 September 2008, there were 317 residential care homes and 252 nursing homes in Northern Ireland, including 42 statutory residential care homes for the elderly. The following table gives a breakdown of these homes by Trust:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of statutory Residential Homes
Northern	11
Southern	5
Western	8
South Eastern	11
Belfast	9
Total	42

In addition the Belfast and Southern Trusts operate one nursing home each, although these are not for the elderly.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) residential homes for the elderly; and (ii) nursing homes, are run by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3753/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of 30 September 2008, there were 317 residential care homes and 252 nursing homes in Northern Ireland, including 42 statutory residential care homes for the elderly. The following table gives a breakdown of these homes by Trust:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of statutory Residential Homes
Northern	11
Southern	5
Western	8
South Eastern	11
Belfast	9
Total	42

In addition the Belfast and Southern Trusts operate one nursing home each, although these are not for the elderly.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) residential homes for the elderly; and (ii) nursing homes, are run by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3754/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of 30 September 2008, there were 317 residential care homes and 252 nursing homes in Northern Ireland, including 42 statutory residential care homes for the elderly. The following table gives a breakdown of these homes by Trust:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of statutory Residential Homes
Northern	11
Southern	5
Western	8
South Eastern	11
Belfast	9
Total	42

In addition the Belfast and Southern Trusts operate one nursing home each, although these are not for the elderly.

Residential Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the names of the (i) residential homes for the elderly; and (ii) nursing homes, that are run by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3755/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of 30 September 2008, there were 317 residential care homes and 252 nursing homes in Northern Ireland, including 42 statutory residential care homes for the elderly. The following table gives a breakdown of these homes by Trust:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of statutory Residential Homes
Northern	11
Southern	5
Western	8
South Eastern	11
Belfast	9
Total	42

In addition the Belfast and Southern Trusts operate one nursing home each, although these are not for the elderly.

Memory Clinics

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will he, in line with the NHS in England and Wales, introduce memory clinics so that patients displaying early signs of dementia might be able to remain in familiar surroundings for as long as possible. (AQW 3759/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts currently provide a number of services for patients with memory problems:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provide a Memory Service across the Trust area that includes clinics being provided by Older Peoples Services in all Trust localities.

The South Eastern Trust four teams deliver a general psychiatric outpatient service where patients with memory disorders, functional disorders and psychotic disorders etc. are cared for together.

The Southern Trust currently provide three Memory Clinics, one in each Legacy Trust.

The Northern Trust holds memory clinics in Causeway Hospital, Antrim/Ballyclare, Cookstown, Carrick/Larne, Newtownabbey and Ballymena.

The Western Trust has a dedicated memory clinic provided for patients in the northern sector of the Trust. Home visits are also provided for clients with memory impairment throughout the Trust and these are carried out by the Community Psychiatric Nurse / Consultant Psychiatrist.

My Department is currently developing a dementia strategy, which will be completed during 2009. This will take account of service developments and best practice throughout the UK and elsewhere.

GP Training

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will provide GP's with the same levels of training that their colleagues in England and Wales will be receiving to enable them to detect, assess and work with patients who are exhibiting early signs of dementia. (AQW 3760/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department is currently developing a Dementia Strategy for NI, due for completion in 2009. We will be looking into the training provided to GP's throughout the UK during the development of the Dementia Strategy in order to follow best practice for further developing our dementia services in NI.

Auxiliary Nurses

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if auxiliary nurses are now responsible for personal care, will this be reflected in a name change to more clearly identify their role. (AQW 3786/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The job title used by staff employed in the Health and Social Care is a matter for the employer to decide. Under Agenda for Change roles are identified and paid according to the responsibilities of the job.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork he sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3795/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There is a requirement to provide hard copies of documents such as Annual Reports, Departmental Publications and Consultation Documents to certain recipients including political representatives, parliamentary contacts and Legal Deposit and other libraries.

Other recipients/stakeholders can be advised in writing when a Departmental document is being launched or published making them aware that it is available in electronic format. It is then a matter of choice for the organisation as to whether their preference is to receive a hard copy document or to access the electronic version.

With the onset of RPA, I anticipate that the number of bodies, and therefore the number of copies to be issued, will be greatly reduced.

Telephone Communication Masts

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the total revenue generated by land owned or leased by the (i) Eastern; (ii) Northern; (iii) Western; and (iv) Southern Health and Social Services Boards to facilitate the erection of telephone communication masts. (AQW 3796/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: None

No revenue income is generated by any Health and Social Services Boards to facilitate the erection of telephone communications masts as Health and Social Services Boards do not have legal powers to own or lease land.

Nursing Home Care

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he monitors fee increases that have been or will be introduced in nursing home care; and what discussions he has had with their governing bodies considering that some nursing homes intend to increase fees by 8.9%. (AQW 3829/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Officials from my Department and the HSC meet periodically with representatives of the care home sector, including the Independent Health and Care Providers, to discuss a range of issues including rates for care. In addition, the HSC, in fulfilling its duty to procure care on the basis of quality and value for money, routinely monitors the level of fees for both residential and nursing homes. However, my Department has no legal authority to compel nursing home providers, which are independent businesses, to restrict the fees charged for care.

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much staff sickness at all levels cost his Department in the last financial year. (AQW 3839/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost of absences in 2007/08 (£1,100,000) was less than that for the 2006/07 year (£1,200,000).

In 2007/08 staff in DHSSPS lost fewer days (10.2 days per member of staff) due to sickness absence than staff in the rest of the NICS (13 days per member of staff).

Staff Sickness Levels

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much staff sickness cost all Health and Social Services Boards in the last financial year. (AQW 3840/09)

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

Efficiency Savings

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline efficiency savings plans and costs for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 3841/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Health Committee paper in October included an indicative split of South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust proposals between different types of efficiencies, to be obtained by 2010/11, as follows:

	2010/11 £m
(1) RPA	6.0
(2) Pharmacy and regional procurement	2.1
(3) Income generation	0.3
(4) Productivity and general efficiency	23.4
(5) Service redesign	5.1
Total	36.9

A range of these proposals are subject to consultation at the current time.

Care in the Community

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's long term plans for care in the community for elderly people in North Down. (AQW 3842/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The HSC is responsible for commissioning services in response to local need. The South Eastern Trust has advised that it will develop services in the North Down area in line with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board's Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Older People. This will see the development of a broad range of services linked to four key themes: Promotion of Health and Wellbeing, Helping Older People Retain or Regain their Independence; Development of Long Term Living Options and Developing Dementia and Mental Health Services. Examples of these services include expanded domiciliary and intermediate care, investment in Assistive Technologies to maintain older people in their own home, increases in day care and respite provision, and partnership working with the Housing Executive to develop alternatives to traditional residential and nursing home care.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what legislation will his Department bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3845/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive and it would therefore not be appropriate or possible to pre-empt this consideration by providing the information you request.

Musgrave Park Hospital

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if respite care at the new Musgrave Park Hospital site will be available before the closure of the Forster Green Hospital unit. (AQW 3851/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has confirmed that respite care for patients with neurological conditions will continue to be provided at the Forster Green Hospital site until this service has been transferred.

Nursing Homes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he would issue a statement that nursing homes should ensure that any increases in fees are level with inflation and not at a rate significantly above this figure. (AQW 3852/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Officials from my Department and the HSC meet periodically with representatives of the care home sector, including the Independent Health and Care Providers, to discuss a range of issues including rates for care. In addition, the HSC, in fulfilling its duty to procure care on the basis of quality and value for money, routinely monitors the level of fees for both residential and nursing homes. However, my Department has no legal authority to compel nursing home providers, which are independent businesses, to restrict the fees charged for care.

Security Facilities for People with Mental Illness

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what facilities are available for people who require a high level of security because they have severe mental health conditions. (AQW 3868/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There is no high secure hospital in Northern Ireland. The State Hospital, Carstairs, Scotland, has provided most of the care and treatment in conditions of high security for adults from Northern Ireland with mental illness or severe mental impairment who, because of their dangerous, violent or criminal propensities, cannot be cared for in any other setting locally.

Residential Homes

Mr E Poots asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the (i) name; (ii) location; (iii) size; and (iv) occupancy levels of residential homes for older people in the 15 mile radius surrounding Dromore, to include Banbridge, Lurgan, Lisburn and Ballynahinch. (AQW 3870/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Statutory Homes

Mr E Poots asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many statutory homes in the 15 mile radius surrounding Dromore are (i) closing; or (ii) have closed, and how many bed places have been lost, in the last five years. (AQW 3871/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Residential Homes

Mr E Poots asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many elderly people from Dromore were placed in residential homes outside the Dromore area. (AQW 3872/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Residential Homes

Mr E Poots asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to give a breakdown of (i) the £2.9m expenditure on the five residential homes in the Dromore area; and (ii) the total cost for Skeagh House. (AQW 3873/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are five statutory residential homes for the elderly within the Southern Trust area. The table below shows the direct cost budget for each of these 5 statutory residential care homes including Skeagh House for 2007/08.

