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# OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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Armstrong, Billy (Mid Ulster)  
Attwood, Alex (West Belfast)  
Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)  
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Bradley, P J (South Down)  
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Browne, The Lord (East Belfast)  
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Burnside, David (South Antrim)  
Butler, Paul (Lagan Valley)  
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Kennedy, Danny (Newry and Armagh)  
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Long, Mrs Naomi (East Belfast)  
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Weir, Peter (North Down)  
Wells, Jim (South Down)  
Wilson, Brian (North Down)  
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

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## NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 13 February 2009

### Written Answers to Questions

#### OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

##### 90th Anniversary Remembrance Day Commemorations

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what role it played in promoting better community relations in relation to this year's 90th anniversary Remembrance Day commemorations. (AQW 4253/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):** OFMDFM has a general responsibility for the promotion of good relations between the communities with the overarching aim of building a shared and better future for all. OFMDFM provides funding directly and through the CRC to promote greater understanding.

We also monitor good relations via the Good Relations indicators.

We are currently working on our Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy which will aim to encourage tolerance, understanding and respect in the building of better relations and increased integration.

##### Loyal Order Parades

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what work it has completed to promote better community relations surrounding Loyal Order parades. (AQW 4255/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Although our Department has not completed any specific work to promote better community relations surrounding Loyal Order parades, the work on the promotion of good community and good relations, led by this Department, has the overarching aim of building a shared and better future for all our people and we endeavour, through the community relations funding streams and our sponsored bodies, to support such work on a consistent, sustained and meaningful basis.

##### Orange Halls

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assessment it has carried out of the community relations benefits of the new insurance regulations for Orange Halls. (AQW 4256/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** There are plans to change the Statutory Compensation arrangements – a scheme offering compensation for attacks on community halls – including Orange halls. However, this is a reserved matter for the Northern Ireland Office.

##### Catholic Maintained Schools

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps it will take to amend the provisions of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 to ensure the removal of the requirement to hold a Catholic certificate to teach in Catholic maintained schools. (AQW 4399/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 provides that the Order does not apply to the recruitment of teachers in schools.

There are no current proposals to change this position. We will keep this situation under review.

### Devolution of Policing and Justice

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place with the UK Government about funding for the devolution of policing and justice. (AQW 4433/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We met with the Secretary of State on 18 November 2008 to discuss a process for engaging on budget issues in relation to the devolution of policing and justice matters. We also met with the Secretary of State and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in London on 17 December 2008 and met the Secretary of State again on 4 February.

### NSMC Meeting

**Mr N McCausland** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister the cost was holding the recent NSMC meeting in Derry/Londonderry broken down by (i) accommodation; (ii) travel; (iii) staff time preparing papers and making arrangements for the meeting; (iv) public relations; and (v) any other costs. (AQW 4443/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The costs of holding the NSMC Plenary on 23rd January 2009 in Derry/Londonderry are yet to be finalised but estimated costs are included in the table below:

Category	Estimated Costs
Accommodation	£1182
Travel	£1496
Public Relations	£1270
Other Costs	£7412
<b>Total</b>	<b>£11,360</b>

With regards to staff time preparing papers and making arrangements for the meeting, since this is part of officials' normal duties it cannot be quantified.

### Review of the Civic Forum

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if has studied the model and remit of the European Economic Social Committee in terms of informing best practice for any new civic forum. (AQW 4498/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The terms of reference for the Review of the Civic Forum included drawing on experience elsewhere in determining the most appropriate mechanism for engaging with civic society. The Review Team has conducted research into relevant experience elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe and the United States. In looking at examples of developed social partnership structures in Europe, the Review Team examined the remit and structure of the European Economic and Social Committee. Written consultation responses included a submission from John Simpson, a former member and vice-president of the European Economic and Social Committee. His contribution, along with the others received, has been carefully considered.

### Presbyterian Mutual Society

**Mr G Savage** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail its contact with the Presbyterian Mutual Society over the last 12 months. (AQW 4510/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Responsibility for this matter lies with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and we understand that the DETI Minister has had numerous meetings on this issue. However, we have received correspondence in recent weeks from worried members and remain deeply concerned about their situation. Following discussion at the Executive meeting on 29 January, it was agreed that we should request an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the issue. This meeting is expected to take place presently.

### Ulster Scots Academy

**Mr P Butler** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much money its Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4546/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Funding of such bodies is primarily a matter for DCAL. OFMDFM has not made any money available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in either of the last two years.

### Planning Appeals Commission

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions it has had with the Planning Appeals Commission about its reasons for not accepting documentation in digital format, including electronic means; and what action it will take to address this issue. (AQW 4611/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Planning Appeals Commission is a tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body, which exercises its functions independently of the Department. The Chief Commissioner is responsible for the operation of the Commission, and so consideration of the use of electronic documentation falls to the Chief Commissioner.

OFMDFM is aware, however, from discussions with the Chief Commissioner, that whilst her priority is to clear the backlog of planning appeals, she plans to explore the feasibility of electronic document exchange in the course of this year and has advised Planning Service of this.

### Discrimination Cases

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much the £1m compensation payments made in 2007-2008 to claimants in discrimination cases was public money. (AQW 4773/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** In total £1,090,808.99 was paid to claimants whose claims of discrimination had been assisted by the Equality Commission and whose case concluded in the year 2007/08. The amount of £460,545.23 was paid by organisations in the public sector.

### PEACE II Funds

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide detail of the legal challenge to the distribution of PEACE II funds as referred to by the Junior Minister on the 3 February, during the debate on Women's Organisations. (AQW 4833/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Firstly, to clarify, we are not aware of any legal challenge to the distribution of PEACE II funding. In the debate on the 3rd February the Minister referred to PEACE III. There are currently no formal legal challenges to the distribution of PEACE III funding. The Minister would like to clarify that the remarks referred to the necessary time taken to ensure that the correct process was followed in order to protect against possible legal challenge.

## Gender Equality Panel

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) when the gender equality panel last met; (ii) what action plan was agreed at the meeting; and (iii) when the panel will meet again.

(AQW 4834/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Gender Advisory Panel last met on 13 January 2009.

A number of follow-up actions were agreed at the meeting, which considered and advised on a draft report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy and key actions under the nine strategic objectives.

The Panel will meet again week commencing 27 April.

## Oral Questions in the Assembly

**Mr D Kennedy** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the reasons behind its request to the Assembly's Committee on Procedures to reduce the number of times it will answer oral questions in the Assembly.

(AQO 1991/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** In response to the Committee on Procedures' Inquiry into Assembly Questions, we made a written submission reflecting the Executive's views on the current procedures for all Assembly Questions to Ministers.

Given that all procedures should be reviewed to evaluate their effectiveness in securing their aims, the Executive welcomed the opportunity to put proposals to the Committee drawing on their experience of Assembly questions since April 2007.

One of the proposals made in that response related to the frequency of oral questions to OFMDFM. As the Assembly will be aware, this proposal was made public, even before the Committee on Procedures had received it, in a deliberate attempt to generate controversy, and to question our commitment to the exercise of accountability to this Assembly. This is far from the truth.

We fully acknowledge the importance of Assembly Questions as one of the ways, together with evidence to Committees, private Members' motions and adjournment debates, in which Ministers are held accountable to the Assembly for their policies and actions.

However, the original rationale for the scheduling of questions fortnightly to OFMDFM appears to have been a belief that we address issues arising from their role as joint Chairs of the Executive and that they would therefore also be in a position to address issues beyond their strict departmental remit.

What these issues might be remain undefined. But it would in any case be inappropriate for us to answer questions relating to the responsibilities of other Ministers. Also, in practice, questions have usually focused on OFMDFM departmental business and on a fairly limited range of topics.

This is not a criticism of Members – simply a statement of fact that a department such as OFMDFM with a limited range of responsibilities – important though these are – does not yield a wide and constantly changing range of issues as potential subject matter for questions.

We, as much as Members, want to make oral questions as useful, informative and interesting as possible.

It was on this basis that we proposed to the Committee that the rationale for fortnightly questions to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister should be examined. That, after all, is the purpose of inquiries.

We look forward to the Report of the Committee's inquiry. It would be inappropriate to anticipate its conclusions but we would wish to assure you and Members that we will co-operate fully in implementing whatever arrangements the Assembly determines following its consideration of the Report.

## Assisting People in the Economic Downturn

**Mr S Neeson** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what measures the Executive is taking to assist people in light of the global economic downturn.

(AQO 1997/09)



**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We announced a package of measures to address the economic downturn in the Assembly on 15th December 2008. On the same date the Assembly comprehensively debated the main measures in place to address problems of energy and fuel poverty; debt and unemployment; the rising cost of living for households; support for the housing and construction sectors; and support for business.

Uniquely, we have brought forward a Financial Assistance Bill to allow us to react quickly to emerging problems and difficulties. Initially this will be used to allow us to address the most pressing problems of fuel poverty.

We also announced a funding package of almost £45m. This provided £15m – for Fuel Credit payments; £20m – for Farm Nutrient Management schemes; £4m – for Schools Maintenance; £2.5m – for Roads Structural Maintenance; £1.8m – for Public Transport Capital Works; £0.5m – for Agriculture Flooding Hardship payments; and £0.7m – for Assistance to the Fishing Industry.

We are acutely aware that this is a difficult time for local people and businesses. The Executive is monitoring the developing economic crisis and we aim to do all that we can to protect local interests from the worst effects of this economic turmoil.

### Senior Civil Servants

**Mr A Ross** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many senior civil servants it employs. (AQO 1998/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** At 1 January 2009 there were 26 Senior Civil Service staff employed in the Department.

### Civic Forum

**Mr M Storey** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the review of the Civic Forum will conclude. (AQO 1999/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The consultation phase of the review of the Civic Forum which began in May last year has been completed. Analysis of the information assembled, including consultation responses, has been undertaken. The review is expected to report to us in the near future.

### Civic Forum

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many times the Civic Forum has met since May 2007. (AQO 2001/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Civic Forum has not met during the period May 2007 to date. The Civic Forum was first convened in 2000 and operated until suspension of devolution in October 2002. After the restoration of devolution in 2007, with the agreement of the Executive, we decided to commission a fresh fundamental review of the Forum and the mechanisms for civic society to promote its views. The review is expected to report to us in the near future.

### Absenteeism Targets

**Mr N McCausland** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how it is performing against its absenteeism targets. (AQO 2002/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** During 2005 targets were agreed within the Northern Ireland Civil Service for an overall reduction in sickness absence to 9.5 days per staff year by end of March 2010. Targets were strategically based with the main focus on reducing the frequency and duration of long-term absence and the frequency of short-term absence. To achieve this, individual targets were calculated and assigned to each Department.

OFMDFM has a relatively low level of absence compared to the average for the rest of the NICS. Taking this into account, challenging targets for overall absence have been set for the Department. In 2005/2006 the Department met the overall absence target but failed to achieve targets in each of the two following years.

Information provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in the table below sets out the annual absence targets for the NICS and for the Department along with the actual absence rates achieved. Information for 2008/2009 is not yet available.

**TABLE: OVERALL ABSENCE TARGETS FOR NICS AND FOR OFMDFM.**

Year	NICS target	NICS achieved	OFMDFM target	OFMDFM achieved
2005/2006	13.8	13.4	11.3	8.6
2006/2007	12.4	13.7	10.2	10.7
2007/2008	11.2	12.9	9.2	9.7
2008/2009	10.2	Not yet available	8.5	Not yet available
2009/2010	9.5	--	8.5	--

More detailed analysis of the Department's sickness absence for last year is available in the NISRA report "Analysis of Sickness Absence in OFMDFM 2007/2008" a copy of which has been placed in the Assembly Library.

### Financial Assistance Act

**Mr A Bresland** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when it expects to make its first determination under the Financial Assistance Act. (AQO 2003/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 received Royal Assent on 4 February 2009 and the provisions of the Act came into operation the following day. We are currently seeking Executive agreement to make a determination and designation under section 1 of the Act. The determination and designation will be made as soon as Executive agreement is obtained.

### Civic Forum

**Mr I Paisley Jnr** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the achievements of the Civic Forum. (AQO 2004/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Civic Forum met in plenary 12 times between October 2000 and October 2002. In addition to plenary sessions, the Forum established a number of standing committees and working groups to take forward distinct aspects of its work programme. During the period of its operation the Civic Forum inputted to draft Programmes for Government. The Forum engaged in a number of research projects into long-term issues affecting society, and by the time of suspension, had published reports on educational disadvantage in the context of lifelong learning, and a regional strategy for social inclusion.

The Forum made submissions to Departments on Investing for Health, the Review of Post Primary Education, Priorities for Social Inclusion and the role of the Commissioner for Children. It also commented on an OFMDFM review of Community Relations policy.

### Interim Commissioner for Older People

**Mr M Brady** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the work programme of the Interim Commissioner for Older People. (AQO 2005/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Executive's Programme for Government includes a commitment under PSA 7 (2) "Making People's Lives Better" to deliver a strong independent voice for older people and we are currently working towards the establishment of an Older People's Commissioner.

To ensure momentum towards creating a Commissioner for Older People is maintained, Ministers asked OFMDFM officials to appoint an Interim Advocate for Older People.

On 3rd November 2008 Junior Ministers Gerry Kelly and Jeffrey Donaldson announced the appointment of Dame Joan Harbison as the Older People's Advocate and Dame Joan took up her position on 1st December 2008.

As Older People's Advocate, Dame Joan will help to identify current problems faced by all older people and provide Ministers with independent advice on a range of issues that impact on all older people in Northern Ireland, including how these might be addressed.

Dame Joan will also co-chair an older people's advisory panel with a senior OFMDFM official and thereby assist with the monitoring and review of the older people's strategy "Ageing in an Inclusive Society".

OFMDFM officials are currently assisting the Older People's Advocate with the recruitment of support staff and the preparation of a work programme which should be finalised in the near future.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### Sustrans Project

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many schools in the Upper Bann constituency benefit from funding from her Department for the Sustrans Project. (AQW 4387/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew):** One school benefited from funding from Sustrans project in the Upper Bann constituency.

### Single Farm Payments

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many Single Farm Payments are outstanding in the South Down constituency; and what is the anticipated timescale for the remainder of payments to be completed. (AQW 4435/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** My Department's Single Farm Payment Branch does not hold Single Farm Payment details on a constituency basis. The data is currently held by county/postcode.

At the end of January 2009, 90.1% of farmers in the North had received their 2008 Single Farm Payment. In South Down, and other constituencies, some farm businesses will not have received payments for a variety of reasons, including queries on the claim, the need to complete processing of an on-farm inspection report, challenges by others of the right to claim land, the need to await probate or because the farmer has not provided bank account details to allow payment to be made by electronic transfer.

It is not possible to specify when individual cases will be cleared for payment. My Department has improved its payment performance and will continue to make payments as quickly as possible. The targets are to complete 92.5% for receipt by the end of February and 95% by the end of March 2009.

### Larne Veterinary Office

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the geographical location of farmers in Islandmagee was not taken into consideration when deciding to close the Larne Veterinary Office. (AQW 4493/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** While I have announced my decisions on the location of 11 of the 12 DARD Direct offices, I have yet to decide on the location of the final location providing services in South and East Antrim. My Department is looking at a number of location options to ensure good accessibility to a DARD Direct office providing the full range of DARD's farmer focussed services for the optimum number of farmers. This process will take into account the needs of customers across the entire area, including Islandmagee.