2007/08	
Home	Direct Cost Budget
Cloughreagh Bessbrook	£607,968
Slieve Roe Kilkeel	£493,610
Roxborough Moy	£675,111
Crozier Banbridge	£563,527
Skeagh Dromore	£623,434
Total	£2,963,650

The direct budget cost for Skeagh House for 2007/08 was £623,434. This budget covers staffing and the running cost of the home. In addition, a further £23,776 was spent on minor works such as resurfacing in 2007/8.

Nursing Staff

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department has, or Health and Social Care Trusts have, considered establishing a pool of nursing staff willing to work at short notice thereby avoiding the additional cost of engaging agency staff. (AQW 3878/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I can confirm that all Trusts have ‘nursing bank’ arrangements in place. Bank staff can be a mixture of nurses employed by their Trust and staff from other organisations who provide additional shifts. I have asked Trusts to examine their reliance on agency staff and I am assured that they are making every effort to address this.

Information on the average number of agency nurses employed daily is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Staff

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average number of agency nurses that are employed each day, broken down by each acute hospital; and what consideration has been given to minimising the dependency on agencies for the provision of additional staff. (AQW 3879/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I can confirm that all Trusts have ‘nursing bank’ arrangements in place. Bank staff can be a mixture of nurses employed by their Trust and staff from other organisations who provide additional shifts. I have asked Trusts to examine their reliance on agency staff and I am assured that they are making every effort to address this.

Information on the average number of agency nurses employed daily is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Staff

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list all hospital wards that are, or have been, closed due to shortages of nursing staff, during this financial year (AQW 3880/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

There has been no hospital wards closed due to shortages of nursing staff, in Health and Social Care hospitals in Northern Ireland, during this financial year.

Contact Youth

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the services provided by Contact Youth under contract to his Department in the Foyle constituency; (ii) the time period of the contract; and (iii) the financial value of that contract. (AQW 3887/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Contact Youth are contracted by my Department to provide a regional 24/7 crisis response telephone helpline service. This includes dealing with calls from people in crisis and helping to de-escalate the crisis situation and, where appropriate, referral of callers to associated statutory sector, community sector or Contact Youth support services. Support services provided under the contract include counselling, mentoring, and befriending. These services are available across Northern Ireland.
- (ii) The contract will run initially for a period of 1 year and 3 months, with options to extend for a further three one-year periods subject to agreement by both parties.
- (iii) It is estimated that the service will cost in the region of £3.5 million per annum.

Contact Youth

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what partnerships exist between Contact Youth and other counselling providers to deliver services in the Foyle constituency; (ii) what process was used to establish these partnerships; and (iii) how long these partnerships are due to remain in place. (AQW 3888/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Contact Youth have been contracted by my Department to deliver a regional 24/7 crisis response helpline service. In doing so, Contact Youth has developed partnerships

with a number of organisations which provide counselling, mentoring, befriending, and complementary services in the Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHST) area. With regard the specific information requested, I can confirm that:

- (i) Information on partnerships is not held by parliamentary constituency; however, this information is available at Trust level. The partner organisations providing support services in the WHST area are:- Aisling Centre, Zest- Healing the Hurt, Northwest Counselling, Cunamh, Carecall, Community Action for Locally Managing Stress, and Feel Great Therapies.
- (ii) Contact Youth held Information “open days” for potential partner organisations in the first instance, and advertisements inviting tenders were subsequently placed in the local press.
- (iii) In line with the regional contract, the partnerships are initially due to run to 31 March 2009, with options to extend for a further three periods of one year subject to agreement by both parties.

Dental Technicians

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will provide funding for a part-time course to enable dental technicians to obtain a recognised qualification and Continuous Professional Development credit in order to obtain full registration with the General Dental Council. (AQW 3889/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My department already provides funding for a full time course for dental technicians at the Royal Victoria Hospital School of Dentistry. My department has also made available £120K per year for Continuous Professional Development for Dental Care Practitioners, which includes dental technicians. In addition, my department is working with DEL to facilitate part-time training for dental technicians. It is not within the remit of the DHSSPS to fund training for the commercial sector.

Hip Arthroscopic Surgery

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which hospitals perform hip arthroscopic surgery. (AQW 3960/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Hip arthroscopic surgery has been recorded in two hospitals, Musgrave Park Hospital and Craigavon Hospital, in the period since April 2007 to November 2008 (the latest date for which information is available).

Antrim Area Hospital

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many trolley waits there were in the Accident and Emergency Department at the Antrim Area Hospital on the evening of Saturday 10th January, 2009. (AQW 3987/09)

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

St. Johns Ambulance Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether St. Johns Ambulance Service is equipped to deal with patients who are suffering from cardiac problems; and if it is an adequate back-up to the emergency ambulance fleet. (AQW 3990/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: St John Ambulance is a voluntary organisation and my Department has not made any assessment of its capacity to deal with patients suffering from cardiac problems. Emergency 999 calls involving patients suffering from cardiac problems will receive a response from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS).

I understand that as part of its contingency planning, for example in the event of a major incident, NIAS would request assistance from the voluntary ambulance services, including St John Ambulance. The voluntary ambulance services also provide valuable support to the Health and Social Care sector by providing routine non-emergency patient transport services.

St. Johns Ambulance Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times have St. Johns Ambulances been used in place of emergency ambulances by the Northern Health and Social Services Board when transferring patients receiving emergency treatment in Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, to hospitals in Belfast, from January 2008 to January 2009. (AQW 3991/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There have been no instances when St John Ambulance vehicles have been used in place of an emergency ambulance to transfer patients from Causeway Hospital to Belfast hospitals.

Nursing Posts

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of nurses who graduated from universities in Northern Ireland during the past year, have obtained nursing posts. (AQW 4001/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From information provided by Queen's University, Belfast, out of 394 students who graduated in 2008, 332 returned destination survey questionnaires. Of these, 281 or 85% have obtained nursing posts, with a further 31 or 9% on HSC Trust employment waiting lists.

The remaining 20 students who returned questionnaires have opted to travel.

At the University of Ulster, destination statistics for nursing students who completed their course in September 2008 are not yet available. However for the 137 students who completed in September 2007, 117 returned destination surveys. Of these 113 or 96% have obtained nursing posts.

Gortmore Nursing Home, Omagh

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what savings would be made by the proposed closure of Gortmore Nursing Home in Omagh. (AQW 4020/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is difficult to make a reliable estimate of such a figure at this stage given that such proposals are subject to the outcome of consultation. The Trust has provided estimates that the potential savings are in the region of £370k.

Gynaecological Ward at the Erne Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the future of the gynaecological ward at the Erne Hospital Enniskillen; and what attempts are being made by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to amalgamate gynaecological services with surgical services that are already overstretched. (AQW 4022/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The gynaecological ward at the Erne Hospital is not closing. The ward will relocate on 1 February to the present female surgical ward and will comprise of 2 four-bedded wards and one single room. The beds will be protected for gynaecological use.

It is for the Western Health and Social Care Trust to configure its services to best meet the needs of the local population. The Trust advises that this adjustment brings the service into line with the model planned for the new south west acute hospital.

Closure of Community Stores at Omagh and Enniskillen

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department or the Western Health and Social Care Trust has to close the community stores at Omagh and Enniskillen and centralise them in Derry/Londonderry by April 2010. (AQW 4023/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following a recent review, the Western Health and Social Care Trust is now considering a number of options in relation to how to best provide a stores service for its

resident population. There are no plans at present to close the community stores at Omagh and Enniskillen, and no decision has been taken on whether or where stores might be centralised.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust has stated that its staff will be kept fully informed throughout the process.

Hip Arthroscopic Surgery

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients are currently on a waiting list for hip arthroscopic surgery, in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4024/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There was one patient waiting for hip arthroscopic surgery at the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland at 30th September 2008, the last quarter for which official waiting time data are available.

There were no patients waiting for hip arthroscopic surgery at any of the other four Health and Social Care Trusts at 30th September 2008.

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) the cost of refurbishing wards 5-6 at Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh in 2008; and (ii) if wards 5-6 will remain open until the new hospital is built in Omagh. (AQW 4068/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

(i) The cost of the refurbishment of wards 5 and 6 at Tyrone County Hospital was some £480,000.

(ii) Wards 5 and 6 will remain open until the new Omagh Hospital is operational.