## Rivers Agency

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the Rivers Agency does not let the users of the Lower River Bann know before opening flood control gates between Coleraine and Lough Neagh. (AQW 4494/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Rivers Agency maintains an arrangement whereby anyone can ring the Rivers Agency Coleraine Area Office for information on that day's gate openings and Lough levels. This arrangement is further enhanced by access to this information at weekends by contacting the Engineer responsible on his mobile phone. These arrangements have been in existence for some years and are regularly availed of by many river users. Gate openings are essential to maintain Lough levels within the statutory range. Rivers Agency is currently completing a £1m refurbishment project to motorize the Lower Bann River Sluice Gates at Toome, Portna and The Cutts, Coleraine. This work has been done to improve efficiency and health & safety arrangements. Installation of new systems now allows Gates to be operated electrically rather than by manual means. This work has included installation of audible and visual alarm facilities to warn river users, who are within close proximity of the gates, of impending movement of the Sluice Gates.

## Fisheries Organisations

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has held had any discussions with Fisheries organisations and especially in respect of the under 10 metres boats, to improve their chances with quotas. (AQW 4504/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I have not received any representations from the industry on this issue but my officials would be happy to meet with the under ten sector to discuss the matter in more detail.

## Dioxin Scare

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many animals have or are due to be culled as a direct result of the dioxin scare in the East Antrim constituency. (AQW 4553/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** There are no animals in East Antrim that have been culled or due to be culled as a direct result of the dioxin scare.

## Fish Numbers on the River Roe

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been taken over the last three years to protect fish numbers on the River Roe. (AQW 4635/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The Loughs Agency, who provided the following information, have responsibility for the conservation, protection, management and development of the salmon and inland fisheries in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.

In the last three years Loughs Agency staff have continually evaluated and managed the status of the River Roe as a Salmonid fishery. This work has involved over three thousand man hours per year in each of the last three years, these man hours have been spent in active fishery development, protection and enforcement, including dealing with issues of illegal angling and water pollution. This has led to criminal prosecution cases being referred to the Loughs Agency solicitors and one ongoing civil case for damages to the fishery caused by a fish kill.

In addition Agency staff have a rolling programme of gathering management data, "audit points," for the Agency's salmon management strategy. The Audit points for the River Roe include:

- Over 450 electro fishing sites to evaluate juvenile salmon and trout abundance in the Foyle catchment; with 82 fished in the Roe in 2006 and 75 in 2007 and 2008.
- Evaluation of declared rod catches (444 in 2006 and 500 in 2007)
- Updated habitat surveys for the whole river system with a total of 115km of watercourses surveyed.
- River chemistry sampling and analysis.
- River Biology sampling and analysis.

- Maintenance and data collation from the Loughs Agency fish counter on the river Roe.

The Agency's fish counters show a healthy improvement in the salmon numbers in the Roe system as detailed below;

	2005	2006	2007	2008
River Roe	2917	1478	5375	4927

The River Roe has also benefited from the wider management policies implemented by the Loughs Agency including carcass tagging and the cessation of the interceptory salmon fishery seaward of Lough Foyle.

Loughs Agency staff continue to work closely with the Roe Angling Association and have regular meetings with the anglers in relation to fisheries protection and development issues, including training their Private River Watchers. The Loughs Agency also undertook enhancement works to improve salmonid productivity on the Woodburn tributary in 2006 which included the provision of stock proof fencing and the improvement of nursery and spawning habitat. Similar work was undertaken on the Boveagh Burn, including the installation of flow deflectors, rubble mats and boulders to improve nursery habitat. In 2008 the Agency offered grant aid and assistance to the club in the provision of the installation of 10 spawning units and nursery in the Wood Burn to the value of £5000 at a level of 75% funding from the Agency's Sustainable Development Fund. The inclement weather in 2008 meant the club could not complete these works but they have been granted an extension to their Letter of Offer until the 31st of May 2009.

Finally, the River Roe and Tributaries Catchment Status Report 2007, a complete management review of the River Roe, is available from the Loughs Agency website.

### Creation of Artificial Reefs

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding is available through the Rural Development Programme for the creation of artificial reefs on the coastline to develop (i) fisheries management; (ii) coastal protection; and (iii) marine recreation. (AQW 4753/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** There is no support under the Rural Development Programme for artificial reefs, however Article 38(1) of the European Fisheries Fund Regulation 1198/2006 allows the Department to provide support for measures of common interest intended to protect and develop aquatic fauna and flora while enhancing the aquatic environment. This can include the construction and installation of artificial reefs intended to protect and develop aquatic fauna and flora. Support may cover work preliminary to installation, including studies, components, signalling, transport and the assembly of the facilities and scientific monitoring.

It is recognised that such artificial reefs may make it easier to catch fish, thus resulting in increased fishing mortality. The European Commission has indicated in its guidance on the EFF that these structures should only be used in situations where fishing mortality is regulated i.e. by suspension of fishing or technical measures.

### Price of Fertilisers

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the current price of fertilisers; and if she will carry out a review on the effect that the prices are having on the viability of farms. (AQW 4780/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The average price of artificial fertilisers for 2008 was £291 per tonne, which was an increase of 81% over the previous year. The total cost to the industry for the calendar year of 2008 was £83 million, an increase of 72% on 2007 levels. Artificial fertilisers accounted for 7.9% of the total input costs of the agricultural industry in 2008 compared with 5.4% in 2007.

## Price of Compound Feed

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the current price of compound feed; and if she will carry out a review on the effect that the prices are having on the viability of farms. (AQW 4781/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The average price of animal feedstuffs purchased in 2008 was £236 per tonne, which was an increase of 19% over the previous year. The total cost to the industry for the calendar year of 2008 was £525 million, an increase of 20% on 2007 levels. The total cost of animal feedstuffs accounted for 50% of the total input costs to the agricultural industry in 2008 compared with 49% in 2007.

## Correspondence Received from MEPs

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide details of the dates and subject matter of all correspondence received from each of the three MEPs during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008. (AQW 4796/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:**

MEP:	Date Received:	Subject Matter:
Mr Allister	8/01/2008	Single Farm Payment
Mr Allister	16/01/2008	Environmental Impact Regulations
Mr Nicholson	14/02/2008	Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
Mr Nicholson	4/03/2008	Animal Slaughter Payments
Mr Allister	6/03/2008	Hedge Cutting
Mr Nicholson	12/03/2008	Funding opportunities for Horse Breeders
Mr Nicholson	12/03/2008	Food labelling
Mr Allister	28/04/2008	Inheritance Tax Liability
Mr Nicholson	13/05/2008	Export of cattle to Scotland (30 day residency requirements)
Mr Nicholson	28/05/2008	Countryside Management Scheme Payments.
Mr Nicholson	4/06/2008	Nitrates Directive
Mr Nicholson	23/06/2008	Problems facing Bee Keepers
Mr Nicholson	24/06/2008	Local Action Groups
Mr Nicholson	4/07/2008	Nitrates Directive
Mr Allister	14/10/2008	Genetically Modified Crops
Mr Allister	15/10/2008	Slurry spreading
Mr Allister	15/10/2008	Wind energy for Rural Businesses Scheme
Mr Allister	21/10/2008	Constituent Query – Outcome of a Court Hearing
Mr Allister	22/10/2008	Single Farm Payment appeal
Mr Allister	23/10/2008	Farm Nutrient Management Scheme
Mr Allister	23/10/2008	Farm Nutrient Management Scheme Applications
Mr Allister	30/10/2008	Fishing Processing & weighing and 100km Rule
Mr Allister	31/10/2008	EU Audit disallowance
Mr Allister	11/11/2008	Rural Development Programme Funding
Mr Allister	13/11/2008	Tourism
Mr Allister	17/11/2008	Flooding

MEP:	Date Received:	Subject Matter:
Mr Allister	20/11/2008	Fermanagh Leader Action Group Application
Mr Allister	26/11/2008	Single Farm Payment
Mr Allister	26/11/2008	Duplicate fields issue
Mr Allister	4/12/2008	National Reserve Award
Mr Allister	4/12/2008	TB Outbreaks
Mr Allister	9/12/2008	Single Farm Payment
Mr Allister	18/12/2008	Dioxin in animal feeding stuffs issue
Mr Allister	22/12/2008	Countryside Management Scheme
Mr Nicholson	23/12/2008	Export refunds on Dairy Products
Mr Allister	23/12/2008	Single Farm Payment claim
Mr Nicholson	20/03/2008	Request for a meeting with representatives of Premier Woodlands
Mr Nicholson	1/04/2008	Request for a meeting to discuss various agricultural issues
Mr Nicholson	6/05/2008	Request for a meeting regarding the equine industry

**Note:** All letters from Mr James Allister QC MEP were addressed to the DARD Permanent Secretary, Malcolm McKibbin. These letters were passed to my Private Office for reply.

### Programme for Government Targets

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what risk assessment she has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4825/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The Department's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets within the Programme for Government are underpinned by Delivery Agreements which are published on the DARD website. There is a separate Delivery Agreement for each of the three DARD PSA targets and these detail the risk management strategy adopted in each case. The Delivery Agreements identify the risks and detail the controls in place. The documents are updated on a regular basis to take account of new and emerging risks.

The website address at which the Department's PSA Delivery Agreements can be found is as follows:

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/strategies-reports-accounts/strategic-corporate-info-what-we-spend/psa-delivery-agreement.htm>

Progress towards the achievement of PSA targets is reviewed by the Departmental Board on a monthly basis.

### Interferon Gamma Tests

**Mrs I Robinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many interferon gamma tests were carried out in each of the last ten years. (AQW 4831/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The following table details Interferon Gamma (IFNG) tests conducted in the past decade as per the question.

Year	Number of herds IFNG tested	Number of animals IFNG tested
1998 *	27	2035
1999 *	11	547
2000 *	6	331
2001	0	0
2002	0	0
2003*	28	1915

Year	Number of herds IFNG tested	Number of animals IFNG tested
2004	59	3762
2005	198	16824
2006	136	13303
2007	91	8513
2008	165	13956

\* IFNG testing in these years was not Field diagnostic testing but was for research and development purposes only. Veterinary Service co-ordinated IFNG testing with offer of purchase of IFNG positive non intra-dermal reactors did not commence until July 2004.

### Flooding Near the Sixmilewater River at Raceview

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action his Department has taken to address flooding near the Sixmilewater River at Raceview, Muckamore, Antrim since flooding occurred in August 2008 and over the weekend of 31 January - 1 February 2009. (AQW 4839/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Having witnessed at first hand the effects of flooding throughout the province, I fully understand your concerns and can assure you that my department is doing all it can to reduce the risk of flooding at this location. To this end general maintenance, including repairs to a culvert, have already been undertaken. In addition my staff are continuing to provide flood emergency response and were able to reassure resident's concerns over the weekend of 31st January to 1st February 2009.

An evaluation of the performance of the existing flood defences is underway, including a review of the operation of drainage systems behind the river defences. This investigation will report and any minor works identified that would reduce flood risk will be given high priority.

Looking to the longer term, a study has been instigated to assess what can be done to reduce flood risk to what is a complex problem.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of civil service staff employed by her Department, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4854/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Details of the information available at present are set out in the attached table. The Department, along with other NICS Departments is currently in the process of introducing a new HR system known as HR Connect. At this time the management reporting facility, which also holds historical data, is not fully functional and therefore the information requested had to be drawn from manual records. While every effort has been made to provide accurate information, it has not been possible to undertake a full validation or to provide the level of details requested for January 2009.

Administrative & Equivalent Grades	Staffing May 2007			Staffing 2009
	Core	Rivers Agency	Forestry Service	Total Department
Administrative Assistant	334	17	4	294
Administrative Officer	453	13	25	435
Executive Officer 11	416	35	10	437
Executive Officer 1	415	32	34	437
Staff Officer	462	33	16	492
Deputy Principal	197	25	12	239
Grade 7	233	9	3	210
Grade 6	8	2	1	15



Administrative & Equivalent Grades	Staffing May 2007			Staffing 2009
	Core	Rivers Agency	Forestry Service	Total Department
Senior Civil Servants	15	3	1	18
Industrial	67	254	163	435
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>3,012</b>

### Capital Projects

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if there are any major capital projects in her Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 4997/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** To date there have been no major capital projects in my Department that have been subject to delay under the above criteria.

### Animal Welfare Consultation

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide a timetable for the delivery of the 2006 animal welfare consultation. (AQO 2016/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** In my Statement to the Assembly on 26 January 2009, I outlined the actions I had taken to date to review animal welfare legislation in the North.

My Department consulted on proposals for new animal welfare legislation in late 2006. However, as this was carried out under Direct Rule, I wanted to take time to fully consider existing Animal Welfare legislation and the responses received to the consultation. I have completed an initial review, and have met a range of key stakeholders to hear their concerns at first hand. These meetings have been exceptionally informative.

As I have already advised the Assembly, I believe that it is important that animal welfare legislation across the Island of Ireland is broadly compatible. I may add that this is a view shared by some of the welfare groups I met. I welcome the fact that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the South is continuing to meet stakeholders and will shortly be finalising their legislative proposals.

My review of animal welfare legislation is nearing completion. I will shortly be examining all the evidence presented to me. I will then consider the scope for new legislation in the North, and the timetable for bringing it forward in line with the resources that are available. At that stage, I will make a summary of the responses to the 2006 consultation exercise publicly available.

### Farm Modernisation Scheme

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how farmers with health or mobility problems will be able to access the Farm Modernisation Scheme. (AQO 2017/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Farmers with health or mobility problems can obtain the Farm Modernisation Programme information pack by downloading it from the DARD website or if they telephone one of the 8 DARD offices which are facilitating the Programme my officials will post the information pack to the farmer. These offices are located in Armagh, Ballymena, Coleraine, Downpatrick, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Newry and Omagh.

Farmers with health or mobility problems can submit their Farm Modernisation Programme application between 17 February and 31 March by posting it to the address advised in the information pack or by hand delivering to one of the 8 DARD Offices. Each of these 8 DARD offices has disabled access. Alternatively they may wish to arrange for someone to hand deliver it on their behalf.

## Farming Industry

**Mr S Neeson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with her European counterparts to safeguard the farming industry. (AQO 2018/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Safeguarding the farming industry as the backbone of the rural communities of the North will always be a priority with me. To this end, I will do whatever it takes to deliver for the farmers on the ground.

I have personally lobbied the European Commission on a wide range of issues which have a direct bearing on the livelihoods of many local people. The Commissioners in Brussels that deal with my policy areas are the Commissioner for Agriculture, Mariann Fisher Boel, the Commissioner for Fisheries Joe Borg and the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, Androulla Vassiliou.

In addition to correspondence and telephone contact, I have represented the views of the North during 9 separate occasions in Brussels and once in Luxembourg. This has included 2 personal meetings with the Agriculture Commissioner, 3 with the Fisheries Commissioner and a meeting with the Health and Consumer protection Commissioner. My colleague Conor Murphy has also met with Commissioner Borg once acting on my behalf. Commissioners are not always available so to press my points home; I have also met twice with the Agriculture Commissioner's senior officials and once with senior fisheries officials.

A meeting is planned tomorrow with the Agriculture Commissioner to discuss the dioxin crisis.

## Rural White Paper

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's progress in producing a 'rural white paper'. (AQO 2019/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I am pleased to have obtained Executive approval to the development of the North's first Rural White Paper which will provide a unique opportunity to address the challenges facing our rural communities now and in the future.

I have established a Stakeholder Advisory Group to assist me in developing the White Paper and to ensure that the views of stakeholders are fully considered. This group met for the first time in December and I am pleased that they have agreed to work collectively and to be actively involved in the development of the Rural White Paper. The group will meet again later this month to discuss the themes and issues to be addressed in the White Paper and their work on developing these themes will intensify over the coming months.

I have also established, and chair, a new Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy which contains the senior policy officials from all Departments. This Committee is the main vehicle within government for development and agreement of the Rural White Paper.

With the help of these two groups, my Department is currently drafting proposals for the Rural White Paper with a view to submitting them to the Executive for approval in April 2009. Work on the full development of the Rural White Paper will continue during 2009 with consultation taking place in 2010.