Emergency Services Employees

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to breakdown by gender, employees of (i) the Northern Ireland Fire Service; and (ii) the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

(AQW 4075/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below details the breakdown, by gender, of employees of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service:

	Male	Female	Total
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Employees	1,927	224	2,151
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Employees	838	294	1,132

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the organisational structure of the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4096/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department is currently developing programmes of activity to address rural poverty, social exclusion and community development, and therefore I cannot confirm that in-kind contributions by Community and Voluntary Groups will be treated as regards eligibility for match funding. The appropriateness of treating in-kind contributions as potential match funding will be considered within the economic appraisal process of each proposed programme. However under all but the farm diversification measure of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 13, social economy enterprises may provide match funding towards eligible costs in the form of contributions-in-kind in line with the programme operating rules.

New Health Centre at Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if (i) the Primacure plans for a new Health Centre at Ballygawley, County Tyrone have been approved by any of the Health authorities; (ii) he will confirm that his Department has approved this plan; and (iii) it will be taken forward as a Private Finance Initiative. (AQW 4183/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The development planned by Primacure is an independent healthcare facility. Consequently it has no connections whatsoever with the plans I have announced for investment in the health and social care infrastructure across Northern Ireland.

The Southern Board and Trust who are responsible for the commissioning and delivery of services in the Ballygawley area have indicated that this proposal has not been discussed with either of them.

My Department has had no discussions with Primacure and as such there is no plan to enter into any project or contracts with Primacure.

A statement was issued to the local Tyrone Times on 16 December 2008 confirming that neither my Department nor the Southern Board and Trust had any connection with the article published by Primacure.

Mid Ulster Hospital

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what changes have been made to the Strategic Spending Review Consultation document with regard to Mid Ulster Hospital, following the end of phase 1 of the consultation process. (AQW 4199/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trust published its Engagement and Consultation Programme document in late 2008. This indicated briefly the proposals that the Trust intended to consult formally on. More detailed but identical Mid Ulster proposals are the subject of a specific formal consultation which is currently underway. The consultation document is available on the Trust's website and responses can be received by the Trust up to 6 March 2009.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Road Gritting

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the annual spend for road gritting, broken down by district council area, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3600/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service does not maintain the information that you have requested by council area. However, the table below details the winter maintenance expenditure to treat snow and frost at Roads Service Divisional level.

Roads Service	Winter Maintenance Expenditure		
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Eastern Division	£1,051,000	£810,000	£829,000
Northern Division	£1,737,000	£1,423,000	£1,494,000
Southern Division	£1,282,000	£1,194,000	£1,298,000
Western Division	£802,000	£745,000	£790,000
Roads Service Headquarters*	£388,000	£272,000	£272,000
Total	£5,260,000	£4,444,000	£4,683,000

* Roads Service Headquarters costs include forecast information from the Met Office, calibration / maintenance of sensor sites and other associated costs.

Dunmurry Waste Water Treatment Works

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an update into the problems associated with Dunmurry waste water treatment works and new developments in the Dunmurry area. (AQW 3604/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that connections to the public sewerage system from new development in the Dunmurry area continue to be controlled and limited. Work commenced recently to address specific issues with the local sewerage network in advance of the main sewer improvements required under the Drainage Area Study. In addition, a detailed catchment survey is underway to establish the design requirements for the upgrade of Dunmurry Wastewater Treatment Works. The upgrade of the Works and the sewerage network in the area is scheduled to commence in 2010 subject to funding being available.

Liability Claims

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development how many liability claims have been made against the Stormont estate due to accidents occurring on the pavements. (AQW 3620/09)

Minister for Regional Development: There have been 20 public liability compensation claims received involving accidents occurring on the Stormont Estate pavements since the Department's Central Claims Unit was set up in 1989.

A25/Burrenbridge Road

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 3059/09 to detail the estimated costs of the proposed improvement scheme at the junction of the A25/Burrenbridge Road. (AQW 3637/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that an improvement scheme at the junction of the A25/Burrenbridge Road is likely to cost in the region of £600,000.

Metro Bus Drivers

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 2872/09, for his assessment of the sufficiency of a 30 minute break for Metro Bus drivers given the workload and responsibilities of these posts. (AQW 3644/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Arrangements for rest breaks are an operational matter for Translink. Translink has informed me that the rules on working time and rest periods for bus drivers are set out in a number of transport regulations with which Translink fully complies. These regulations set a minimum rest period of 30 minutes.

Disabled Parking

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development what recent action his Department has taken to reduce the abuse of blue badges for disabled parking. (AQW 3652/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department is currently in the process of making a statutory rule, which amends the 1993 Regulations, to prescribe a revised form of the Blue Badge. The revised badges will incorporate a hologram on the front to improve security and help prevent the use of forgeries. It is expected that this amendment will come into operation on 1 April 2009.

In addition, Roads Service's Parking Enforcement Unit, in conjunction with NCP Services Ltd, is effectively enforcing parking violations, where information gathered points to the misuse of Blue Badges. This has resulted in a number of Penalty Charge Notices being issued to vehicles parked in contravention of parking concessions falsely claimed under the scheme. NCP Services Ltd and Roads Service will continue to gather information to substantiate the legitimacy of vehicles displaying Blue Badges and enforce parking legislation accordingly.

Walking to School and Cycling Initiatives

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to walking to school and cycling initiatives as part of his Department's strategy to reduce traffic congestion. (AQW 3661/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is involved in promoting walking and cycling to school through its Travelwise Safer Routes to Schools programme. This programme has been developed to support the objectives of the Regional Transportation Strategy. The aim of this strategy is to provide a safe, modern and sustainable transportation network, for the north, by raising awareness of the major issues related to traffic congestion, including the detrimental impact on road safety, health and the environment.

More information on the Travelwise initiative can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.travelwise.org.uk/>

Schools with Flashing Warning Lights

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development which schools have flashing warning lights. (AQW 3740/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has provided road safety schemes incorporating flashing warning lights outside 187 schools detailed in the table below.

School	Location
Ashfield Girl's High School	Belfast
Ballinderry Primary School	Lisburn
Ballymacward Primary School	Lisburn
Ben Madigan Primary School	Belfast
Braniel Primary School	Castlereagh
Carr Primary School	Lisburn
Carrickfergus College	Carrickfergus
Carrickfergus Grammar	Carrickfergus
Cavehill Primary School	Belfast
Christian Brothers Secondary School	Belfast
Currie Primary School	Belfast
Derriaghy Primary School	Lisburn
Friends School	Lisburn
Gilnahirk Primary School	Castlereagh
Glengola Collegiate School	Bangor
Glengormley High School	Glengormley
Holy Rosary Primary School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Primary School	Belfast
Kilbride Central Primary School	Kilbride
La Salle Boys Secondary School	Belfast
Lagan College	Castlereagh
Leadhill Primary School	Castlereagh
Loughview Integrated Primary School	Castlereagh
Mallusk Primary School	Mallusk

School	Location
Moira Primary School	Moira
Moneyreagh Primary School	Castlereagh
Newtownbreda High School	Castlereagh
Oakwood Integrated Primary School	Derriaghy, Lisburn
Our Lady Of Lourdes Primary School	Belfast
Redburn Primary School	Holywood
Riverdale Primary School	Lisburn
St Comgalls Primary School	Bangor
St Joseph's College	Belfast
St Kevin's Primary School	Belfast
St Louise's Comprehensive College	Belfast
St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School	Belfast
St Teresa's Primary School	Belfast
Stranmillis Primary School	Belfast
Sullivan Upper School	Holywood
Wallace High School	Lisburn
Whitehead Primary School	Whitehead
Armagh Christian Brothers Primary School	Armagh
Ballydown Primary School	Banbridge
Bocombra Primary School	Portadown
Bridge Integrated Primary School	Banbridge
Bronte Primary School	Banbridge
Brownlow College	Craigavon
Clea Primary School	Keady
Drumsallen Primary School	Killylea
Killylea Primary School	Killylea
Kings Park Primary School	Lurgan
Lisnadill Primary School	Armagh
Moyallon Primary School	Portadown
Mullavilly Primary School	Portadown
Rathfriland High School	Rathfriland
Richmount Primary School	Portadown
St Coleman's Primary School	Annaclone
St Coleman's Primary School	Lawrencetown
St Paul's Junior High School	Lurgan
St Peter's Primary School	Charlemont
St. Anthony's Primary School	Craigavon
St. Francis Primary School	Lurgan
St. Jarlath's Primary School	Blackwatertown