## Bee Health Contingency Plan

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made on the Bee Health Contingency Plan. (AQO 2020/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The Department's Bee Health Contingency Plan for Northern Ireland is now in the final stages of drafting.

Comments on this draft are currently being sought from relevant staff within my Department and scientific experts in the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

It is envisaged that my officials will be in a position to circulate this Contingency Plan to the two Bee Organisations in early March for their consideration and comments prior to it being finalised.

### Dangerous Dogs

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what strategies have been employed by her Department to ensure that individuals are fully aware of the breeds of dog that are dangerous and should not be kept. (AQO 2021/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The control of dogs, including dangerous dogs, is regulated under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, as amended by the Dangerous Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. The Order designates certain types of dogs which it is an offence to possess. The prohibited dogs are the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

When the Dangerous Dogs legislation came into force in 1991, the Department issued a number of Press Releases outlining the effect of this legislation. Details of the prohibited types are also available on the Department's website.

However, local Councils are responsible for enforcing all aspects of the Dogs Order, and it is therefore their responsibility to ensure that the public are aware of the dogs that are proscribed. I understand some Councils have published advice on this matter on their websites.

### Dangerous Dogs

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development following her discussions with key stakeholders, what format her Dangerous Dogs Bill will take. (AQO 2022/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** My Review of Dogs legislation is drawing to a close. I will shortly be examining all the evidence presented to me and will then consider how existing legislation and practices might be improved.

The specific provisions of any new legislation that may be needed will depend on detailed consideration of this evidence. I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of my considerations.

### DARD Direct Scheme

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if consideration will be given to the expansion of the DARD Direct Scheme to include the Ballynahinch area. (AQO 2023/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** As you are likely to be aware, I have decided that the successful DARD Direct one stop shop approach will be rolled out to 12 locations across the North. I am confident that 12 offices will meet the needs of the vast majority of farmers and represents best value for money. I have confirmed 11 of these locations (Omagh, Dungannon, Armagh, Newry, Downpatrick, Newtownards, Ballymena, Coleraine, Claudy, Magherafelt and Enniskillen) but, I have yet to decide on the location of the final office which will provide services in South and East Antrim. Once the DARD Direct model has been rolled out, farmers from the Ballynahinch area can visit the office most convenient for them, which is likely to be Downpatrick.

### Funds from Europe

**Mr P Doherty** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how funds from Europe are drawn down by her Department; and how fluctuations in currency levels impact on money that is received. (AQO 2024/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Funding from Europe falls into two categories:-

- (i) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Schemes  
The department does not draw funding directly from Europe for these schemes but is funded through the Rural Payments Agency which acts as the UK Funding Body. As a result of these arrangements there is no impact on the Department from currency fluctuations.
- (ii) EU Structural Funds Programme 2000-2006  
The Department draws funding directly from Europe via expenditure declarations which are made in euro.

This will result in either a gain or loss to the department depending on the fluctuation in the exchange rate between the declaration being made by the Department and the re-imbusement being issued by the Commission.

This also applies to expenditure incurred by the Department on projects funded out of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which is drawn from Europe by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

### **Rural White Paper**

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the development of a Rural White Paper. (AQO 2025/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I am pleased to have obtained Executive approval to the development of the North's first Rural White Paper which will provide a unique opportunity to address the challenges facing our rural communities now and in the future.

I have established a Stakeholder Advisory Group to assist me in developing the White Paper and to ensure that the views of stakeholders are fully considered. This group met for the first time in December and I am pleased that they have agreed to work collectively and to be actively involved in the development of the Rural White Paper. The group will meet again later this month to discuss the themes and issues to be addressed in the White Paper and their work on developing these themes will intensify over the coming months.

I have also established, and chair, a new Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy which contains the senior policy officials from all Departments. This Committee is the main vehicle within government for development and agreement of the Rural White Paper.

With the help of these two groups, my Department is currently drafting proposals for the Rural White Paper with a view to submitting them to the Executive for approval in April 2009. Work on the full development of the Rural White Paper will continue during 2009 with consultation taking place in 2010.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE**

### **Multi Sports Stadium**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many construction jobs would be created during the course of building a multi-sports stadium. (AQW 4204/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell):** No estimates have been made of the number of construction jobs that would be created during the course of building a multi-sports stadium. It is however important to note that allowing for the completion of planning and procurement procedures it could take between 18-24 months before any workers would be employed on site.

### **Sportsmatch Scheme**

**Dr A McDonnell** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has plans to introduce 'Sportsmatch', the supportive government scheme available in England, Scotland and Wales. (AQW 4209/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. I have, however, asked my officials to liaise with SNI over the possibility of introducing a Sportsmatch scheme into Northern Ireland.

### Films Made in Northern Ireland

**Mr D Hilditch** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many films have been made in Northern Ireland, in the last three years (AQW 4227/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** There have been 19 feature films made in Northern Ireland in the last 3 calendar years, 18 of which were produced with assistance from Northern Ireland Screen. Of the total of 19, 7 were made in 2006, 5 in 2007 and 7 in 2008.

Over the three year period there have been 23 short films produced in Northern Ireland with assistance from Northern Ireland Screen. There were also a small number made which did not receive support from Northern Ireland Screen,

### Films Made in Northern Ireland

**Mr D Hilditch** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many films are scheduled to be made in Northern Ireland in the next two years. (AQW 4228/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** It is difficult to predict with any degree certainty the number of films going into production in Northern Ireland over the next 2 years,

However, Northern Ireland Screen, the lead body for the promotion of film production here, advises that the level of production should remain similar to that of recent years, with, as a reasonable estimate, 6 films being made in 2009.

### Music Performing Rights Society

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consideration he has given to the development of a Northern Ireland Music Performing Rights Society; and what assessment his Department has made of the current arrangements, and potential improvements in the collection and distribution that could occur if a local organisation was set up to distribute royalties. (AQW 4240/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Whilst the Performing Rights Society is a UK wide royalty collection and distribution agency, there is no organisation providing these services solely for clients in Northern Ireland.

However, I am aware of the recently established Northern Ireland Music Rights Society and its wish to act as a royalty collection agency here. I can confirm that Edwin Poots my predecessor advised those involved in that organisation to prepare a feasibility study which would inform if and how this matter should be taken forward.

To date this has not been received by my Department and consequently we have not been able to make an informed assessment of the current arrangements and the potential impact of a local royalty collection agency.

When the feasibility study is received by my Department it will be given careful consideration.

### Multi Sports Stadium

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how he intends to distribute the £70m that has been allocated between 2008/9 and 2010/11 for the proposed Multi-Sports Stadium. (AQW 4271/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** I declared an underspend of £10m allocated in 2008-09 to Stadia Development. I would propose to defer major stadia expenditure until after 2010-11 to allow for further consultation with sports' Governing Bodies and to seek to use some of the resources targeted for stadia development to bring forward capital expenditure on other priority sports projects.

### Films Made in Northern Ireland

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many films have been completed in the Strangford constituency, in the last three years. (AQW 4347/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** No feature film has been shot or completed exclusively in the Strangford constituency in the last three years.

However, a comedy film entitled Buy Borrow Steal was shot extensively at Ballywalter House in 2007.

### Films Made in Northern Ireland

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure has he been contacted by any film companies outside Northern Ireland who are considering making their films here. (AQW 4348/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** I have not been contacted by any film companies from outside Northern Ireland that are considering making films here.

Northern Ireland Screen is the lead body for the promotion of film production in Northern Ireland and its staff are in regular contact with film producers from within and outside Northern Ireland regarding potential projects. These discussions are of a commercially sensitive nature and as such remain confidential until a production is confirmed as proceeding.

As Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, I will continue to support the local film industry and to promote Northern Ireland as an excellent location for film production.

### Film Industry

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what input the film industry contributed to the local economy, in each of the last three years. (AQW 4350/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** There is very little statistical information readily available on the input of the film industry to the local economy.

However, Northern Ireland Screen estimates that film and television drama production, which are supported through the same funding package, generated the following expenditure to the Northern Ireland economy in each of the last three years:

Year	Amount
2006/07	£6,164,046
2007/08	£14,204,526
2008/09	£10,000,000*

\* The 2008/09 figure is projected expenditure and will be revised in due course.

### Creative Industries Initiative

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps he is taking to involve the Creative Industries Initiative with local councils. (AQW 4352/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** I launched the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) on 17 October 2008 and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is administering the Fund on behalf of DCAL.

The Arts Council will be holding a series of roadshows across Northern Ireland to raise awareness of the CIIF and encourage applications.

The CIIF staff have delivered 10 presentations on the Fund across Northern Ireland over the past few weeks and all 32 Local Enterprise Agencies have been provided with copies of the presentation.

Belfast City Council also promotes the CIIF by providing links on it's website to the appropriate pages on the Arts Council website.

### Francis McPeake School of Music

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding the Francis McPeake School of Music has received from the Arts Council in each of the last five years; and why funding for next year was refused. (AQW 4356/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Francis McPeake School of Music received funding from the Arts Council for the period 2004/05 to 2008/09 from two funding streams, Annual Support for Organisations Programmes (ASOP) and Lottery funding as set out in the table below:

Year	Exchequer Funding	Lottery Funding
2004/05	25,000	-
2005/06	50,000	10,000
2006/07	50,000	45,000
2007/08	50,000	-
2008/09	-	-

The Arts Council is responsible for decisions on funding and has advised that the School's applications for support under ASOP and Lottery for 2008/09 were unsuccessful because the School did not provide the information required to meet the funding criteria.

The School should contact the Arts Council directly to discuss this decision and the potential for future funding.

### RUC George Cross Museum

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in the event of the devolution of Policing and Justice to the Assembly, if the provision of the promised RUC George Cross Museum will become the responsibility of his Department and, if so, what action needs to be taken to complete this process. (AQW 4429/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** In the event of the devolution of policing and criminal justice to the Assembly we expect that responsibility for the RUC George Cross Foundation, currently an Executive NDPB of the NIO will transfer to the proposed Department of Justice. It would then be a matter for that Department to consider any business proposals put forward by the RUC George Cross Foundation.

NIO have informed me that the Foundation is seeking funding for a museum and this is currently under consideration.

### Safety at Sports Grounds

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money is available in the CSR for Safety at Sports Grounds. (AQW 4500/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** £96m is available over the period 2008/2011 for all sports capital projects.

Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding. The amount of money available for safety at sports grounds is being considered by SNI in the context of the total capital allocation for sport and competing priorities.

### Elite Facilities

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money is available for the Elite Facilities in preparation for the London 2012 Olympics. (AQW 4501/09)

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

A competition is currently underway and the number of potential projects cannot be identified until the Outline Business Cases have been assessed.

£96m is available over the period 2008/2011 for all sports capital projects. The amount that will be available for the Elite Facilities Capital Programme will be determined once the Outline Business Cases have been assessed, the number of priority projects have been identified and the consequential spending profile considered.

### Ulster Scots Academy

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money his Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 4547/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** My Department has made funding available as follows in the last two financial years:

(1) Ulster-Scots Academy:

2006-2007

£392,412

2007-2008

£405,189

(ii) Ulster-Scots projects

Through Arts Council Northern Ireland's programmes and grants, (Ulster-Scots Arts - Annual Support for Organisations Programme, Lottery, Awards for All, NW Challenge Fund, Arts Development fund and support for individual artists) funding has been made available as follows:

2006-2007

£267,967

2007-2008

£1,050,164

In addition, the Ulster-Scots Agency has received a budgetary allocation of £2.557m for the calendar year 2007 and £3.315m for the calendar year 2008. In accordance with its statutory remit the Agency supports funding through its Financial Assistance Scheme to organisations and groups involved in projects, festivals and events relating to Ulster-Scots culture, heritage and language.

### Cairncastle Ulster-Scots Event

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if funding will be available for the Cairncastle Ulster-Scots event this summer.

(AQW 4554/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Funding for community events, such as the Cairncastle Ulster-Scots event, is distributed through the Ulster-Scots Agency. The Department does not fund community groups directly.

The Ulster-Scots Agency has received an application for the Cairncastle event. The application will be considered by the Agency's Board at a meeting at the end February 2009.

### Celebration of Homecoming Scotland

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if there are any events planned for the year long celebration of Homecoming Scotland that includes the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns. (AQW 4556/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** As you will be aware Homecoming Scotland 2009 is a national celebration of the contribution Scotland has made. My Department, although not directly involved in Homecoming Scotland celebrations, has already, and will continue to mark the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns.



Indeed the Ulster-Scots Agency is involved with supporting Burns Night celebrations, and the Ulster-Scots Community Network, funded by the Ulster-Scots Agency, has produced a booklet on Robert Burns and organised a Burns festival which has just finished in Belfast.

Furthermore events were held in a number of libraries over the week 19 - 26 January 2009 to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, and the Ulster Scots Tradition and further events are planned for throughout the year.

### 2012 London Olympics

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of concerns that £50m has been lost to projects in Northern Ireland and diverted to the 2012 London Olympics. (AQW 4561/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** National Lottery Policy and Legislation is a reserved matter. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has overall responsibility for the Lottery within Government.

The Lottery will be required to contribute around £2.2 billion to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and in Northern Ireland this means a direct loss to the non-Olympic good causes of around £40 million over the period 2009-2012.

Despite this being a reserved matter, Northern Ireland together with the other devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales did make representation to DCMS to ensure that the contribution from Lottery was kept as low as possible. Assurances were also sought that should Olympic costs increase, no further funds will be diverted from the National Lottery and this has since been received from DCMS.

I can also confirm that an agreement has been reached with the Mayor of London under which DCMS should be able to refund some £675m to the Lottery distributors throughout the UK. It is hoped that this will come from the proceeds of Olympic Park land sales post-2012.

### Proposed Sports Stadium at the Maze site

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what feasibility studies, equality impact assessment and other criteria have been used to allow the redirection of funding from the proposed sports stadium at the Maze site to Linfield Football Club.[R] (AQW 4569/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has not redirected Sports Stadium Development funding to Linfield Football Club. Consequently, no feasibility studies, equality impact assessment etc are available or have been carried out. However, a business case to identify options both to enable, on a short term basis, international soccer to continue to take place at Windsor Park, which is owned by Linfield FC, and address pressing public safety needs at the ground has been commissioned by Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) at the request of the Department and with the agreement of the IFA and Linfield FC.

### Crowd Control at Irish League Grounds

**Lord Browne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what arrangements are in place between the PSNI and the owners of Irish League grounds for crowd control in the grounds. (AQW 4585/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Policing arrangements in Northern Ireland are a reserved matter under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In addition, crowd control in Irish League grounds is the responsibility of the owners and operators of the grounds in the first instance. However, the Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds, published by the Department in 2007, provides owners and operators of sports grounds, including Irish League grounds, with guidelines for arranging policing at venues. The Guide also provides guidelines on safety arrangements for spectators which includes crowd control in the grounds.

### Multi Sports Stadium

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money, public and other, has been spent in preparing for the proposed multi sports stadium at the Maze site. (AQW 4590/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** My department has spent a total of £3,598,708 to date in relation to the proposed multi-sports stadium at the Maze.

### Multi Sports Stadium

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the companies involved in the development of the sports stadium at the Maze site, and any compensation due to them as a result of the termination of their contracts. (AQW 4595/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** My department has had contractual arrangements with the following organisations in relation to the multi-sports stadium:

- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Mott MacDonald/HOK Sports Partnership
- KPMG/Davis Langdon
- Fire IMC
- Mott MacDonald
- Central Procurement Directorate

All contracts have been completed therefore the issue of compensation does not arise.

### Sailing Sports

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding has he made available for sailing sports and events in the Strangford area. (AQW 4600/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. SNI has advised that exchequer investment into sailing is made on a Northern Ireland wide basis to the governing body, the Royal Yachting Association NI, and not directly into one specific geographical area.

In the period 2006-2009, SNI has provided £248,173 of exchequer funding to the Royal Yachting Association NI. This would have indirectly impacted on the Strangford area through work with sailing clubs and junior squad sessions held in that area.