School	Location
St. Marys Primary School	Derrytrasna
St. Mary's Primary School	Granemore
St. Mary's Primary School	Aghagallon
St. Teresa's Primary School	Lurgan
Ballynahinch Primary School	Ballyhinch
Carrickmannon Primary School	Ballygowan
Cortamlet Primary School	Altamackin
St Joseph's Primary School (Ballymartin)	Kilkeel
Abbey Primary School	Newtownards
St Macartan's Primary School	Loughinisland
Carrick Primary School	Warrenpoint
Sacred Heart Primary School	Dundrum
Saintfield High School	Saintfield
Castle Gardens Primary School	Newtownards
Andrews Memorial Primary School	Comber
Dromintee Primary School	Drumintee
St Mary's High School (to be installed Jan 09)	Downpatrick
St. Patrick's Primary School	Ballynahinch,
St Michael's Primary School	Newtownhamilton
St Mary's Primary School	Mullaghbawn
St Joseph's (Bessbrook)	Bessbrook
Killyleagh Primary School	Killyleagh
Balloughry Primary School	Derry
Culmore Primary School	Derry
St Brigid's College	Derry
St Patrick's Primary School	Derry
St. Cecilia's Secondary School	Derry
St John's Primary School	Derry
Bligh's Lane Nursery School	Derry
Glendermott Primary School	Derry
St. Peters Secondary School	Derry
Broadbridge Primary School	Eglinton
St Colmcille's Primary School	Claudy
Groarty Primary School	Derry
Irish Society Primary School	Coleraine
Culcrow Primary School	Aghadowey, Coleraine
Damhead Primary School	Coleraine
St. Paul's Secondary School	Kilrea
Central Primary School	Limavady

School	Location
St. Columba's Primary School	Boleran, Garvagh
St. Columba's Primary School	Kilrea
Ballytober Primary School	Bushmills
Carnalridge Primary School	Portrush
St. Mary's Primary School	Cushendall
St. Patrick's Primary School	Waterfoot
Cullycapple Primary School	Aghadowey, Coleraine
St. Anthony's Primary School	Limavady
Hezlett Primary School	Articlave, Coleraine
Gracehill Primary School	Ballymena
Corran Integrated Primary School	Larne
Bushvalley Primary School	Ballymoney
Eden Primary School	Ballymoney
Longstone Primary School	Ballymoney
Ballyboley Primary School	Larne
Templepatrick Primary School	Antrim
St Joseph's Primary School	Antrim
Moorfields Primary School	Ballymena
Braid Primary School	Ballymena
Knockahollet Primary School	Ballymoney
Cloughmills Primary School	Ballymoney
Parkhall/Antrim Grammar	Antrim
Loanends Primary School	Antrim
Garryduff Primary School	Ballymoney
Kilmoye Primary School	Ballymoney
Diamond Primary School	Ballymena
Carrowreagh Primary School	Ballymoney
Larne Grammar	Larne
Groggan Primary School	Antrim
Moneynick Primary School	Antrim
Altayeskey Primary School	Draperstown
Ampertaine Controlled Primary School	Maghera
Anahorish Primary School	Toomebridge
Artigarvan Primary School	Artigarvan
Aughnacloy Regional Primary School	Aughnacloy
Ballinamallard Primary School	Ballinamallard
Ballylifford Primary School	Cookstown
Bush Primary School	Dungannon
Churchill Primary School	Caledon

School	Location
Clogher Regional Primary School	Clogher
Coagh Primary School	Coagh
Crossroads Primary School	Upperlands
Derrycrin Primary School	Cookstown
Donaghey Primary School	Donaghey, Cookstown
Drumlisk Primary School	Dromore, Co Tyrone
Dungannon Primary School	Dungannon
Fivemiletown High School	Fivemiletown
Florencecourt Primary School	Florencecourt
Gillygooley Primary School	Omagh
Loup Primary School	Loup
Money more Primary School	Money more
New Row Primary School	Castledawson
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School	Greencastle
Primate Dixon Primary School	Coalisland
Roan St Patricks Primary School	Eglisk
Royal School Grammar School	Dungannon
Spires Integrated Primary School	Magherafelt
St Bridgid's Primary School	Magherafelt
St Columban's Primary School	Belcoo
St Comghall's High School	Lisnaskea
St Dymna's Primary School	Dromore, Co Tyrone
St Eoghan's Primary School	Draperstown
St Eugene's Primary School	Lisnaskea
St John's Business & Enterprise College	Dromore, Co Tyrone
St John's Primary School	Swatragh
St Josephs Primary School	Drumquin
St Joseph's Primary School	Dungannon
St Malachy's Primary School	Ballygawley
St Mary's Primary School	Maguiresbridge
St Mary's Primary School	Bellenaleck
St Mary's Primary School	Fivemiletown
St Mary's Secondary School	Belleek
St McCartan's Primary School	Clogher
St Patrick's Maintained Primary School	Coalisland
St Patrick's Maintained Primary School	Ardboe
St Patrick's Maintained Primary School	Money more
St Patrick's Primary School	Eskra
St Patrick's Primary School	Castle derg

School	Location
St Patrick's Primary School	Derrygonnelly
St Patrick's Primary School	Donaghmore
St Paul's Primary School	Irvinestown
St Ronan's Primary School	Lisnaskea
St Treas Primary School	Ballyronan
Strabane Grammar School	Strabane
Tobermore Primary School	Tobermore

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how much was spent by Translink on fuel for (i) buses; and (ii) trains by each month in 2008. (AQW 3742/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I enclose a table showing how much was spent by Translink on fuel for buses by Metro and Ulsterbus and on trains by NIR for each month in 2008.

Translink Fuel Costs 2008 (£)				
Month	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jan	1,116,935	363,579	322,564	1,803,078
Feb	1,512,201	444,906	358,507	2,315,615
Mar	2,041,830	598,762	589,081	3,229,674
Apr	1,701,277	507,592	439,223	2,648,092
May	1,624,874	483,947	439,813	2,548,634
Jun	2,143,896	682,104	558,572	3,384,572
Jul	1,237,996	428,161	406,894	2,073,051
Aug	1,391,795	511,441	482,638	2,385,874
Sep	1,884,938	588,379	491,789	2,965,105
Oct	1,891,400	584,058	527,441	3,002,900
Nov	1,790,200	618,611	571,832	2,980,642
Dec	2,301,000	751,668	687,046	3,739,714
	20,638,343	6,563,209	5,875,399	33,076,951

Note that Translink report that the December fuel figures are not yet finalised.

B47 Glenelly Road

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what gritting arrangements are in place for the B47 Glenelly Road between Plumbridge and Draperstown; and (ii) if he has any plans to revise these arrangements. (AQW 3757/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the B47 Glenelly Road runs from Plumbridge to its junction with the B41 Sixtowns Road. The route to Draperstown then extends along the B41.

The B47 Glenelly Road from Plumbridge to the eastern boundary of Cranagh, and the section of the B41 Sixtowns Road from Draperstown to its junction with the Disert Road, are included within the salting schedule.

Previously, the 13 mile gap between these locations did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the salting schedule. This stretch was serviced with approximately 50 grit piles.

However, following a recent Roads Service assessment of this route, a one mile section of the B41 between its junctions with the Disert Road and the B47 Glenelly Road, has been added to the salting schedule, for inclusion from the end of January 2009.

Traffic Census Figures

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what are the most up to date traffic census figures for the following roads and locations; (i) Jordanstown Road (Shore Road Junction to Monkstown Road Junction); (ii) Monkstown Road (Doagh Road Junction to Old Carrick Road B90 Junction); (iii) Doagh Road (Cloughfern Corner to Shore Road Junction); (iv) Doagh Road (Cloughfern Corner to Monkstown Road Junction); (v) Shore road (M5 Roundabout to Whiteabbey Station Road Junction); (vi) Shore Road (Whiteabbey Station Road to Jordanstown Road Junction); (vii) Shore Road (Jordanstown Road to Greenisland Station Road Junction) (AQW 3762/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that while none of the roads detailed in your question are included in its automatic traffic counting sites, temporary traffic counts will be carried out on a number of these roads as part of the proposed works on the A2 Shore Road. I have asked the Divisional Road Manager for Eastern Division to write to you when these surveys have been completed.

Roads Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Roads Service has spent on roads, in each of the last five financial years, broken down by division. (AQW 3805/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below sets out the total capital and maintenance spend on roads by Roads Service over the last five financial years, broken down by Division.

All figures are in £ million's

Division	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
North	54.002	50.934	52.387	39.473	51.135
East	50.251	64.614	59.465	68.243	54.713
South	49.373	65.257	62.291	99.324	55.860
West	39.748	48.364	50.878	53.064	58.168
Total	193.374	229.169	225.021	260.104	219.876

Roads Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development how (i) many compensation claims were made; and (ii) much was paid out by Roads Service for vehicle damage on County Fermanagh roads, in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 3806/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The number of compensation claims made against the Department for Regional Development and the amount of compensation paid in each of the last five financial years in respect to damage to vehicles on roads in County Fermanagh is as follows:-

	Number of Claims	Total Compensation Paid
2003/04	72	£7,752.52
2004/05	75	£6,357.17
2005/06	68	£4,814.15

	Number of Claims	Total Compensation Paid
2006/07	72	£5,351.55
2007/08	88	£7,129.00

CCTV Cameras

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would consider a change in the rules and legislation so that CCTV cameras could be mounted on street lights. (AQW 3819/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that they do not have the powers to allow the mounting of CCTV cameras by third parties on to their street lighting equipment.