### Promotion of Hurling

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has attended a hurling match in his official capacity; and, if not, what plans he has to attend such an event. (AQW 4675/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** I have not attended a hurling match and there are currently no plans to attend a match.

### Promotion of Hurling

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action he has taken to promote and sponsor hurling. (AQW 4676/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Responsibility for the promotion of hurling rests, in the first instance, with the governing body for the sport, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The Ulster Council GAA has published a strategic plan for the period 2006-2010 which sets out its proposals for the promotion of Gaelic Games, including hurling. Over the last three financial years, Sport Northern Ireland, which is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding, has provided a total of £6,257,597 of Exchequer funding to the Ulster Council GAA to help them take forward their strategic plan.

### Gaelic Athletic Association

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what major capital projects his Department has sponsored for the Gaelic Athletic Association since taking up office. (AQW 4678/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. Since I took up office, SNI has made the following award offers to the GAA for capital projects:

Club	Project Description	Award Amount
St Canice's GFC	construction of a full size pitch, fencing & floodlighting	245,000
Owen Roe GAC	Pavilion with 4 changing rooms, referees room, committee room and a store room.	245,000
St Colmcille's GAC	Development of 2.5 acres of land adjacent to the existing facilities which the club has already purchased in 2006. Development into a training pitch and associated facilities	210,000
St Mary's GAC Slaughtmanus	Gaelic football training/playing pitch with floodlighting.	210,000
Dromara GFC	2nd natural grass pitch & floodlighting	254,000
Derry GAA County Board	Provision of 4300 seated stand, crowd control point & spectator facilities for disabled at Celtic Park	800,000
All Saints GAC	Construction of full size grass pitch	248,195
Lavey GAC	Construction of Synthetic pitch and 2 changing rooms	821,226
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association	Exchequer modernisation programme for Gaelic games. Completion of floodlighting programme at main county grounds	251,400
Drumragh Sarsfields GAC	Second full-sized floodlit pitch; and two storey four changing room pavilion with ancillary services.	795,000
Pearse Óg GFC	Construction of a 4 changing room pavilion	245,000
Tempo Maguire's GFC	4 changing room pavilion	245,000
Ballerin GAC	Construction of a natural turf full size pitch.	225,000
Brookeborough Heber McMahon GAC	Construction of a natural turf training pitch.	68,987
Derrygonnelly Harps GFC	Reconstruction of existing natural turf pitch	142,302
Derrylin O'Connells GAA	Construction of a natural turf pitch.	137,604
Galbally Pearses GFC	Construction of a natural turf training pitch.	200,565
Glen Rovers GAC	Construction of a natural turf full size pitch.	188,793
O'Donovan Rossa GAC	Construction of a full size natural turf pitch with floodlighting.	225,000
Pearses Gaelic Football & Camogie Club	Construction of a full size natural turf pitch and training pitch	170,000
Slaughtneill GAC	Installation of floodlighting to training pitch.	119,140
St Malachy's GAC	Construction of a natural turf training pitch with floodlighting.	225,000
St Mary's GAC	Construction of a natural turf training pitch with floodlighting.	225,000
Wolfe Tones GAC	Construction of a natural turf training pitch.	180,000
		<b>6,677,212.00</b>

### Bushmills Salmon Station

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money has been spent on the Bushmills Salmon Station in each of the last five years. (AQW 4715/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The overall expenditure in the last five years for the above is as follows;

- 2004/2005 - £96,327
- 2005/2006 - £163,407
- 2006/2007 - £256,358
- 2007/2008 - £217,964
- 2008/2009 - £102,268 (figure to end Dec 2008)

### Irish Language

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what his Department has done to promote Irish language television and radio productions since coming into office and how he plans to continue this work. (AQW 4741/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Since my appointment as Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure my Department has paid £2m to Northern Ireland Screen to administer the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF). A further £1m will be paid before the end of this financial year, 31 March 2009.

In June 2008 the UK Government directly allocated an additional £6m to the ILBF which will enable it to continue to March 2011.

### 10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if his Department and all its agencies and bodies operating under his Department, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4764/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** My Department issued guidance on 28 November 2008 to all branches requesting that they should make every effort to process and pay valid invoices as promptly as possible.

In addition, Sponsor Branches were requested to forward the guidance to all Arms Length Bodies within their Responsibility.

In December 2008, 51% of invoices addressed to the Department were paid within 10 days of receipt.

Given the timescale involved, significant impact on December's payment statistics would not be expected.

My Department will continue to monitor progress towards this target and take steps to overcome any barriers to its achievement.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of civil service staff employed by his Department, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, as of (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4856/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:**

(a) Number of civil servants employed by DCAL at 1 May 2007: 420

(i) Breakdown of Staff by Grade

AA	32
AO	62
EO2	32
EO1	120
SO	74
DP	47

AA	32
G6/7	30
SCS	7
Industrial	16

(ii) Breakdown by Department/Agency:

DCAL Core – 260

Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (OSNI)\* – 160

\* OSNI transferred to Land and Property Services of the Department of Finance and Personnel on 1 April 2008 and are not included in the January 2009 figures.

(b) Number of civil servants employed by DCAL at 1 January 2009:

279

(i) Breakdown of Staff by Grade:

AA	29
AO	56
EO2	29
EO1	25
SO	50
DP	35
G7	25
SCS	7
Industrial	23

(ii) Breakdown by Department/Agency:

DCAL 279 (no agency staff employed)

(The information requested has been provided by HRConnect, apart from the May 2007 figures for one division of DCAL Core – Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI) - which has been taken from departmental records).

### Capital Projects

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if there are any major capital projects in his Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 4998/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** There are no major capital projects in my Department that have been delayed either by lack of finance due to the recession or as a result of a backlog in Planning Service.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Schools in Foyle

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister of Education to list the number of students in each school in the Foyle constituency that has less than 200 students enrolled. (AQW 4043/09)

**Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane):** Tá an t-eolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos. Níl iarbhunscoil ar bith i dtoghcheantar an Fheabhail a bhfuil níos lú ná 200 dalta ag freastal uirthi.

The information requested is contained in the table below. There are no post primary schools with fewer than 200 pupils in the Foyle constituency.

**NURSERY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY WITH LESS THAN 200 PUPILS – 2008/09**

School Name	Total Enrolment
Lisnagelvin Nursery School	80
The Academy Nursery School	79
Belmont Nursery School	78
Bligh's Lane Nursery School	54
Galliagh Nursery School	53
Strathfoyle Nursery School	52
Carnhill Nursery School	52
Trench Road Nursery School	52

**PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY WITH LESS THAN 200 PUPILS – 2008/09**

School Name	Total Enrolment
Newbuildings PS	198
St Eugene's PS	192
Chapel Road PS	190
St Pauls PS, Slievemore	176
Glendermott PS	172
Bunscoil Cholmcille	161
St Oliver Plunkett PS	157
Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	128
Cumber Claudy PS	124
Craigbrack PS	99
Mullabuoy PS	98
Ashlea PS	97
Fountain PS	91
Culmore PS	82
Ballougry PS	80
St Columba's PS	50
Gaelscoil Na Daróige	34
Groarty Integrated PS	31
Listress PS	26

**SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY WITH LESS THAN 200 PUPILS – 2008/09**

School Name	Total Enrolment
Belmont House Special School	163
Foyleview Special School	117

**Note:** Figures for primary schools includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

**Source:** Annual school census.

### Ministers Comments at St. Colm's High School

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education if she gave a text of the speech where she referred approvingly to Bobby Sands, to Departmental officials, before she delivered the speech. (AQW 4080/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níor thug.

No.

### Ministers Comments at St. Colm's High School

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the contribution made to community relations by the positive statement she made about Bobby Sands, in a recent school speech. (AQW 4081/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní raibh sé ar intinn agam riamh damáiste a dhéanamh ar chaidreamh pobail agus mé ag tabhairt óráide ar bith. Is cearta daonlathacha iad ceart an díospóireachta agus ceart éagsúlacht tuairime ar ábhar ar bith a bheith ag duine.

I have never set out in any speech to damage community relations. Debate and the right to hold differing opinions on any subject is a democratic right.

### Ministers Comments at St. Colm's High School

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education if she has praised hunger strikers in any other speech as Minister other than her recent comments at St. Colm's High School. (AQW 4082/09)

**Minister of Education:** Is féidir m'óráidí mar Aire a fháil ar líne ag an láithreán gréasáin [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)  
My Ministerial speeches can be accessed online at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

### Ministers Comments at St. Colm's High School

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education if she sought and if so, received any advice from Departmental officials before she delivered a positive statement about Bobby Sands, in a school speech. (AQW 4112/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níor chuardaigh agus ní bhfuair.

No.

### CCEA Transfer Test

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Education (i) what academic standard will be required to obtain a grade A, B, C and D in a CCEA test; and (ii) the academic criteria against which this will be assessed. (AQW 4246/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níl na ceisteanna seo ábhartha níos mó i ndiaidh an ráitis a thug mé ar 2 Feabhra 2009 a shonraigh go bhfuil mé ag tarraingt siar an choimisiúnaithe le haghaidh teist CCEA.

These questions no longer have relevance in light of my announcement on 2 February 2009 that I am withdrawing the commission for a CCEA test.

### CCEA Transfer Test

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Education what time will be given to pupils when sitting a CCEA transfer test. (AQW 4247/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níl na ceisteanna seo ábhartha níos mó i ndiaidh an ráitis a thug mé ar 2 Feabhra 2009 a shonraigh go bhfuil mé ag tarraingt siar an choimisiúnaithe le haghaidh teist CCEA.

These questions no longer have relevance in light of my announcement on 2 February 2009 that I am withdrawing the commission for a CCEA test.

### CCEA Transfer Test

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on the development of the CCEA transfer test; and what is the anticipated final cost of this test. (AQW 4248/09)

**Minister of Education:** Actual expenditure to date is less than £1500. The test was commissioned in anticipation of Executive agreement of Regulations to govern post primary Transfer 2010. Given the absence of any such agreement the test has been decommissioned and CCEA has advised the Department that the final anticipated cost will be around £100000.

### Academic Selection

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQO 1676/09, in which she stated ‘I want to reach agreement, but in the absence of agreement, I will issue guidance’; if she would confirm if this guidance would have the legal power to prevent any school from using academic selection. (AQW 4249/09)

**Minister of Education:** The guidance that I published for consultation on 2 February 2009 is guidance which schools are required to “have regard to”. This means that they cannot disregard it. It means that the guidance is an important document for them to consider in developing their admissions criteria and in performing their role within the admissions process.

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

Tá súil agam go gcloíonn gach scoil leis an treoir ar mhaithe le leas na bpáistí.

I hope that in the interests of children all schools will adhere to the guidance.

### Pupil Languages

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils do not have English as their first language, broken down by (i) total; (ii) Education and Library Boards; and (iii) constituency. (AQW 4401/09)

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

The information requested is provided in the tables below.

#### CHILDREN WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE BY EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD 2007/08

	Education and Library Board					
	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	NI total
EAL pupils	1,139	668	896	770	2,192	5,665

#### CHILDREN WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE BY CONSTITUENCY 2007/08

Constituency	EAL pupils
Belfast East	277
Belfast North	231
Belfast South	592



Constituency	EAL pupils
Belfast West	148
East Antrim	139
East Derry	224
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	840
Foyle	181
Lagan Valley	287
Mid Ulster	330
Newry And Armagh	482
North Antrim	230
North Down	145
South Antrim	247
South Down	216
Strangford	170
Upper Bann	695
West Tyrone	231
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,665</b>

Source: Annual school census.

**Notes:**

1. Children with English as an additional language are those children who do not have English as their first language and who have difficulty with English and require assistance.
2. Figures relate to pupils in nursery, primary, post primary and special schools.

## Substitute Teachers

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Education if her Department has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the decision to cap central reimbursement for the employment of substitute teachers at main payscale point four. (AQW 4430/09)

**Minister of Education:** The arrangement whereby schools are compensated for teacher substitution costs at up to point M4 of the Teachers main payscale within the Common Funding Scheme for all schools, is a continuation of the maximum level of reimbursement which applied prior to the introduction of Common Funding in April 2005.

The effective management of expenditure on teacher substitution is one of the major tools available to Boards of Governors and school principals in managing their budget. The level of compensation seeks to maximise the levels of funding delegated to schools (as opposed to being retained centrally) while providing schools with the flexibility to decide to engage a substitute teacher at a higher cost, at a charge to the school's budget, if the school so wishes.

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to the introduction of the Common Funding Scheme, which incorporates both the funding formula and arrangements by which schools to have access to central support funds and services. The Common Funding Scheme is subject to on-going review.

Má bhíonn fianaise de thionchar diúltach ann, nó má thagann deiseanna chun cinn a thabharfadh seans do níos mó comhionannais deiseanna bheith ann, cinnteoidh an Roinn go leasófar beartais dá réir sin.

If there is evidence of adverse impact, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Department will ensure that policies are revised accordingly.

### Admissions Tests

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Education which grammar schools have indicated that they intend to use their own admissions tests. (AQW 4454/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá socruithe don teist ag scoileanna gramadaí á bhforbairt go neamhspleách ar an Roinn Oideachais.

The development of test arrangements by grammar schools is being taken forward independently of the Department of Education.

I have issued guidance recommending the use of non-academic admissions criteria and hope that all schools will adhere to these recommendations in the interests of creating a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence.

While I am aware through media reports that a number of schools have announced their intention to use independent admissions tests, of these schools only Lumen Christi College and Slemish College have notified me formally of their plans in this regard.

### Admissions Tests

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Education whether she has legal authority to prevent grammar schools from using their own admissions tests. (AQW 4455/09)

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

Tá treoir eisithe agam a mholann go mbaintear úsáid as critéir iontrála neamh-acadúla agus tá súil agam go gcloíonn gach scoil leis na moltaí ar mhaithe le córas a chruthú atá bunaithe ar cheartas sóisialta, ar chomhionannas agus ar shármhaitheas.

I have issued guidance recommending the use of non-academic admissions criteria and hope that all schools will adhere to these recommendations in the interests of creating a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence.

### Sure Start Initiative

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Education what funding will be available for the Sure Start Initiative for the year starting 1 April 2009. (AQW 4458/09)

**Minister of Education:** Is é neasmhéid an buiséid táscach reatha atá ar fáil don tionscnamh Sure Start sa bhliain airgeadais 2009 – 2010 ná £17303 K

The current indicative budget available for the Sure Start initiative in the 2009 – 2010 financial year is approximately £17303K

### School Cleaners

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister of Education when each Education and Library Board will be in a position to pay school cleaners the agreed back payments owed to them. (AQW 4476/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá gach ceann de na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) ag próiseáil íocaíocht na riaráistí faoi láthair a d’éirigh ó thoradh phostmheastóireacht na nglantóirí.

Each of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) are currently processing the payment of the arrears from the cleaners’ job evaluation outcome.

An indicative timetable for the payment of job evaluation arrears and pay awards was agreed by the Boards and shared with Unions. The target date for completion of processing payments is August 2009. ELBs are

continuing to make payments as quickly as possible and has confirmed that work is progressing towards the achievement of their respective target date.

### Electoral Office

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Education to list the 20 post-primary schools which did not co-operate with the Electoral Office in its School's Initiative; and what reason was given by each school for their non-participation. (AQW 4479/09)

**Minister of Education:** Chuir mé do cheist faoi bhráid an Phríomhoifigigh Thoghchánaigh. Cuirfidh sé freagra chugat go díreach.

I have passed your request to the Chief Electoral Officer. He will respond to you directly.

### Breach of the Ministerial Code

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Education if it is appropriate to praise a convicted terrorist in her capacity as Minister when speaking to school children. (AQW 4491/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní bheadh sé fóirsteanach moladh a thabhairt do sceimhlitheoir ar bith i gcás ar bith.

It would not be appropriate to praise any terrorist under any circumstances.

### Breach of the Ministerial Code

**Mr N McCausland** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQO 1806/09, if she will place the full text of her speech in the Assembly library. (AQW 4517/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níor shíl mé go raibh sé riachtanach do m'oifigigh óráid a ullmhú, mar gheall ar an ionad agus an ócáid.

Given the venue and the occasion I did not think it necessary to have my officials prepare a speech.

### Schools Sited Near Overhead Power Cables

**Mr N McCausland** asked the Minister of Education for details of any schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board which are within 200 metres of overhead power cables. (AQW 4518/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní choinníonn an Roinn Oideachais an t-eolas a iarradh. Thug NIE PLC an t-eolas a leanas an iarraidh seo.

The information requested is not held by the Department of Education. NIE PLC on this occasion has provided the following information. There are 20 schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board which are within 200 metres of overhead power cables, these are:

- Avoniel Primary School, Avoniel Road, Belfast
- Elmgrove Primary School, Beersbridge Road, Belfast
- Gaelscoil Na Móna, Monagh Link, Belfast
- Grosvenor Grammar School, Cameronian Drive, Belfast
- Holy Child Nursery School, Slievegallion Drive, Belfast
- Holy Child Primary School, South Green, Belfast
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Monagh Road, Belfast
- Matt Talbot Nursery School, New Barnsley Green, Belfast
- Orangefield Primary School, Marina Park, Belfast
- St Aidan's Christian Brothers Primary School, Whiterock Road, Belfast
- St Anne's Primary School, Kingsway, Belfast
- St Gerard's Education Resource Centre, Upper Springfield Road, Belfast

- St John The Baptist Boys' Primary School, Finaghy Road North, Belfast
- St John The Baptist Girls' Primary School, Finaghy Road North, Belfast
- St Martin's Nursery School, Monagh Link, Belfast
- St Oliver Plunkett Nursery School, Glen Road, Belfast
- St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, Glen Road, Belfast
- St Teresa's Nursery School, Bernagh Glen, Belfast
- St Teresa's Primary School, Glen Road, Belfast
- Vere Foster Primary School, Moyard Parade,

### Schools Sited Near Overhead Power Cables

**Mr N McCausland** asked the Minister of Education for details of any schools in the North Eastern Education and Library Board which are within 200 metres of overhead power cables. (AQW 4519/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní choinníonn an Roinn Oideachais an t-eolas a iarradh. Thug NIE PLC an t-eolas a leanas an iarraidh seo.

The information requested is not held by the Department of Education. NIE PLC on this occasion has provided the following information. There are 15 schools in the North Eastern Education and Library Board which are within 200 metres of overhead power cables, these are:

- Ballycarry Primary School, Hillhead Road, Ballycarry
- Ballee Community High School, Ballee Road West, Ballymena
- Camphill Primary School, Carolhill Park, Ballymena
- Carnaghts Primary School, Valley Road, Ballymena
- Acorn Integrated Primary School, Victoria Road, Carrickfergus
- Carrickfergus College, North Road, Carrickfergus
- Castleroe Primary School, Castleroe Road, Coleraine
- North Coast Integrated College, Cloyfin Road, Coleraine
- Kilcoan Primary School, Browns Bay Road, Island Magee
- Toreagh Primary School, Raloo Road, Larne
- Ballyhenry Primary School, Ballyhenry Avenue, Newtownabbey
- Mossley Nursery School, Hazelburn Road, Newtownabbey
- Mossley Primary School, Hazelburn Road, Newtownabbey
- St Macnissi's Primary School, Christine Road Off Manse Road, Newtownabbey
- Anahorish Primary School, Deerpark Road, Toome

### Educational Psychologists

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Education what plans her Department has to (i) address the current shortage of educational psychologists; (ii) ensure a sufficient number of educational psychologists are undergoing training; and (iii) address funding issues to enable the Education and Library Boards to expand their educational psychology services to schools. (AQW 4532/09)

**Minister of Education:** I am aware of the current difficulties experienced in some areas around the recruitment of educational psychologists and to this end I can confirm that my Department has been working closely with the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) to consider future staffing requirements and to help ensure that supply matches demand. I should explain, however, that it is a matter for the ELBs in the first instance to determine their staffing levels.

Since 1999 the number of educational psychologists in training at QUB has been increased from 5 to 12 per annum, through the provision of additional resources. This increase was agreed following discussion with the ELBs and QUB. The increase in trainees has been sustained following the move to a 3-year Doctorate course, which replaced the 1-year Master's course, in 2006.

In addition the vacancy control measures, in place because of the Review of Public Administration, have been lifted in relation to the recruitment of permanent educational psychology staff due to the unique situation of the Educational Psychology Service.

In recent years the Department has also provided ELBs with additional funds to train and employ additional psychologists in an effort to enable them to meet increased demand for assessments, part of an additional £53m made available to Boards over the three years 2005/06 to 2007/08 for children with special educational needs.

Tá tugtha le fios dom fosta ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí na ELBanna gur bhain na seirbhísí síceolaíochta tairbhe mór as cúntóirí síceolaíochta a thabhairt isteach agus go bhfuil sé ar intinn ag gach ELB folúntais do shíceolaíthe oideachais a fhógairt.

I have also been advised by the Chief Executives of the ELBs that the introduction of psychology assistants has greatly benefited their psychology services and that all ELBs plan to advertise shortly for educational psychologist vacancies.

### Educational Psychologists

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Education how many educational psychologists are currently employed (i) full time; and (ii) part time, in each Education and Library Board; and how the number of educational psychologists for each Education and Library Board is determined. (AQW 4533/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá sé tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí (CE anna) na Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELB anna) gurb iad seo a leanas líon na síceolaíthe oideachais atá fostaithe faoi láthair i ngach ELB:-

I have been advised by the Chief Executives (CEs) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that the number of educational psychologists currently employed in each ELB is as follows:-

	Full-Time	Part-Time
BELB	10	20
NEELB	23	6
SEELB	21	11
SELB	20	12
WELB	17	7

The Department of Education does not determine the staffing complement of Educational Psychologists for ELBs. It is a matter for each CE to allocate resources from the overall funding available to the ELB, in order to determine priorities. The CEs have also advised that the full complement of educational psychology staffing is determined by a combination of historical spend and the budget made available to psychology services by each ELB in any particular financial year. In recent years additional funding provided directly by the Department of Education has also resulted in additional posts being established.

### Children with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 3973/09, the cost for each child registered with speech, language and communication difficulties, in each Education and Library Board. (AQW 4592/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí na Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne nach féidir costas ar gach pháiste atá cláraithe le deachrachaí urlabhra, teanga agus cumarsáide a sholáthar.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that it is not possible to provide a cost for each child registered with speech, language and communication difficulties.

The data provided in response to AQW 3973/09 related to children with speech, language and communication difficulties at all stages of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational

Needs. These children can access a range of support and provision at both school and ELB level. Stages 1- 3 are school based, calling as necessary on external specialists. At stages 4 and 5 ELBs can make provision in a variety of ways but always tailored to the needs of the individual child. It is not therefore possible to calculate a cost for the range of supports per child.

### Classroom Assistants

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Education to confirm that parents whose children have statements of special needs will be able to keep their children in mainstream schools with the help of school and classroom assistants. (AQW 4603/09)

**Minister of Education:** Déanann Airteagal 7 de The Education (NI) Order 1996, mar a rinneadh leasú air tríd an Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005, tagairt ar an dualgas le oideachas a sholáthar do pháistí a bhfuil ráitéisí faoi riachtanais oideachais speisialta acu i ngnáthscoileanna seachas cásanna nuair nach luíonn sé le:-

- (i) mianta na dtuismitheoirí, nó
- (ii) soláthar oideachais éifeachtúil do pháistí eile.

Article 7 of The Education (NI) Order 1996, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005, refers to a duty to educate children with statements of special educational needs in mainstream schools unless this is incompatible with:-

- (i) the wishes of the parents, or
- (ii) the provision of efficient education for other children.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), in discussion with the parents of children with statements, and taking into consideration the special educational needs of the child, to determine the type of school placement required. If the parents disagree with the placement proposed by an ELB they have the right to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.

It should not be assumed, however, that all children who have statements of special education needs and who are educated in a mainstream school will have a classroom assistant. In many cases a classroom assistant would not be appropriate and a different type of provision would be named on the statement e.g. additional individual/small group teaching, specialist IT equipment, adapted materials etc.

### Joint Negotiating Council

**Mr L Cree** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the pay award agreed with the Joint Negotiating Council; and to provide a timeframe for the implementation of this payment. (AQW 4605/09)

**Minister of Education:** Under public sector pay policy all public sector bodies, including the Education and Library Boards (Boards), are required to submit a business case for the approval of the parent department and the Finance Minister before a pay award can be implemented. This procedure applies even if the public body follows a nationally determined settlement such as the National Joint Council (NJC) award. In October 2008 the Boards agreed to follow the nationally agreed proposal to implement an interim settlement while arbitration to reach a final settlement continues.

Since the interim settlement was agreed the Department, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), has been working closely with the Boards to ensure that each business case is cleared as quickly as possible. Approximately 40 business cases have to be submitted across the 5 Boards comprising 8 groups of staff. The business cases covering the vast majority of Board staff were submitted to the Department last month and on 29 January 2009 the Department submitted a composite 5 Board business case to DFP for approval. Approval for this group was confirmed on 4 February, enabling the Boards to implement the pay award and arrears by 31 March 2009.

Tá an Roinn ag obair go dlúth leis na Boird, mar a bhí sí, lena chinntiú go ndéantar próiseáil gan moill ar chásanna gnó a bhaineann leis na grúpaí foirne beaga eile.

The Department is continuing to work closely with the Boards to ensure that the business cases for the other smaller groups of staff are processed without delay.

### Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Education

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Education what provision there is in secondary school education for learning about energy efficiency and climate change. (AQW 4623/09)

**Minister of Education:** The statutory revised curriculum, which is being phased in from the 2007/08 to the 2009/10 school years for all pupils from Years 1 to 12 of compulsory education, includes Sustainable Development as a key objective to be developed across all areas of the curriculum. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is included in the curriculum across all Key Stages.

Ar leibhéal bunscoile, cuirtear ESD san áireamh leis an chuid reachtúil Foghlaim ar an Domhan inár dTimpeall (Tíreolaíocht, Eolaíocht agus Teicneolaíocht).

Ar Eochairchéim 3, is mar chuid de na codanna Foghlaim don Saol agus don Obair (Saoránacht Áitiúil agus Domhanda, Infhostaitheacht) agus Timpeallacht agus Sochaí (Tíreolaíocht agus Stáir) agus Eolaíocht agus Teicneolaíocht.

At primary level ESD is built into the statutory Area of Learning of The World Around Us (Geography, Science and Technology). At Key Stage 3 it is included in the statutory areas of Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship, Employability), and Environment and Society (Geography and History) and Science and Technology.

Through ESD, pupils will explore issues such as environmental and climate change and the need to manage human impact on the environment. They will come to understand the interdependence of society, the economy and the environment; to develop respect for the needs of both present and future generations and to act towards promoting an improved environment.

### Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Education

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Education what provision there is in primary school education for learning about energy efficiency and climate change. (AQW 4624/09)

**Minister of Education:** The statutory revised curriculum, which is being phased in from the 2007/08 to the 2009/10 school years for all pupils from Years 1 to 12 of compulsory education, includes Sustainable Development as a key objective to be developed across all areas of the curriculum. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is included in the curriculum across all Key Stages.

Ar leibhéal bunscoile, cuirtear ESD san áireamh leis an chuid reachtúil Foghlaim ar an Domhan inár dTimpeall (Tíreolaíocht, Eolaíocht agus Teicneolaíocht).

Ar Eochairchéim 3, is mar chuid de na codanna Foghlaim don Saol agus don Obair (Saoránacht Áitiúil agus Domhanda, Infhostaitheacht) agus Timpeallacht agus Sochaí (Tíreolaíocht agus Stáir) agus Eolaíocht agus Teicneolaíocht.

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Through ESD, pupils will explore issues such as environmental and climate change and the need to manage human impact on the environment. They will come to understand the interdependence of society, the economy and the environment; to develop respect for the needs of both present and future generations and to act towards promoting an improved environment.

### School Facilities in East Antrim

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to upgrade school facilities in East Antrim in 2009. (AQW 4628/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá sceimeanna mhionobreacha faoi phleanáil le feabhas a dhéanamh ar aiseanna sna scoileanna seo a leanas sa bhliain airgeadais 2009/10 agus faoi réir dhóthain airgid bheith ar fáil.

Schemes of minor works are in planning to improve facilities at the following schools in the 2009/10 financial year and are subject to resources being available:

**MAINTAINED AND VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOL SECTOR SCHEMES PLANNED FOR 2009/10**

Name of School	Scheme
Seaview Primary School, Glenarm	Upgrade fire doors and fire alarm Replacement windows
St James' Primary School, Newtownabbey	Upgrade/replace school bell system Refurbish toilets

Name of School	Scheme
St Anthony's Primary School, Larne	Disabled Access– remove steps and construct ramp
Belfast High School	Access control system Perimeter fencing Comfort cooling system in ICT support room Replacement hot water system
St MacNissi's College, Carnlough	Toilet & girl changing refurbishment Fire risk assessment – fire doors & electrical wiring
Corran Integrated Primary School, Larne	Upgrade toilets
Acorn Integrated Primary School	Lay-by CCTV provision Fire detection & alarm system

**CONTROLLED SECTOR SCHEMES PLANNED FOR 2009/10**

Name of School	Scheme
Carnalbanagh Primary School	Internal Alterations
Carrickfergus Central Primary School	Provision of storage space
Carrickfergus Central Primary School	Improvements to reception area including DDA work
Carrickfergus Central Primary School	Fencing
Carrickfergus Model Primary School	Fire Escape
Carrickfergus College	Additional car parking facilities
Carrickfergus College	Provision of storage container
Carrickfergus Grammar School	1 science mobile
Downshire School	Provision of 1 Bus Studies mobile
Downshire School	Provision of Careers classroom
Downshire School	Fencing
Glynn Primary School	New school (mobile pilot scheme) - DE approval required

Name of School	Scheme
Kings' Park Primary School	Provision of play area for infant classes
Larne High School	Fencing
Linn Primary School	Refit all schools toilets
Linn Primary School	Extension of car park
Linn Primary School	Provision of admin and special needs
Linn Primary School	Emergency gate in perimeter fence



Name of School	Scheme
Linn Primary School - Nursery Unit	Refit all nursery toilets
Linn Primary School - Nursery Unit	Enclose entrance porch and turn into a multi-purpose room
Moyle Primary School	Refurbishment of toilets
Victoria Primary School	Nursery Unit - Improvements to access
Victoria Primary School	Fence
Victoria Primary School	Provision of office accommodation & DDA
Whiteabbey Primary School	Fencing
Whitehead Primary School	Fencing
Whitehead Primary School	DDA - Phase 2

**SCHEMES SPANNING THE 2008/09 AND 2009/10 FINANCIAL YEARS**

Name of School	Scheme
Sunnylands Nursery School	Minor works/DDA
Monkstown Nursery School	Minor works/DDA
Woodburn Primary School	2 mobile classrooms

### Temporary Teaching Positions

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Education how many retired teachers have been re-employed in temporary teaching positions, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4630/09)

**Minister of Education:** Is iad seo a leanas líon na múinteoirí a chuaigh ar scór agus a athfhostaíodh i bpostanna sealadacha ina dhiaidh sin iad, i ngach bliain le cúig bliana anuas.