Roads Service refuses such requests on the grounds of Health and Safety, third party liability and the implications concerning the violation of Human Rights legislation, including the Data Protection Act. The Health and Safety grounds for refusal include the risks to Roads Service staff carrying out maintenance operations, with the presence of multiple power supplies.

Therefore, I cannot agree to any change to Roads Service's current practice that would allow the mounting of third party CCTV cameras on to their street lighting equipment.

Road Resurfacing Projects

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any cuts to road resurfacing projects in the North Down area, in the next two years. (AQW 3843/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, although budgets have not been finalised, it is anticipated that the road resurfacing programme in the North Down area will remain broadly at its current level for the next two years.

However, as always, all proposed projects are subject to the availability of funding.

Level Crossings

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how many recorded incidents there were where (i) vehicles; and (ii) pedestrians, violated barriers at level crossings, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3855/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The following table provides the number of recorded incidents at level crossings in each of the last five years.

Year	Incidents Involving Vehicles	Incidents Involving Pedestrians
2004	48	9
2005	35	20
2006	47	27
2007	37	44
2008	71	41

Unpaid Parking Fines

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many unpaid parking fines, issued to Republic of Ireland registered vehicles, remain outstanding since the start of the NCP contract. (AQW 3859/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that from commencement of the current parking enforcement contract, at the end of October 2006, up to 11 January 2009, the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued to vehicles registered in the south, which remain unpaid, is 18,898.

Nutt's Corner Roundabout

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development what road safety issues his Department has identified at Nutts Corner Roundabout; and when this traffic flow was last reviewed. (AQW 3886/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service, in conjunction with the PSNI, continues to monitor the safety performance of all roads across the North. I am advised that the majority of collisions occurring in the vicinity of the Nutts Corner Roundabout, over the most recent three-year period for which collision data is available, tend to be minor. The collisions relate mainly to rear end shunts on the approaches to the roundabout, or poor lane discipline of vehicles circulating the roundabout. There is no discernable pattern of collisions that would be amenable to treatment under the programme of collision remedial measures carried out by Roads Service.

Recently it has been identified that the landscape planting, on the islands on the approaches to the roundabout, has reduced visibility. This issue has been raised with Antrim Borough Council, who provided the landscaping and has responsibility for its maintenance.

I can also advise the Member that a few years ago, planning approval had been granted for warehousing in the vicinity of the roundabout. As a condition of the approval, the developer agreed to improve the junction by widening the circulatory carriageway and introducing spiral road markings. I am advised that the warehousing development has not yet commenced. Therefore, Roads Service has no plans at present to carry out any further work to the roundabout junction.

In regard to traffic flow, the Member will be aware that a number of important routes, including the A26, A52 and B101, converge at the Nutt's Corner Roundabout. Roads Service recently published the Annual Traffic Census 'Traffic and Travel Information 2007' report, which details the volume of traffic using the A26 at two locations, one on either side of the Nutt's Corner roundabout. The report shows 19,450 vehicles per day using the A26 Tully Road, and 13,270 vehicles per day using the A26 Moira Road.

Dungiven By-Pass

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if there will be any delay in the Dungiven by-pass project as a result of the current economic climate. (AQW 3895/09)

Minister for Regional Development: At present, the economic climate has had no impact on the delivery of the A6 Derry to Dungiven scheme, including the Dungiven Bypass. My Department's Roads Service has advised that its programme of development work is making good progress, and it is anticipated that the preferred route will be announced in spring 2009.

Gritting Schedule

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what changes have been made to the gritting routes maintained by Roads Service in North Down, in the past five years. (AQW 3909/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service salts main through routes carrying more than 1,500 vehicles per day and, in exceptional circumstances, roads with difficult topography carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles per day. The application of this policy ensures that 28% of the total road network, which carries around 80% of traffic, is salted, at an annual cost of approximately £5 million.

Roads Service does not maintain a record of specific changes made to its schedule of salted routes over the past five years. However, arising from a review carried out in 2001, the salting schedule was increased by about 4% across the North. The additional routes were determined by an increased weighting for buses. In addition, small settlements containing 100 dwellings or more now have salted links to roads on the main salted network. Also, as new sections of road were constructed, they were included onto the salting schedule, if the above criteria were met.

Gritting Schedule

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide a list of all the roads on the gritting schedule, in the North Down Constituency. (AQW 3910/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below lists the roads within the North Down Constituency that are included in the salting schedule.

Roads Service Gritting Schedule – North Down Constituency	
Road	
Abbey Street	Dufferin Avenue
Airport Road West Mini Roundabout	Dunlady Road
Airport Road West Roundabout	East Circular Road
Airport Road West Slip Roads	Gransha Road Roundabout
Ashbury Avenue (Silverbirch Road to Bexley Road)	Gransha Road
Ashley Drive	Gray's Hill
Ashley Gardens	Green Road (Newtownards Road to Six Road Ends)
Balloo Road Roundabout	Groomsport By Pass
Balloo Road	Groomsport Road Roundabout
Ballycrochan Road	Groomsport Road
Ballyholme Esplanade (Sandringham Drive to Ballyholme Road)	Hamilton Road Roundabout
Ballyholme Road	Hamilton Road
Ballymenoch Road	High Donaghadee Road
Ballymiscaw Road	High Street, Bangor
Ballyree Drive	High Street, Hollywood
Ballyrobert Road	Hollywood By Pass
Ballysallagh Road	Hollywood Road
Bangor Road, Conlig	Innisfayle Drive
Bangor Road A2	Jacksons Road
Bangor Road, Groomsport	Kilmaine Road
Bangor Road, Hollywood	Lisnabreen Crescent (South Circular Road to Skipperstone Road)
Belfast Road slip roads (at Springhill flyover)	Main Street, Bangor
Belfast Road A2 (dual carriageway)	Main Street, Conlig
Belfast Road, Bangor	Main Street, Crawfordsburn
Belfast Road, Hollywood	Main Street, Groomsport
Bexley Road	Mills Road Roundabout
Bingham Street	Mills Road
Bloomfield Road Roundabout	My Lady's Mile
Bloomfield Road	Newtownards Road Roundabout
Bloomfield Road South	Newtownards Road
Bridge Road	Old Belfast Road
Bridge Road South	Old Hollywood Road
Bridge Street	Owenroe Drive
Brunswick Road	Quay Street
Bryansburn Road Roundabout	Queens Parade
Bryansburn Road	Rathgael Road
Castle Park Avenue	Rathmore Road

Roads Service Gritting Schedule – North Down Constituency	
Road	
Castle Park Road	Rhanbuoy Park (Seahill Road to Craigdarragh Park)
Castle Street	Robinson Road
Church Road	Sandringham Drive
Church Street	Seahill Road
Clandeboye Road	Shore Road
Clifton Road (High Street to Victoria Road)	Silverbirch Road (Ballycrochan Road to Ashbury Avenue)
Cootehall Road	Skipperstone Road
Craigantlet Road	South Circular Road
Craigdarragh Park (Seahill Road to Rhanbuoy Park)	Springhill Road
Craigdarragh Road	Sullivan Place
Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor	Victoria Road, Bangor
Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards	West Circular Road
Croft Road	Whinney Hill
Demesne Road	Windmill Road (Donaghdee Road to Ashley Drive)
Donaghadee Road Roundabout	A2 Warren Road
Donaghadee Road, Bangor	A2 Millisle Road
Donaghadee Road, Groomsport	B21 High Donaghadee Road
Downshire Road, Holywood	A48 Donaghadee Road
Drumhirk Drive	B172 Movilla / Killaughey Road
Dufferin Avenue Roundabout	

Steria Contract

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment (i) of a statement released by Northern Ireland Water about an alteration to a contract with Steria that will cost approximately £3m pounds to implement; (ii) of what the alteration entails; (iii) of the operational and financial benefits he would envisage as a result of this alteration; and (iv) to any figures relevant to this matter. (AQW 3939/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that, as part of an increasing focus on value for money and in view of the continuing deferral of domestic charging, it plans to change the contractual arrangements with the Crystal Alliance consortium led by Steria Ltd that provides customer contact and billing services and a mobile work management system. Any costs associated with the change will only be determined following commercial negotiations with Steria Ltd over the next 12 months, but there is a provision in the contract for payment up to a maximum of £3 million.

The change to the contractual arrangements involves the termination of the contract with Steria Ltd with NIW taking over direct management of the sub-contractors. Steria Ltd will continue to provide business to NIW's Customer Billing and Contact Service alongside the existing sub-contractors.