The number of teachers who have retired and subsequently become re-employed in temporary teaching positions, in each of the last five years is as follows:

Financial Year	Number of Retired Teachers	Number of retired teachers who became re-employed
2003/04	730	314
2004/05	741	306
2005/06	955	455
2006/07	991	423
2007/08	969	360

The Department has repeatedly advised employers that retired teachers should only be re-employed to provide short-term cover where newly qualified teachers or experienced non-retired teachers are unavailable.

The rules of the 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. The Department has strict controls in place to monitor such cases.

Since 1999/2000 the level of central reimbursement by education and library boards of the cost of substitute cover has been capped at point 4 of the Main Scale. This provides an incentive for schools to employ newly qualified teachers to provide substitute cover in preference to costlier retired teachers. However, schools have the flexibility to decide to engage a teacher at a higher cost at a charge to the school budget if they so desire.

### St. Mary's College and St. Cecilia's College

**Ms M Anderson** asked the Minister of Education if she is aware of any difficulties which sub-contractors are experiencing in terms of accessing contracts associated with the two new-builds of St. Mary's College and St. Cecilia's College in Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 4647/09)

**Minister of Education:**

- (i) Tuigim ó chúdach na meán cumarsáide áitiúil go d'ardaigh roinnt breceadóirí atá ag obair mar fhochonraitheoirí ceist faoi na rátaí oibre á dtairiscint ag an conraitheoir, agus gur thug an conraitheoir a thuairim ar an scéal.
- (i) I am aware from local media coverage that a number of bricklaying sub-contractors have raised the issue of the rates offered for work by the contractor, and that the contractor has commented on the matter. I also understand that a number of brick-laying subcontractors have been employed to work on the project.
- (ii) Níl údarás ar bith agam idirghabháil a dhéanamh ar chonradh na scéime seo.
- (ii) I have no authority to intervene in the contract for this scheme which was signed between St. Canice's Educational Trust and Belfast Education Services (Derry) Ltd in December 2008.
- (iii) Sular tugadh faomhadh don tionscadal seo, cuireadh faoi scrúdú costais iomlán an tionscadail maidir le luach ar airgid agus cuireadh bainistíocht foirngníochta agus aiseanna san áireamh le seo.
- (iii) Before approval, the overall costs of the project including the construction and facilities management over the life of the contract were examined for value for money. The examination of a public private partnership project such as this does not involve an assessment of a detailed Bill of Quantities.

### St. Mary's College and St. Cecilia's College

**Ms M Anderson** asked the Minister of Education, given that the contracts in relation to the two new-builds of St. Mary's College and St. Cecilia's College in Derry/Londonderry were drawn up by a previous administration and prior to the implementation of new procurement guidelines, if she has any authority to intervene. (AQW 4648/09)

**Minister of Education:**

- (i) Tuigim ó chúdach na meán cumarsáide áitiúil go d'ardaigh roinnt breceadóirí atá ag obair mar fhochonraitheoirí ceist faoi na rátaí oibre á dtairiscint ag an conraitheoir, agus gur thug an conraitheoir a thuairim ar an scéal.
- (i) I am aware from local media coverage that a number of bricklaying sub-contractors have raised the issue of the rates offered for work by the contractor, and that the contractor has commented on the matter. I also understand that a number of brick-laying subcontractors have been employed to work on the project.
- (ii) Níl údarás ar bith agam idirghabháil a dhéanamh ar chonradh na scéime seo.
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### St. Mary's College and St. Cecilia's College

**Ms M Anderson** asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the contracts for the two new-builds of St. Mary's and St. Cecilia's colleges in Derry/Londonderry, to confirm that the estimates contained in the Bill of Quantities, tendered by the successful bidder, reflect the current market costs. (AQW 4649/09)

**Minister of Education:**

- (i) Tuigim ó chúdach na meán cumarsáide áitiúil go d'ardaigh roinnt breceadóirí atá ag obair mar fhochonraitheoirí ceist faoi na rátaí oibre á dtairiscint ag an conraitheoir, agus gur thug an conraitheoir a thuairim ar an scéal.
- (i) I am aware from local media coverage that a number of bricklaying sub-contractors have raised the issue of the rates offered for work by the contractor, and that the contractor has commented on the matter. I also understand that a number of brick-laying subcontractors have been employed to work on the project.
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- (iii) Before approval, the overall costs of the project including the construction and facilities management over the life of the contract were examined for value for money. The examination of a public private partnership project such as this does not involve an assessment of a detailed Bill of Quantities.

**Transfer 2010**

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education if and when she will publish any legal advice she received, from the Department's solicitors, in relation to her statement on 2 February 2009 on Transfer 2010. (AQW 4694/09)

**Minister of Education:** Maidir le foilsiú treoracha i ndiaidh an ráitis faoi Aistriú 10 a thug mé ar 2 Feabhra 2009, is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuarthas comhairle dleathach ó Oifig Dlíodóra na Roinne amháin.

In relation to the publication of guidance on foot of my 2 February 2009 statement on Transfer 2010, I can confirm that the only legal advice received was from the Departmental Solicitor's Office.

All Departments take legal (and other necessary types of advice) on many major actions. Like all legal advice obtained by Government Departments, this advice is privileged.

However, the legislative basis for the issuing of guidance has already been published. Paragraph 1 of the guidance states that it is issued under Article 30 of the Education Order 2006. I will quote what this Article says: "The Department may issue, and from time to time revise, such guidance as it thinks appropriate in respect of the arrangements for the admission of pupils to grant-aided schools".

**Admissions Criteria**

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education why random selection is her recommended tie breaker in admissions criteria. (AQW 4695/09)

**Minister of Education:** In order to work properly, admissions criteria have to be capable of distinguishing between individual applicants. Schools have an obligation in law to use admissions criteria that are capable of distinguishing exactly the number of applicants that their capacity permits them to admit.

Mar gheall ar na fáthanna seo, is cuid tábhachtach de hiontrálacha na scoileanna uile í an "cheist réitigh". Is critéar í an "cheist réitigh" a dhéanfaidh idirdhealú idir na hiarrthóirí aonair i mbealach trédhearcach, nuair a cuirtear i bhfeidhm í.

For these reasons, a "tie-breaker" is an important part of all schools admissions. A "tie-breaker" is a criterion that, when applied, will distinguish between individual applicants in a transparent manner.

The Department recommends a "random selection" tie-breaker because it is commonly used already. The Department does not recommend a "distance to school" tie-breaker (which prioritises children according to the precise distance between their home and the school) because that would disadvantage outlying (e.g. rural) applicants.

It will be for a post-primary school's Board of Governors to design a method of random selection, but the Department strongly advises schools to use random selection as a tie-breaker to ensure they have a clear audit trail of the process.

### Transfer 2010

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education to outline the specific issues on which she sought legal advice from the departmental solicitors prior to issuing her statement on 2 February on Transfer 2010. (AQW 4696/09)

**Minister of Education:** Maidir le foilsiú treoracha i ndiaidh an ráitis faoi Aistriú 10 a thug mé ar 2 Feabhra 2009, is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuarthas comhairle dleathach ó Oifig Dlíodóra na Roinne amháin.

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### Transfer 2010

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education what legal advice, if any, she received other than from the departmental solicitors, prior to issuing her statement on Transfer 2010. (AQW 4719/09)

**Minister of Education:** Maidir le foilsiú treoracha i ndiaidh an ráitis faoi Aistriú 10 a thug mé ar 2 Feabhra 2009, is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuarthas comhairle dleathach ó Oifig Dlíodóra na Roinne amháin.

In relation to the publication of guidance on foot of my 2 February 2009 statement on Transfer 2010, I can confirm that the only legal advice received was from the Departmental Solicitor's Office.

All Departments take legal (and other necessary types of advice) on many major actions. Like all legal advice obtained by Government Departments, this advice is privileged.

However, the legislative basis for the issuing of guidance has already been published. Paragraph 1 of the guidance states that it is issued under Article 30 of the Education Order 2006. I will quote what this Article says: "The Department may issue, and from time to time revise, such guidance as it thinks appropriate in respect of the arrangements for the admission of pupils to grant-aided schools".

### Ministerial Code

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Education have her guidelines outlined to the Assembly on 2nd February 2009 been presented to the Executive in line with the Ministerial Code. (AQW 4736/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá páipéir curtha os comhair an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin agam ar dhá ócáid, páipéir a dhéanann cur síos ar mholtaí agus bhí mé ag iarraidh go mbeadh plé dearfach á dhéanamh orthu agus go mbeadh creat reachtúil an Aistrithe 2010 mar thoradh air.

I have brought before the Executive on two occasions papers describing proposals around which I sought a constructive engagement with a view to achieving a legislative framework for Transfer 2010. In submitting my policy memorandum paper to the Executive on 26 January 2009 I made clear that if the Executive could not reach agreement around my proposals, I would withdraw them and given the urgency with which clarity on post-primary transfer is required, bring forward guidance under Article 30 of the Education Order, 2006. Although not my preferred course of action, having given the Executive the opportunity on two occasions to exercise its collective responsibility to discuss this issue, in the interests of teachers, parents and the children affected I have issued this guidance as I consider this to be the only responsible course of action open to me. The recommendations contained within the guidance are subject to consultation until 27 April 2009.

### Guidelines on Post Primary Transfer

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Education what discussions she has held with her Ministerial colleagues on the impact that her guidelines on post primary transfer could have on the Programme for Government's aim to increase levels of employment, given that her recommendation, that a quota be introduced for those eligible for free school meals as the primary consideration in secondary level admissions, could be a disincentive to parents seeking to return to work. (AQW 4759/09)

**Minister of Education:** Bhí gá le treoir sholéir a eisiúint mar gheall ar theip na gComh-Airí dul i mbun plé liom faoi mo thograí a bhain leis an aistriú iarbhunscoile.

The failure of Ministerial colleagues to engage in discussion with me around my proposals for post-primary transfer led to the need for clear guidance to be issued.

### School Facilities in North Down

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to upgrade school facilities in North Down in 2009. (AQW 4765/09)

**Minister of Education:** Construction work on a new school building for Towerview Primary School, Bangor is currently underway and is due to complete in summer 2009. In addition, plans for new school buildings for Bangor Grammar School and St Columbanus College are currently being taken forward and it is anticipated that construction work on these projects should start in 2009/10.

Tá líon scéimeanna mhionobreacha faoi phleanáil fosta le forbairt a dhéanamh ar aiseanna na scoileanna seo a leanas sa bhliain 2009/10, faoi réir dhóthain airgid a bheith ar fáil.

A number of minor works schemes are also in planning to improve facilities at the following schools in 2009/10, subject to sufficient resources being available.

St Patrick's Primary School Holywood	Toilet refurbishment Replacement windows
Sullivan Upper Holywood	Air conditioning system to selected rooms Fire Risk Assessment Refurbishment of music department
Trinity Nursery School Bangor	Rewire
Clandeboye Primary School Bangor	New boiler plant
Crawfordsburn Primary School	Toilet refurbishment Improvements to entrance way
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	2 or 3 classroom extension with shared play/resource space
Millisle Primary School	Disabled Access and enlarge Special Educational Needs room
Rathmore Primary School Bangor	Improvements to toilet facilities
Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	Works to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act
Glencraigh Collegiate School, Bangor	Extension to lunch accommodation in basement

### Clogher Valley Integrated Primary School

**Mr T Gallagher** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the development proposal for the new Clogher Valley integrated primary school. (AQW 4792/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tháinig deireadh leis an tréimhse dhá mhí reachtúil comhairliúcháin, ar bhunú Bunscoil Dheontaschúnta Imeachta nua i gceantair Clogher Valley ar an 8 Nollaig 2008.

The statutory two-month consultation period on the Development Proposal to establish a new Grant Maintained Integrated Primary School in the Clogher Valley area ended on 8 December 2008. The department is currently assembling all material relevant to the proposal so that I can make a decision on it as soon as possible.

## Educational Psychologists

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) the actual and target numbers of whole time equivalent educational psychologists in each Education and Library Board area; (ii) the reasons for the current shortfall; (iii) the steps being taken to increase the availability of educational psychologists; and (iv) the interim measures being taken to ameliorate this shortfall. (AQW 4800/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí (CEanna) na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) gurb é seo a leanas líon na síceolaithe oideachais ar choibhéis lánaimseartha atá fostaithe i ngach ELB faoi láthair:

I have been advised by the Chief Executives (CEs) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that the number of full-time equivalent (fte) educational psychologists (EPs) currently employed in each ELB is as follows:-

BELB	24.51
NEELB	25.40
SEELB	27.55
SELB	27.51
WELB	21.60

I have also been advised that the current number of fte EP vacancies in each ELB is as follows:-

BELB	2.6
NEELB	1.0
SEELB	5.2
SELB	0
WELB	9.6

These figures include permanent and temporary posts and temporary vacancies created by career breaks and maternity leave.

The Department of Education (DE) does not determine the staffing compliment or target numbers of educational psychologists for ELBs. It is a matter for each Chief Executive to allocate resources from the overall funding available to the ELB, in order to determine priorities. The Chief Executives have also advised that the full complement of educational psychology staffing is determined by a combination of historical spend and the budget made available to psychology services by each ELB in any particular financial year. In recent years additional funding provided directly by the Department has also resulted in additional posts being established.

I am aware of the current difficulties experienced in some areas around the recruitment of educational psychologists and to this end I can confirm that my Department has been working closely with the Education and Library Boards and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) to consider future manpower requirements and to help ensure that supply matches demand. I should explain, however, that it is a matter for the ELBs in the first instance to determine the staffing levels required to fulfil their statutory duties.

Prior to 2006 DE supported 12 students per annum on a 1-year Master's course. Since 2006 DE has provided significant additional funding to support a 3-year Doctorate course. Currently 24 trainees per annum are being supported at QUB at various stages of the Doctorate.

Interim measures being taken to increase the availability of EPs include the lifting of vacancy control measures, in place because of the Review of Public Administration, in relation to the recruitment of permanent educational psychology staff due to the unique situation of the Educational Psychology Service.

In recent years the Department has also provided ELBs with additional funds to train and employ additional psychologists in an effort to enable them to meet increased demand for assessments. This funding was part of an additional £53m made available to Boards over the three years 2005/06 to 2007/08 for children with special educational needs.

I have also been advised by the Chief Executives of the ELBs that the introduction of psychology assistants in some ELB areas has greatly benefited their psychology services and that all ELBs plan to advertise shortly for educational psychologist vacancies.

### Educational Psychologists

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education to provide a list of services to which (i) an educational psychologist; and (ii) an Assistant Educational Psychologist, can refer children. (AQW 4802/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá tugtha le fios domh ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne go dtiocfadh le síceolaí oideachais páistí a atreorú chuig na seirbhísí tacaíochta cineálaí seo a leanas:-

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards that an educational psychologist could refer children to the following generic support services:-

- behavioural;
- moderate learning difficulties;
- specific learning difficulties/literacy;
- autistic spectrum disorder diagnostic;
- autistic spectrum disorder ;
- social services;
- educational welfare service;
- audiology;
- pre-school;
- speech and language therapy;
- children and adolescent mental health services;
- occupational therapy;
- physiotherapy;
- education other than at school;
- language and communication;
- pupil personal development;
- sensory;
- school medical;
- learning.

Specific services may differ across Boards.

In addition to the above educational psychologists, in all ELBs, play a key role, through the statutory assessment process, in arranging placements in all types of special schools, special units and mainstream schools.

The Boards do not employ assistant educational psychologists. The Southern and Western Education and Library Boards each of these Boards employ 3 psychology assistants who can refer children to the literacy support service. A psychology assistant is employed mainly to screen/test children under the supervision of a senior educational psychologist to ascertain whether they meet criteria for support from the literacy support service.

### Educational Psychologists

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education how many children, who were awaiting an educational psychology assessment, have been assessed by an Assistant Educational Psychologist. (AQW 4803/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní fhostaíonn Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELB) ar bith síceolaí oideachais cúnta. Tugadh le fios dom, áfach, ag Príomhfheidhmeannaí na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne gurb é seo mar a leanas líon na bpáistí a ndearna cúntóir síceolaíochta measúnú orthu:-

None of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) employs assistant educational psychologists. I have, however, been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards that the number of children who have been assessed by a psychology assistant is as follows:-

Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)	0 *
North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB)	0 *
South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)	0 *
Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)	658
Western Education and Library Board (WELB)	643

\* BELB, NEELB and SEELB do not employ psychology assistants.

Since April 2008, 643 children have been tested by a psychology assistant in WELB to ascertain whether they met criteria for literacy support. In the 2007/08 academic year 658 children were assessed by a psychology assistant in SELB again to ascertain whether they met criteria for literacy support. Children in both Board areas were not assessed by a psychology assistant if they were referred for a comprehensive assessment by an educational psychologist.

### Specialist Teaching

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils in grammar schools require specialist teaching. (AQW 4838/09)

**Minister of Education:** Sa bhliain 2007/08, bhí taifead de 2,858 dalta i scoileanna gramadaí a raibh Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais acu.

In 2007/08, 2,858 pupils in grammar schools were recorded as having Special Education Needs.

**Note:**

1. Figure includes pupils at stage 1 – 5 of the SEN Code of Practice.

### Road Safety

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Education what is the North Eastern Education and Library Board doing to improve road safety and parking provision at Lislagan Primary School; and if it is working with other agencies on this initiative. (AQW 4845/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní bhfuair Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt iarrtas ó Lislagan Primary School le déanaí maidir le feabhsúcháin ar áiseanna phairceála. Nuair a bhíonn fadhbanna tráchta ann, oibríonn an Bord i gcónaí le Seirbhís Bóithre an DRD le réiteach na ceiste a fháil.

The North Eastern Education and Library Board has not received a recent request from Lislagan Primary School for improvements to car-parking facilities. Where traffic management problems arise the Board always liaises with DRD Roads Service in seeking to find a resolution.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of civil service staff employed by her Department, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4852/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá an teolas a iarradh sna táblaí thíos:

The information requested is detailed in the tables below:



**CORE DEPARTMENTAL STAFF BY GRADE**

May 2007		January 2009	
Grade	No of Staff	Grade	No of Staff
Permanent Secretary	1	Permanent Secretary	1
Chief Executive (Designate) ESA	1	Chief Executive (Designate) ESA	1
Grade 3	3	Grade 3	3
Grade 5	13	Grade 5	11
Grade 6	57	Grade 6	65
Grade 7	34	Grade 7	33
Deputy Principal	76	Deputy Principal	87
Staff Officer	78	Staff Officer	81
Executive Officer 1	62	Executive Officer 1	56
Executive Officer 2	90	Executive Officer 2	88
Administrative Officer	145	Administrative Officer	144
Administrative Assistant	26	Administrative Assistant	50
Programmer Analyst	7	Programmer Analyst	6
Programmer	5	Programmer	4
Operator	0	Operator	2
Senior Personal Secretary	3	Senior Personal Secretary	3
Personal Secretary	13	Personal Secretary	13
Senior Professional & Technical Officer	1	Senior Professional & Technical Officer	1
Senior Systems Analyst	4	Senior Systems Analyst	1
Systems Analyst	4	Systems Analyst	4
Typist	11	Typist	11
SGB2	8	SGB2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>665</b>

**AGENCY STAFF BY GRADE EQUIVALENT**

May 2007		January 2009	
Grade Equivalent	No of Staff	Grade Equivalent	No of Staff
Accountant	1	Executive Officer	5
Executive Officer	2	Personal Secretary	1
Programmer	1	Administrative Officer	4
Administrative Officer	3	Support Grade Band 2	3
Administrative Assistant	1	Receptionist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

**Capital Infrastructure Projects**

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Education to list all capital infrastructure projects (i) under construction; (ii) in the procurement process; or (iii) to be advertised in this financial year, in the Strangford constituency and to detail the aggregated value of each. (AQW 4898/09)

**Minister of Education:** Níl aon tionscadal mórchaipitil bonneagair á dtógáil faoi láthair i dtoghcheantar Loch Cuan, agus ní bheidh ceann ar bith á fhógairt sa bhliain airgeadais seo ach oiread.

There are no major capital infrastructure projects currently under construction in the Strangford constituency, nor are any to be advertised in this financial year. There are two projects in the procurement process which are expected to be advertised or start on site in the 2009/10 financial year. These are:-

Glastry College, Ballyhalbert – New School Building on an Extended Site.

Total Aggregated Value - £12.5m

St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff – New School Building on Existing Site. Total Aggregated Value - £5.4m

### Pupil Languages

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister of Education the total number of pupils who do not have English as a first language; and to provide a breakdown of these other languages, including the number of pupils within each language category. (AQW 4920/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá freagra na ceiste sa tábla thíos:

The answer is contained in the table below.

#### PUPILS WHO ARE RECORDED AS HAVING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE BROKEN DOWN BY FIRST LANGUAGE – 2007/08

First language	Total
Arabic	63
Bengali	67
Cantonese	465
Chinese (other dialects)	13
Czech	12
Dutch	19
Filipino/Tagalog	354
French	13
German	40
Greek	9
Gujarati	11
Hindi	108
Hungarian	47
Indian (not specified)	30
Italian	19
Japanese	5
Latvian	112
Lithuanian	647
Malaysian	58
Mandarin	72
Malayalam	33

First language	Total
Other	874
Punjabi	55
Pashto	5
Polish	1,850
Portuguese	409
Romanian	38
Russian	55
Slovakian	63
Spanish	39
Thai	9
Turkish	11
Urdu	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,665</b>

Source: Annual school census.

**Notes:**

1. Figures relate to children at nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools.
2. A child with English as an additional language is defined as one for whom English is not their first language and who has significant difficulty with the English language and requires assistance.
3. 'Other' includes cases where the language was not specified and languages where the number of cases was less than 5.

## School Transport

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Education if she would consider changing the criteria in those instances where a bus passes the household of children who have applied for free travel but do not currently qualify due to living within three miles of their destination. (AQW 4936/09)

**Minister of Education:** The current home to school transport policy requires Education and Library Boards to provide a transport service for children who meet the criteria laid down in the arrangements. However, the current policy includes a provision whereby spare seating capacity on Education and Library Board buses may be awarded on a concessionary basis to pupils who are otherwise ineligible to receive school transport assistance.

Is ceist feidhme iomlán don Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ábhartha í ceist an chinnidh faoi thaistil lamháltais a sholáthar do dhaltaí aonair.

The decision regarding whether or not to provide concessionary transport to individual pupils is entirely an operational matter for the relevant Education and Library Board.

Boards will not provide concessionary seats to ineligible pupils who seek to travel beyond their nearest suitable school, as to do so could have a potentially damaging effect on the viability of the nearer school. I have no plans to change the current arrangements.

## Capital Projects

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Education if there are any major capital projects in her Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 4999/09)

**Minister of Education:** Ní fios dom aon mhoill ar thionscadal mórchaipitil ar Chlár na Roinne mar gheall ar easpa maoinithe de thairbhe an chúlaithe airgeadais ná mar gheall ar riaráiste oibre sa tSeirbhís Pleanála.

I am not aware of any major capital projects in the Department's Programme which have been delayed either by lack of finance due to the recession or a backlog of work in Planning Service.

## DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

### Christian Ethos of Stranmillis Teacher Training College

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the Christian ethos of Stranmillis Teacher Training College will remain a distinct identity if it is fully subsumed by Queens University Belfast. (AQW 4436/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey):** My Department has received assurances from the University that there will be no change to the agreed Religious Education curriculum following any proposed merger with Stranmillis University College. The programmes for training Religious Education teachers in the School of Education at Queen's through its PGCE, and at Stranmillis through its Bachelor of Education (BE), prepare a sufficient number of teachers to deliver the agreed curriculum in any school in Northern Ireland. My Department has received assurances that the University will continue to deliver on this commitment should any merger take place.

In June 2008, I also met with representatives of the Transferors Representatives Council to discuss the future of Religious Education provision in the context of a merger between both institutions. The Board of Stranmillis previously had 3 Transferors Representative Council representatives. This ceased to be the case in 2005.

### Learner Access and Engagement Pilot Programme

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning which third party organisations received funding through the 'Learner Access and Engagement Pilot Programme'. (AQW 4599/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Further Education Colleges awarded contracts to third party organisations, for the provision of learner support under the Learner Access and Engagement Pilot programme, on the basis of open competitive tender.

The Department understands that colleges have awarded the following contracts:

Belfast Metropolitan College awarded contracts to the Upper Springfield Development Company Ltd, a consortium which comprises Ashton Community Trust, GEMS NI, Workforce Training Services, Impact Training, and Oasis Caring in Action.

Northern Regional College awarded contracts to the Workers Educational Association (WEA), and FIT NI.

North West Regional College awarded contracts to WEA, FIT NI, Churches Training Company, Dovehouse Community Trust and the Greater Shantallow Area Partnership.

South Eastern Regional College awarded contracts to the Training for Women Network (TWN), a FIT NI led consortium (consisting of FIT NI, RNIB, RNID, USEL, Extern and Gingerbread) and WEA.

Southern Regional College awarded contracts to WEA and the LEAP consortium, which includes Clanrye, RNIB, RNID, USEL, Extern and Gingerbread.

South West College awarded contracts to FIT NI, WEA, TWN and the STEP Training and Learning consortium, which includes South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP), Willowbank, Coalisland Training Services and Customised Training Services.

### Student Grants

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he is aware that students taking Osteopathy as a second degree are unable to get student grants under the Equivalent Lower Qualification; and what steps he is taking to address this issue. (AQW 4604/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** From academic year 2009/10, most new eligible Northern Ireland domiciled students applying for student support for a second full-time, part-time or full-time distance learning course that is equivalent or lower in level than their first Higher Education course will be excluded from further fee and maintenance (grant and loan) support. This will apply if a student has a degree from a UK or overseas institution.

A number of exceptions to this policy will continue to apply to certain categories of students. Eligible students may be entitled to further student support for:

- Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses (fee and maintenance support)
- first degree Bachelor of Education courses (loan for living costs).
- medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, architecture and social work (loan for living costs)
- courses that attract means-tested National Health Service bursaries (reduced rate loan for living costs)

Courses in osteopathy do not fall under any of these exceptions.

In terms of student support, however, this policy change will have a minimal effect on Northern Ireland second degree students as, under the Education (Student Support) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008, students with an honours degree from an institution in the UK or Republic of Ireland are already generally excluded from fee and maintenance (grant and loan) support for a further undergraduate course (previous study rules).

The rationale for applying these rules is to target resources more effectively at those students who have not had a chance to experience higher education and to contribute, therefore, towards widening participation.

### 16-18 Year Olds not in Education, Employment or Training

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what percentage of 16-18 year olds are not in (i) education; (ii) employment; and (iii) training. (AQW 4612/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The latest figures from the July 2007 – June 2008 Labour Force Survey estimate that (i) 27% of 16-18 year olds were not in full-time education<sup>1</sup>; (ii) 70% were not in employment; and (iii) 91% were not in Government employment and training programmes. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive e.g. someone in full-time education may also have a part-time job.

During the same period an estimated 9% of 16-18 year olds were not in full-time education, employment or Government supported training schemes.

<sup>1</sup> Figures exclude those in part-time education or training.

### Helping Unemployed Back to Work

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what efforts his Department is making to help those who are 45 years old and over and unemployed, to get back into work. (AQW 4660/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The comprehensive range of services available through my Department's Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentres and through contracted Providers is designed to help all unemployed clients find work.

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

For those with health problems or disabilities who are keen to find a suitable job, Pathways to Work provides a fresh and innovative approach aimed at providing tailored support for the individual regardless of age.

### Access NI

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he has taken to ensure that candidates applying for jobs, where clearance from Access NI is required, do not have to make multiple payments if they use more than one recruitment agency. (AQW 4693/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The policy in relation to the operation of AccessNI a matter for the Northern Ireland Office. However, it is my understanding that a disclosure certificate can only indicate what is known about any individual at a given point in time. It cannot be regarded as an indicator of future behaviour. For this reason, I am advised that AccessNI disclosures are not portable - they cannot be taken from one post to another, and it is therefore entirely possible that if an individual signs up with a number of recruitment agencies and applies for posts requiring disclosure certificates that a cost will be incurred each time an application is made to AccessNI by a different agency.

The private recruitment sector is governed by the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations (NI) 2005. Under the Regulations, an employment agency may not introduce or supply a work-seeker to a hirer unless it has obtained confirmation that the work-seeker has any authorisation which the hirer considers is necessary, or which is required by law, to work in the position the hirer seeks to fill. This may include an Access NI check. When a work-seeker applies for a post through an employment agency, the Access NI check relates to the vacancy the agency is proposing to fill so it is possible that a check will be required for every vacancy applied for, and each check will be subject to a fee. It is a matter to be decided between the agency and the work seeker or hirer as to who pays for the checks.

The Regulations state that, on the first occasion that an agency offers to arrange the provision of a service, the agency shall provide the work-seeker with a notice detailing any charges or fees payable by the work-seeker in respect of that service. The work-seeker therefore has the opportunity to agree with the agency who will pay the Access NI fee. The Department's employment agency inspectors enforce the regulations to ensure compliance with all aspects of employment agency legislation (including in relation to the fair administration of charges to work-seekers) and will take appropriate advisory or legal action where necessary.

My Department, via Jobs and Benefits Offices will consider reimbursing an individual for the costs of vetting checks in circumstances where they need the clearance to be able to take up an offer of employment, in other words to remove an immediate barrier to work.

### Super Colleges

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) the cost to his Department of all redundancies in the FE sector following the restructuring and creation of the six 'super colleges'; and (ii) how many redundancies were made and the cost in saving to his Department, per 'super college'. (AQW 4720/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The number of redundancies in the FE sector following the creation of the six new FE colleges on 1 August 2007, and the associated cost and annual savings per college, are provided in the Table below. The redundancies include teaching and non-teaching staff.

College	Total No. of redundancies	Cost to the College	Annual savings
Belfast Metropolitan College	64	£4,800,000.00	£3,200,000.00
North West Regional College	25	£1,720,007.20	£1,205,129.10
South Eastern Regional College	65	£4,395,000.00	£2,361,000.00
Northern Regional College	23	£1,797,574.00	£1,246,189.00
Southern Regional College	30	£2,854,581.63	£1,261,390.00
South West College	41	£2,188,000.00	£1,460,000.00

### Irish Language

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many lecturers teach Irish language courses in further education colleges. (AQW 4805/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** At present, there are 18 lecturers teaching Irish language courses in Northern Ireland's six Further Education colleges. The number of lecturers will vary depending on demand in any given year.

### Consultation on Vocational Qualifications

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department's consultation on vocational qualifications is intended to bring regulatory practices into line with those in England and Wales. (AQW 4821/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** QCA has been regulating National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Northern Ireland since they were introduced and legislation is currently progressing to extend this remit in Northern Ireland to all vocational qualifications. DEL's consultation on the new regulatory arrangements for Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland was with the view of moving forward together with its counterparts in England and Wales.

### Further Education Rationalisation Strategy

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why his Department has endorsed college policy to re-employ college lecturers made redundant as part of the Further Education rationalisation strategy; and to detail the benefits of this action and how it assists his Department's strategy to reduce unemployment among job seekers. (AQW 4888/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** My Department has not endorsed this policy. There is no legal impediment to the re-employment of prematurely retired lecturers, however, as a general principle, my Department does not encourage this practice, in view of the significant pension and compensation costs that may have been incurred already.

It is a matter for colleges to determine their staffing requirements to meet their business needs. The Department has been assured by the colleges that adopted this approach that any re-employment of prematurely retired lecturers has been on a short-term, temporary basis to meet immediate business needs.