NIW is confident that in overall terms, this development will achieve significant benefits in cost efficiency, value for money and continuing customer service improvements through more direct relationships with its core service providers and customers. However, it would not be appropriate to speculate on costs or savings, both of which will depend on the outcome of commercial negotiations with Steria Ltd.

Budget for Roads Service Southern Division

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development if the budget for roads in the Southern Division has been cut by over £50m; and what is his assessment of the impact of this reduction (AQW 4009/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the budget for Roads Service Southern Division has not been cut from the £38.1 million allocated at the start of this financial year. I should explain that this is not necessarily the total spend that will be achieved this financial year, as Cross Divisional schemes and expenditure by Roads Service's in-house contractor, Roads Service Direct, will also benefit Southern Division.

Cycle Lane

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development if Roads Service carried out consultation with the residents of Grand Parade before commencing work to create a cycle lane on 12th January 2009; and what was the extent of these consultations. (AQW 4047/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the cycle lane at Grand Parade forms part of a larger scheme for the area that includes a pelican crossing, an upgrade to the existing zebra crossings, pedestrian refuge islands and road markings for right turning vehicles. The scheme has been designed to enhance road safety, provide safer crossing facilities for pedestrians and to assist cyclists.

I can advise the Member that consultation with residents has included;

- a letter drop with plans and details of the scheme was made on 23 September 2008;
- a letter to all of the residents who signed a petition expressing concerns about the scheme. Several amendments were made as a result of the points raised;
- a letter drop notifying residents of the proposed start date, and outlining changes to proposals as a result of feedback from residents, was made on the 7 January 2009; and
- Roads Service officials have corresponded directly with any residents who have contacted them about the scheme.

Unlawful Advertising Signage

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of rural businesses which have incurred Roads Service (i) enforcements; and (ii) penalties for infringements, in relation to signposting of businesses. (AQW 4188/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not distinguish between rural and urban businesses in respect of action taken against the erection of unlawful advertising signage. Roads Service, therefore, does not maintain such records to answer the Member's question.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Pensioners Living Below the Poverty Threshold

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the number of pensioners living below the poverty threshold because their income is marginally above the threshold receiving Pension Credit. (AQW 3674/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The assessment of the number of pensioners living below the poverty threshold because either income is marginally above the threshold receiving Pension credit necessitates a range of complex analysis. The information required could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Housing Executive

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development if all non-emergency repairs to Housing Executive stock in Belfast have been suspended and, if so, when that suspension is expected to be lifted. (AQW 3768/09)

Minister for Social Development: All non-emergency repairs across Northern Ireland have been suspended and that suspension will not be lifted until 1 April 2009.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork she sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3832/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department's arrangements for the distribution of publications and consultations are governed by guidance issued by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. This guidance stipulates that certain recipients, such as political representatives, must be provided with hardcopies of documents but that other recipients can be offered the option of obtaining documents electronically.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what legislation her Department will bring forward to the Assembly in 2009. (AQW 3847/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department has identified its potential legislative requirements for the remainder of this session of the Assembly. However, as these proposals are subject to consideration by the Executive, it is therefore difficult to forecast which legislation will be agreed by the Executive for introduction in the Assembly before summer recess.

Strategic Business Review

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the proposals under the Strategic Business Review, to relocate staff and services from the Armagh Social Security Office to Newry and Dungannon, given the possible increase in the use of these services in Armagh in light of the economic downturn. (AQW 3881/09)

Minister for Social Development: Public consultation on the Strategic Business Review proposals was launched on the 27 November 2008 and is planned to run in two phases until late April 2009. Final decisions on the proposals, including the potential relocation of staff, will not be made until consultation has been completed. I will make my assessment of the impacts once the consultation responses have been considered.

Strategic Business Review

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development what implications the Strategic Business Review Plan will have on Benefits Offices in Banbridge, Lurgan and Portadown. (AQW 3900/09)

Minister for Social Development: The proposals set out in the Strategic Business Review of the Social Security Agency are currently subject to ongoing public consultation which will run until late April 2009. Final decisions on the proposals, including any relocation of functions or staff, will not be made until consultation has been completed and responses considered.

Housing Executive

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister for Social Development what assessment has been made of the number of jobs at risk due to the decision by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to implement cuts to its programme of routine maintenance repairs, changes of tenancy repairs, and other similar works. (AQW 3914/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Construction Employers Federation estimates that for every £1 million the Northern Ireland Housing Executive invests, 18 jobs are created in the construction industry. The lack of resources to deliver the Northern Ireland Housing Executive planned programme of work will ultimately result in further job losses across the industry.

A request for a further £10.5 million funding to be reallocated to the Housing Executive in February has been made. This financial support will allow the Housing Executive to release all change of tenancy repair work to contractors between now and the end of March.

Housing Executive

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister for Social Development what efforts are being made to increase the funding available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive so that it has sufficient resources to carry out its programme of routine maintenance repairs, changes of tenancy repairs, and other similar works. (AQW 3915/09)

Minister for Social Development: Following discussions with the Finance Minister Nigel Dodds, I have requested that the additional £10.5m is re-allocated to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, subject to approval in the February Monitoring Round. This will allow the NIHE to release a number of maintenance, change of tenancy repairs and other similar works.

Requests for additional resources will also be made in February to increase funding for housing to carry out programmes which would otherwise not be started until the next financial year. It will also support the building industry at a time when it is facing job losses.

Housing Executive

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development to list how many Housing Executive properties in each estate in the Ballymoney, Ballymena and Ballycastle areas are unoccupied; and for how long they have been unoccupied. (AQW 3916/09)

Minister for Social Development: The tables below detail the required information:-

BALLYMONEY

Housing Executive Estate	Properties unoccupied	Length of time unoccupied
Knock Road	1	182 weeks.
Carnany Drive	1	3 months
Garry Drive	1	1 month
Carnany Drive	1	1 month
Carness Drive	1	1 month
Travers Place	1	1 month
Cloneen Drive	1	1 month
Carnany Park	1	3 weeks
Carnany Avenue	1	1 month
Travers Place	1	3 weeks
McArthur Avenue	1	3 weeks
Belford Park	1	2 weeks
Newhill Park	1	2 weeks
Carnany Park	1	2 weeks
Trinity Drive	1	2 weeks
Garry Drive	1	1 month

Housing Executive Estate	Properties unoccupied	Length of time unoccupied
Trinity Drive	1	3 days

BALLYMENA

Housing Executive Estate	Properties unoccupied	Length of time unoccupied
Adair	1	9 weeks
Ahoghill	4	Between 1 and 17 weeks
Ballee	19	Between 1 week and 8 years.
Ballykeel	1	6 weeks
Doury Road	5	Between 1 week and 7 years.
Duke Street	1	345 weeks.
Dunclug	11	Between 3 weeks and 4 ½ years.
Kells	3	183 weeks
Rectory	2	45 weeks

BALLYCASTLE

Housing Executive Estate	Properties unoccupied	Length of time unoccupied
Armoy	1	6 weeks
Ballycastle	2	1 - 3 weeks 1 - 11 weeks
Mosside	2	1 - 1 week 1 - 2 weeks

Heating Installations

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Social Development (i) if she considers the Egan form of contract to be a saving to the taxpayer in terms of heating installations; and (ii) what the spend is on an average oil heating and gas installation since the conversion in 2001 from solid fuel to oil and gas. (AQW 3943/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is estimated that the Egan form of contract has resulted in savings of 8% per annum, plus further savings of £0.5 million in administration costs per annum. The average cost of all heating installations is set out in the table below:-

Year	Total amount
2001/02	£ 8,773,930.00
2002/03	£12,854,810.00
2003/04	£13,636,989.00
2004/05	£15,807,631.00
2005/06	£16,733,624.00
2006/07	£13,536,602.00
2007/08	£11,232,444.00

Heating Installations

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of whether (i) the rising cost of oil heating and gas installations has been good value for money; and (ii) this rising cost can be justified beyond the inflation rate. (AQW 3946/09)

Minister for Social Development: The cost of heating installations has risen above the level of inflation as a result of legislative changes in building regulations and rising costs in materials. Whilst costs have increased my Department and its partners have introduced several technical innovations to bear down on the cost of heating installations. New oil and gas heating systems can generate significant energy efficiency savings over their lifetime and continue to provide good value for money.

Benefits Not Claimed by the Elderly

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to ensure that the £1.2 million in benefits, not claimed by the elderly, will be claimed by those who are entitled to it. (AQW 3947/09)

Minister for Social Development: The £1.2 million quoted, was published in Help the Aged's SeniorLine Benchmark Report 2008. It is an estimate of benefit potentially available to older people who contacted SeniorLine with a benefit enquiry. The report acknowledges that the majority of unclaimed benefits recorded were as a result of their participation in the Social Security Agency's 2007/08 Benefit Uptake Programme. This Programme aimed to increase awareness of social security benefits for customers identified by the Agency as having potential entitlement for additional benefit. I can report that the 2007/08 Programme generated over £8 million of additional benefit.

The Housing Executive and the Social Security Agency provide a range of services on a daily basis to ensure that people are advised of their potential entitlement to benefits, including outreach services, joint working and promotional campaigns. Both organisations participate in the recently established Interdepartmental Group on Benefit Uptake, the aim of which is to coordinate efforts to increase benefit take-up.

I launched the 2008/09 Benefit Uptake Programme in May 2008 to increase awareness of social security benefits. This builds on the previous successful uptake programmes which have been in place since 2005 and resulted in £15 million of additional benefit paid to the most vulnerable in our society, £11 million to older people. This year's Programme will see over 115,000 people contacted about possible benefit entitlement, over 108,000 are older people. I can report that £2.2 million in additional benefit has already been generated for older people.

In addition, an improved way to process new claims for State Retirement Pension was introduced in 2008. This has resulted in a more joined-up service for customers who are claiming State Retirement Pension but may also be entitled to State Pension Credit. This new service increases the Agency's ability to ensure that older people are receiving the full range of benefits to which they are entitled.

Overall, the Agency has a comprehensive system of reviews to ensure people are receiving their full entitlement. Since April 2008, over 5,000 cases have been adjusted upwards resulting in extra benefit payments of approximately £12.8m.

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 862/09, what steps she is taking to ensure that those applications that have not yet been processed are cleared, particularly those applications received more than 48 months ago. (AQW 3949/09)

Minister for Social Development: Since the answer to AQW No 862 was given, the number of applications received over 12 months ago and not yet cleared has been reduced by approximately 16%. Specifically, in relation to those applications received over 48 months ago, the number uncleared has been reduced by 10%. There are a number of reasons why applications can go uncleared for this period of time. Amongst these is the inability to trace a secure address for Non Resident Parents, which would allow the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division to obtain the relevant information to calculate a liability. Each of these failures to obtain a confident address is reviewed on a regular basis with the aim of identifying fresh information to allow the application to be progressed. The Division has dedicated resources focused entirely on the clearance of the older outstanding applications.

Housing Executive

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding was requested for maintenance by each area office of the Housing Executive, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3950/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information on how much maintenance funding was requested by each of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's area offices in each of the last five years is not available.

Housing Executive

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding was allocated for maintenance to each area office of the Housing Executive, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3951/09)

Minister for Social Development: The revenue maintenance budget which excludes capital improvement works for each area office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each of the last five years, is contained in the table below:-

BUDGET £K

Area Office	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Belfast	29042	27048	26873	32513	31554
South East	19061	20016	18489	19065	18173
South	16261	15888	16183	16829	17625
North East	22413	19813	19865	22175	22393
West	14919	15381	16054	17135	16083
Total	101696	98146	97464	107717	105828

Housing Executive

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how much of the maintenance budget for each area office of the Housing Executive was spent on maintenance; and (ii) was the underspend returned to her Department or diverted to other sections of the Housing Executive, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3952/09)

Minister for Social Development: The total amount of the revenue maintenance budget, which excludes capital improvement works, spent in each area office of the Housing Executive, in each of the last five years, is contained in the table below. There were no underspends.

Area Office	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Belfast	29042	28821	27048	26453	26873	27952
South East	19061	19293	20016	21301	18489	18895
South	16261	16270	15888	16234	16183	16242
North East	22413	22114	19813	20218	19865	19442
West	14919	15389	15381	15650	16054	16840
Total	101696	101887	98146	99856	97464	99371

Area Office	2006/07		2007/08	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Belfast	32513	32638	31554	31736
South East	19065	18934	18173	18292

Area Office	2006/07		2007/08	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
South	16829	17062	17625	17288
North East	22175	21957	22393	22129
West	17135	17728	16083	17302
Total	107717	108319	105828	106747

Shared Future Housing Programmes

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to list the proposed locations of schemes for 'Shared Future' housing programmes and to provide these proposed schemes by Electoral Ward or the smallest geographical unit available. (AQW 3954/09)

Minister for Social Development: A twin track approach to developing shared areas has been adopted, firstly through the social new build programme and secondly through existing housing areas.

All new developments on the Social Housing Development Programme are now considered for Shared Future status and later this week I will launch our latest Scheme in Lisburn. Others will follow. However, given the sensitivity attached to community consultation to bring these schemes forward, I would prefer not to jeopardise that process by revealing any further details of these at present.

In respect of existing estates, a total of 30 neighbourhoods will be identified to participate in the Shared Neighbourhood Programme. In August 2008, I launched the first five estates to participate in this Programme; Springfarm in Antrim, Lissize in Rathfriland, Knockmore/Tonagh in Lisburn, Gortview/Killybrack Close in Omagh and Ballynafeigh in Belfast. Details of the next ten neighbourhoods will be announced shortly.

Housing Waiting List

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the housing waiting list for North Belfast broken down by; (i) electoral ward; (ii) religion; (iii) with/without dependants; and (iv) with/without disabilities, in each of the last two years. (AQW 3956/09)

Minister for Social Development: The following table details the total number of people on the Social Housing waiting list for North Belfast broken down by electoral ward at 31 March 2007 and 31 March 2008.

		Total on waiting list at 31/03/2007	Total on waiting list at 31/03/2008
Belfast 4	Carlisle/New Lodge	246	283
	Duncairn Gardens	40	46
	Fairhill	31	36
	Gainsborough	78	73
	Glandore & Dunmore	10	10
	Grove Area	57	46
	M/S Flats - Carlisle	28	38
	Mount Vernon Estate	19	26
	Newington/Limestone	35	25
	Ross House Flats/Mountvernon Flats	5	11
	Shore Road	72	74
	Skegoneill/Ashfield/Fortwilliam	105	122

		Total on waiting list at 31/03/2007	Total on waiting list at 31/03/2008
	Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	62	54
	Unity Flats	51	39
	Upper & Lower Duncairn	40	52
	Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	87	112
	Whitewell/White City	16	13
Belfast 6	Alliance	16	13
	Ardoyne	233	263
	Ballysillan	120	146
	Cavehill	328	342
	Cliftondene	8	8
	Cliftonville	260	270
	Lower Ligoniel/Glenbank	31	40
	Lower Oldpark	33	25
	Oldpark	106	107
	Rosewood/Crumlin RDA	1	2
	Sunningale	25	30
	Torrens	71	61
	Upper Ligoniel	91	94
	Westland	21	13
	Wheatfield	28	27
		North Belfast Total	2354

The following table gives the religious breakdown for North Belfast as a whole:-

	Total on waiting list 2007	Total on waiting list 2008
Catholic applicants	1376	1392
Protestant applicants	650	606
Other applicants	114	143
Undisclosed applicants	214	360

The following table gives the breakdown of people on the waiting list with and without dependants.

	Total on waiting list 2007	Total on waiting list 2008
Applicants with Dependants	752	823
Applicants without Dependants	1602	1678

The information for households with or without disabilities is not available.

North Belfast Housing Strategy

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of new social housing units completed under the North Belfast Housing Strategy between 2007 and 2008; (ii) the number of completed units by electoral wards; and (iii) the type of housing unit provided. (AQW 3957/09)

Minister for Social Development: During 2007/2008 there were 283 social housing units completed under the North Belfast Housing Strategy.

The electoral ward breakdown is as follows:

Duncairn	Waterworks	Chichester	Ardoyne
68 units	34 units	77 units	104 units

The housing types are as follows:-

1 bedroomed flats	2 bedroomed flats	2/3 bedroomed flats
29 units	98 units	156 units

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how much financial assistance her Department allocated to the Warm Homes Scheme in the 2008/9 financial year; and how much is proposed for 2009/10. (AQW 3959/09)

Minister for Social Development: The budget for the Warm Homes Scheme for 2008/09 was £20 million and this money has all been committed. The detail of the Budget allocations for 2009/10 will not be determined until March 2008.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the waiting list for (i) loft and wall insulation; and (ii) oil heating, under the Warm Homes Scheme. (AQW 3961/09)

Minister for Social Development: At 9 January 2009, there were:

- (i) 3,167 applications for insulation waiting to be surveyed; and
- (ii) 2,812 applications for heating and insulation waiting to be surveyed.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many people benefited from the Warm Homes Scheme in 2008. (AQW 3962/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department is on track to meet its 2008/09 Public Service Agreement target to alleviate fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures. This will mean that over 69,000 households will have benefited from increased energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Scheme since its inception in 2001.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development when new applications will be accepted for the Warm Homes Scheme. (AQW 3963/09)

Minister for Social Development: The budget available for the Warm Homes Scheme has been fully committed for the financial year 2008/09 and the Department is on track to meet its Public Service Agreement

target to alleviate fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures. It is not possible, therefore, to take any new applications for the current scheme. My Department has just completed a public consultation on proposed changes to the Warm Homes Scheme following a report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and subsequent Public Accounts Committee hearing. I expect the new Scheme to be operational in the spring.

Housing Executive

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development in relation to the £25m shortfall in the Housing Executive's budget to detail (i) how this situation came about; (ii) what schemes, projects and maintenance works will not be undertaken; and (iii) what Council areas are affected. (AQW 4041/09)

Minister for Social Development: The approved budget for the Housing Executive voted by the Assembly included £80m of capital receipts as it was based on historical and property receipts. The shortfall is a consequence of the collapse of the housing market, combined with the credit crunch. Housing Officials have been aware of this and have tried to mitigate the impact by bidding for the shortfall in each monitoring round. While there was some success in securing additional resources it was insufficient to meet the deficit. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made; this is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring. This would allow a significant amount of work to be undertaken this year that would otherwise not be possible.

Approximately 85 Planned Maintenance, Kitchen replacements, Heating replacement and Multi Element improvement schemes have been held back this year and there are now only funds to allow 16 of these to proceed. There will also be a delay in up to 400 new starts. It is too early in the review of the Housing Executive's programmes to state the specific locations that may be affected, however, the Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes in its programmes at the earliest opportunity.

Housing Executive

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development to give an assessment of the impact of Northern Ireland Housing Executive's £25m shortfall on the Upper Bann constituency. (AQW 4042/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has been working alongside my Department to minimise the impact of the shortfall. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made; this is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring. This would allow a significant amount of work to be undertaken this year that would otherwise not be possible. It is too early in the review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's programmes to state the specific locations that might be affected by the shortfall in funding, however, the Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes in its programmes as soon as possible.

'Christmas Bonus' Received by Pensioners

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development regarding the 'Christmas Bonus' received by pensioners in 2008, (i) who was eligible for the bonus; (ii) how a payment was made; (iii) when a payment was made; (iv) how many people received the payment; (v) the cost of providing the bonus; and (vi) if the same payment was made to pensioners in the rest of the United Kingdom. (AQW 4063/09)

Minister for Social Development: The 2008 Christmas Bonus includes an additional one off amount of £60 on top of the normal £10 Christmas Bonus making a total payment of £70. The information requested, where available, is set out below.

(i) A person is eligible for the 2008 Christmas Bonus if they are living or normally resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Gibraltar, another European Economic Area Member State or Switzerland and are entitled to one of the qualifying benefits in week commencing 22nd December 2008. The qualifying benefits are: Retirement Pension, State Pension Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, long-term Incapacity Benefit, qualifying Employment and Support Allowance, Widowed Mother's Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance, Widow's Pension, Severe Disablement Allowance, Industrial Death Benefit, an Unemployability Supplement or Allowance, a War Disablement Pension, a War Widow's Pension, and a Mobility Supplement.

- (ii) The payments are made automatically using the customer's normal method of benefit payment
- (iii) The 2008 Christmas Bonus is being paid in two instalments- all eligible recipients received their normal £10 bonus in December 2008 and will receive the additional £60 payment by the end of March 2009.
- (iv) & (v)
Final figures in relation to the number of recipients and the total cost of the 2008 Christmas Bonus are not yet available as payments will continue to be made up to the end of March 2009.
- (vi) Social Security benefits in Northern Ireland are maintained in parity with those in Britain. This means that benefits, including the 2008 Christmas Bonus payment are paid at the same rates and are subject to the same conditions of entitlement across Northern Ireland and Britain.

Castlemara Housing Scheme in Carrickfergus

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development when the Castlemara housing scheme in Carrickfergus will be completed. (AQW 4083/09)

Minister for Social Development: Phase 3 of the Castlemara Multi Element Improvement scheme was programmed to start in March 2009. However, due to the current funding position this date will not be achieved. At this stage it is not possible to give a completion date for this scheme.

Winter Fuel Costs

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many households in the West Tyrone constituency will benefit from the proposed payment of £150 to assist with winter fuel costs. (AQW 4114/09)

Minister for Social Development: I expect the Financial Assistance Bill to come into effect by the end of January. OFMdFM will then designate a department to deliver a fuel credit/payment. I am unable to confirm when a credit/payment will be made as there are still a number of key decisions to be made in terms of who will get the payment and whether it will be a credit or a payment. These decisions will not be made until OFMdFM have designated a department to deliver the credit/payment.

Housing Executive

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development what effect the £25m shortfall in the Housing Executive budget will have for the West Tyrone constituency. (AQW 4115/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has been working alongside my Department to minimise the impact of the shortfall. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made; this is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring. This would allow a significant amount of work to be undertaken this year that would otherwise not be possible. It is too early in the review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's programmes to state the specific locations that might be affected by the shortfall in funding, however, the Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes in its programmes as soon as possible.

Multi-Element Improvement Scheme at Annadale Flats

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to give an update on the planned multi-element improvement scheme at Annadale Flats, South Belfast. (AQW 4120/09)

Minister for Social Development: Phase 1 of this Multi Element Improvement scheme currently going through the European Procurement process is planned, subject to budget provision, for 2009/2010.

Winter Fuel Costs

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development how many households in the Mid-Ulster constituency will benefit from the proposed payment of £150 to assist winter fuel costs. (AQW 4157/09)

Minister for Social Development: I expect the Financial Assistance Bill to come into effect by the end of January. OFMdFM will then designate a department to deliver a fuel credit/payment. I am unable to confirm when a credit/payment will be made as there are still a number of key decisions to be made in terms of who will get the payment and whether it will be a credit or a payment. These decisions will not be made until OFMdFM have designated a department to deliver the credit/payment.

Liquor Licensing Laws

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the timeframe for her proposal to introduce a system of penalty points for premises that break liquor licensing laws. (AQW 4173/09)

Minister for Social Development: Following my review of liquor licensing and registered clubs' legislation in Northern Ireland, I submitted in October 2008 a Policy Memorandum seeking Executive approval for a Bill in the current session which would amend the Licensing (NI) Order 1996 and the Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996 to provide for a system of penalty points for premises contravening those laws. I await an Executive decision on my legislative proposals. In the absence of such a decision I cannot confirm the timescale for bringing the Bill into effect.

Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development when she proposes to bring forward her amendment to the Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996. (AQW 4175/09)

Minister for Social Development: Following my review of liquor licensing and registered clubs' legislation in Northern Ireland, I submitted in October 2008 a Policy Memorandum seeking Executive approval for a Bill in the current session which would amend the Licensing (NI) Order 1996 and the Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996 to provide for a system of penalty points for premises contravening those laws. I await an Executive decision on my legislative proposals. In the absence of such a decision I cannot confirm the timescale for bringing the Bill into effect.

Strategic Business Review

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development what consultation her Department has had with the Department for Employment and Learning about the Strategic Business Review. (AQW 4187/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Social Security Agency has had ongoing consultation with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) from the outset of the Strategic Business Review. I discussed the proposals with my Executive colleague, the Minister for Employment and Learning, prior to the launch of public consultation. A senior DEL official represents DEL interests at Project Board level. In addition, a Joint Working Group between DEL and the SSA has been established to assess the operational impact of the SBR proposals in terms of the joint Jobs & Benefits service.

Social Security Agency

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development what plans and costings her Department has to improve the telecommunications system in the Social Security Agency, in the next 12 months; and if funding is in place. (AQW 4189/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Social Security Agency has plans for number of new initiatives and the extension of existing solutions to improve its telecommunications systems over the next 12 months. Funding cover via an approved Business Case is in place for all of these plans.

1. Disability and Carers Service (DACS) – To replace the existing contact centre infrastructure with a more modern replacement with enhanced functionality in June 2009. The implementation costs are £221,000 with annual running costs of £216,000.

2. Link between DWP and NICS Telephony – This initiative will allow telephone calls between the NICS telephone system and the DWP telephone system to be handled as internal calls and not require external dialling. Finalised costs are under discussion with the supplier.

3. Strategic Business Review (SBR) – Subject to the outcome of the public consultation current plans over the next 12 months are to implement 3 Telephone Support Units in Newry, Dungannon and Armagh in October 2009. Estimated implementation costs are £12,094 with annual running costs of £9,591. Full rollout of the SBR proposals would see a further 13 Telephone Support Units established. Estimated implementation costs of full rollout are £119,697 with annual running costs of £296,579.

3. Extensions to Existing Services - Over the next 12 months there will be an increase in numbers of Agency staff using existing telephony systems in Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and the Pension Centres in Windsor House and Carlisle House. Finalised costs for these increases are under discussion with the supplier.

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