The Department of Education (DE), which administers the Teachers' Pensions Scheme, is currently exploring options for further restrictions on the re-employment of prematurely retired teachers and lecturers, taking into account possible legal and equality issues which might arise from any potential new measures. My Department is fully supportive of DE's actions in this regard.

### Capital Infrastructure Projects

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list all capital infrastructure projects (i) under construction; (ii) in the procurement process; or (iii) to be advertised in this financial year, in the Strangford constituency and to detail the aggregated value of each. (AQW 4899/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The Department for Employment and Learning has one capital infrastructure project, value £4.85m, under construction in the Strangford constituency. The project is in the further education sector, at the Newtownards campus of the South Eastern Regional College. There are no further projects in procurement or due to be advertised in this financial year.

### Departmental Staff

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of staff employed by his Department, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4902/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The number of staff employed by the Department for Employment and Learning by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009 was as follows:

#### CORE DEPARTMENT

Grade (and Analogous grades)	May 2007	January 2009
Permanent Secretary	1	1

Grade (and Analogous grades)	May 2007	January 2009
Under Secretary	2	2
Grade 5	6	6
Grade 6	6	5
Grade 7	37	40
Deputy Principal	97	106
Staff Officer	168	183
EO1	317	315
EO2	497	564
AO	538	572
AA	92	73
SGB 1	1	0
SGB 2	8	6
Industrial band 10	1	0
Casual AA	25	44
Casual SGB2	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1801</b>	<b>1923</b>

**AGENCY WORKERS**

Personal Secretary	1	0
DP Accountants	0	1
SO Accountants	1	2
SGB 2	0	1
AO	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

**Capital Projects**

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if there are any major capital projects in his Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 5000/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Funding availability and a request for revised terms has caused a delay in achieving contract closure in the Belfast Metropolitan College PPP campus development. It is however anticipated that these issues will be overcome in this financial year.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT****Attracting Tourists to the North Coast**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to attract tourists to the North Coast. (AQW 4513/09)



**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) promotes Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland markets. This is achieved by extensive marketing activity throughout the year with the Causeway Coast as one of our key attractions. In 2009, NITB will launch an extensive spring campaign in February in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with further campaigns to follow later in the year.

NITB also works in partnership with and provides business and financial assistance to the Causeway Coast and Glens Regional Tourism Partnership (CCGRTP) which has responsibility for marketing, product development and visitor servicing for its region.

Tourism Ireland works in close collaboration with NITB and CCGRPT to showcase and promote the Causeway Coast and the Glens as a must-see holiday destination in Great Britain and overseas. The Giants Causeway has featured prominently in Tourism Ireland's global television advertising campaigns in markets across the world aimed at general consumers. Tourism Ireland activity includes targeted television, radio and print campaigns in key overseas markets, overseas media and trade visits to the Causeway Coast and Glens and Tourism Ireland and Causeway Coast and Glens presence at overseas travel and trade events.

From a development perspective the North Coast is part of the Causeway Coast and Glens Signature Project, one strand of which is the Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan which provides the overarching tourism strategy for the area. A key project of the Masterplan was the development of the Causeway Coastal Route which was launched in July 2007 and which is designed to encourage visitors to move safely and comfortably beyond the iconic Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site (WHS) to other rural and coastal areas, which can then enjoy the associated economic and social tourism benefits. Development of this area is on-going.

### Business Start-ups in North Down

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much financial assistance was given to business start-ups in the North Down constituency, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4523/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** During the period 2003/04 to 2007/08 Invest NI directly offered assistance to 17 new locally-owned businesses in the North Down Parliamentary Constituency Area. These businesses have the potential for significant growth, primarily through the development of markets outside Northern Ireland.

In addition, 659 offers were made to individuals intending to set up a business with a focus on the local market. Most of these were assisted indirectly through the Start A Business programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland.

These 676 offers amounted to £1.2m of assistance during the 5 year period. Table 1 below shows the number of offers approved in the area and the corresponding amount of assistance offered in each year.

**TABLE 1: INVEST NI OFFERS APPROVED TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESS STARTS IN NORTH DOWN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA (2003/04 – 2007/08)**

Year of Offer	No of Offers	Total Assistance (£)
2003/04	157	231,955
2004/05	160	301,573
2005/06	148	404,606
2006/07	112	62,200
2007/08	99	182,315
<b>Total</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>1,182,649</b>

### Ulster Scots Academy

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much money her Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4545/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

- (i) NITB has not made any money available to the Ulster Scots Academy.
- (ii) In 2007 NITB produced and distributed over 25,000 copies of 'Northern Ireland: The American Connection' publication which outlines the migration of the Ulster Scots community to North America and highlights the Ulster presidential connections and trail. The publication was reprinted specifically for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2007, at a cost of £13,000.

**New Greyhound Track and Four Star Hotel in Ballymoney**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment on whether a new greyhound track and four star hotel in Ballymoney would help improve the tourist attraction of the North Coast. (AQW 4610/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The North Coast region is part of the Causeway Coast and Glens Signature Project area, one strand of which is the Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan. This provides the overarching tourism strategy for the area. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board welcomes product development initiatives that will improve or enhance the visitor experience. These should be in line with the product development priorities highlighted in NITB's Draft Corporate Plan (2008 – 2011).

Greyhound racing has not been identified within either the Signature Project Area Masterplan or the product development portfolio. However, NITB is always keen to see the provision of high quality, well designed and managed tourist accommodation that meets or exceeds modern visitor expectations.

Proposals must be based on a sound business plan which includes an assessment based on market analysis.

**Households in which No-one is Working**

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for the percentage of households in which no-one is working. (AQW 4615/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** At April – June 2008, the Labour Force Survey estimated there were 692,000 households<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland. Of these, an estimated 33.6% had no-one in employment (the equivalent UK figure was 34.9%).

<sup>1</sup> This analysis is based on all households and will therefore include households consisting solely of persons who are past retirement age.

**Hibernia Atlantic Telehouse Facility in Coleraine**

**Ms M Anderson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she received any political representation from her party colleagues in relation to the siting of the Hibernia Atlantic telehouse facility in Coleraine and, if so, if the decision to locate in Coleraine, as opposed to Derry/Londonderry, was taken after receiving this representation. (AQW 4641/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** I did not receive any political representation from my party colleagues in relation to the siting of the telehouse facility that forms part of Project Kelvin. The decision to locate the facility in Coleraine was taken by Hibernia Atlantic and submitted in its tender for the Project.

**Attracting Investment to Upper Bann**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her efforts to attract investment to the Upper Bann constituency. (AQW 4659/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** In the last 12 months, Invest NI facilitated 6 visits by potential investors to the Upper Bann constituency.

Whilst Invest NI is concerned to see a spread of investment across the region its role is to promote Northern Ireland as an entity. Ultimately the location decision rests with the investor. If the investor seeks information on specific areas within Northern Ireland then Invest NI will work with the local stakeholders to best promote the area.

In promoting Northern Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland's sales message is based on Skills, Competitive Costs and Excellent Infrastructure.

### Project Kelvin

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the process for selecting the locations for the hubs to be connected with the new international telecommunications infrastructure as part of Project Kelvin. (AQW 4661/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The contract for Project Kelvin was awarded on the basis of an open procurement. The invitation to tender for the project specified that direct access to the infrastructure had to be available at three locations – Londonderry, Letterkenny and Monaghan. However, it also encouraged bidders to add additional access points across Northern Ireland and border county regions and the evaluation process gave credit for the number of these additional access points.

The contract was awarded to Hibernia Atlantic who indicated that they would provide an additional ten locations - Armagh, Belfast, Ballymena, Coleraine, Omagh, Portadown, Strabane, Castleblayney, Dundalk and Drogheda.

### Project Kelvin

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment the reasons why no location within County Fermanagh was selected as a location for a hub to connect with the new international telecommunications infrastructure as part of Project Kelvin. (AQW 4662/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The invitation to tender for Project Kelvin specified only three mandatory locations for direct access to the infrastructure – Londonderry, Letterkenny and Monaghan. However, it encouraged bidders to add additional access points across Northern Ireland and border county regions and the evaluation process gave credit for the number of these additional access points. The location of any additional access points was a decision for tenderers.

The contract was awarded to Hibernia Atlantic who indicated that they would provide an additional ten locations - Armagh, Belfast, Ballymena, Coleraine, Omagh, Portadown, Strabane, Castleblayney, Dundalk and Drogheda.

My Department and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Ireland) have already worked together on a number of cross border projects. DCENR have engaged consultants to perform a technical and economic feasibility study to establish if further joint DETI/DCENR projects are needed to improve telecommunications in the border region. The Fermanagh – Leitrim border area is included in this study. The report will be finalised shortly and I will consider the recommendations in due course.

### Former Army Barracks at Ballykelly

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she would consider developing the former army barracks at Ballykelly as a centre and hub for industry, trade and commerce for the creation of new employment; and to make a statement. (AQW 4691/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** My department has no plans to develop the former army barracks at Ballykelly.

Invest NI's current available landholding in the surrounding areas of Londonderry, Limavady and Coleraine (174 acres) is considered sufficient for the medium to long term needs of its client companies in the North West. There is also significant private sector industrial landholding in the area.

### Small and Medium Sized Businesses

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 373/09, what support and assistance was given to small and medium sized businesses in the Foyle constituency. (AQW 4710/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The number of offers made by Invest NI to small and medium sized businesses in the Foyle Parliamentary Constituency Area in each of the last 5 years is set out in the table below. The table also provides details of the £21.66m of assistance offered to these projects.

In addition to the support provided directly by Invest NI, 1,299 offers were made through the Start A Business Programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland. These projects were offered assistance of £686,000, details of which are also set out in the table.

#### INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED BUSINESSES WITHIN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY (2003/04 - 2007/08)

Year	Invest NI Direct Support		Start A Business Programme	
	No of Offers	Total Assistance Offered £000	No of Offers	Total Assistance Offered £000
2003/04	211	3,308	200	144
2004/05	211	4,875	353	240
2005/06	146	7,716	250	110
2006/07	157	3,390	221	84
2007/08	124	2,365	275	107
<b>Total</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>21,656</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>686</b>

Notes: Table totals may not add due to rounding.

### Reconnect Scheme

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of grants paid out under the Reconnect scheme; (ii) any payments still outstanding; and (iii) the number of applicants who were not offered a grant. (AQW 4724/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** In relation to your queries on the Reconnect scheme I can advise:-

- (i) 4220 grants have been paid;
- (ii) 13 claims for payment are still outstanding;
- (iii) 3,200 applicants were not offered grant.

### Presbyterian Mutual Society

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance she is providing to those with investments in the Presbyterian Mutual Society. (AQW 4733/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** At its meeting on 15th January 2009, the Executive considered the Presbyterian Mutual Society and it was agreed that the First Minister and deputy First Minister would seek to raise with the Prime Minister the issue of help to the members of the Society and to impress upon him that the UK Government provide support in terms of depositor protection.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister wrote on 26th January 2009 to the Prime Minister requesting a meeting and it is hoped that this will be arranged as soon as possible.

### Specialist Debt Advisers

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many Specialist Debt Advisers her Department funds in each parliamentary constituency. (AQW 4756/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** My Department is funding the provision of a free face to face debt advice service with advisers based in 11 parliamentary constituencies.

Name of Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Advisers
Belfast East	1
Belfast South	2
Belfast West	2
East Londonderry	1
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1
Foyle	3
Mid Ulster	1
Newry and Armagh	1
South Antrim	1
Upper Bann	1
West Tyrone	1

### Small Business Growth

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if small business growth is a priority for her Department. (AQW 4772/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** My Department remains fully committed to the growth and development of Northern Ireland's small business base. In particular, our focus is on helping these businesses achieve the scale necessary to compete effectively in global markets and thereby make a significant contribution to the greater wealth and economic strength of Northern Ireland.

This commitment to our small businesses is evident from the wide range of targets contained within the Programme for Government. These include, encouraging first time exporters, supporting companies to diversify into new markets, supporting the establishment of new business starts with an export or global focus, working with existing Invest NI client companies whose investment plans demonstrate increasing productivity and promoting growth projects from locally-owned clients.

Invest NI also continues to develop new schemes of support such as the Growth Accelerator Programme and the Accelerated Support Fund which are focused on encouraging business starts and assisting them to maximise opportunities. Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, Invest NI offered start-up assistance to 18,817 locally-owned businesses and individuals. Of these new businesses, 493 were supported because of their potential for significant growth, primarily through the development of markets outside Northern Ireland.

### Invest NI

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many visits have been made by potential inward investors, facilitated by Invest NI, to each constituency in the last 12 month period for which figures are available; and how many jobs have been created as a result of these visits. (AQW 4863/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Invest NI's role is to promote Northern Ireland as an attractive and viable location for new inward investment opportunities.

Invest NI promotes all constituencies to potential investors on an impartial basis. Invest NI does not determine locations for visits for a potential investor and the decision for the final location for investment is taken by the investor.

In the last 12 months, Invest NI facilitated 153 visits made by 126 companies. These potential investors visited the following constituencies during their stay in Northern Ireland:

Constituency	No. of Visits
Belfast North	10
Belfast East	89
Belfast South	95
Belfast West	13
East Antrim	5
Mid Ulster	3
North Down	44
South Antrim	14
Foyle	7
Lagan Valley	43
Newry and Armagh	4
Upper Bann	6
West Tyrone	3
Strangford	1
East Londonderry	2
South Down	1

The following investment projects were secured in the last 12 months:

- Belfast South: 6 projects, promoting 250 jobs.
- Belfast East: 3 projects, promoting 98 jobs.
- Newry and Armagh: 2 projects, promoting 157 jobs.
- North Down: 2 projects, promoting 91 jobs.

In addition, the following expansion projects from existing investors were secured:

- Belfast South: 1 project, promoting 30 jobs.
- East Derry: 2 projects, promoting 420 jobs.

### Programme for Government

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what risk assessment she has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4884/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Programme for Government (PfG) and DETI's Corporate Plan (2008 -2011) indicate that targets were framed in the context of the then predicted economic downturn. The documents also explained that targets will be continually tracked and monitored against changing markets and, where appropriate, amended over the PfG period.

As part of this process, my Department has implemented 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 and they continue to be used to identify areas of concern and where remedial action may be required. In addition, I have also asked the Independent Review Panel to provide an assessment of my Department's economic goals and targets as outlined in the PFG.

It should be noted that 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 certain targets for 2009/10 and 2010/11 will need to be carefully monitored and kept under review.

### Departmental Staff

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of staff employed by her Department, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4903/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Number of staff employed in DETI by (i) grade & (ii) core departmental staff

Grade	May 2007	January 2009
Industrial Band 10	2	0
Admin Assistant	39	30
SGB2 Watchperson/Cleaner	6	4
Support grade Band 2	9	6
SGB 2 Security Guard	3	3
Typist	7	7
Admin Officer	131	113
Supp Grade Security Guard	2	2
Support Grade Band 1	1	0
TSS Tech Grade 2	6	6
Executive Officer 2	69	85
Programmer	7	0
ICT Level 3	0	5
Typing Manager	1	0
Senior Personal Secretary	2	1
Personal Secretary	6	4
Executive Officer 1	67	53
Higher Instructional Officer	1	1
Assistant Info Officer	0	1
Mapping & Charting Officer	1	1
ICT Level 4	0	3
Assistant Librarian	0	1
Programmer/Analyst	4	0
Trading Standards Inspector	15	10
Staff Officer	57	58
Staff Officer (Accountant)	7	8
Auditor (SO) MIIA or BATS	4	5
Auditor (SO) MIIA & BATS	2	1
Asst Economist	4	3

Grade	May 2007	January 2009
Fire Officer	1	0
Information Officer	0	1
Librarian	2	1
Systems Analyst	5	0
ICT Level 5	0	2
Area Inspector	6	8
Deputy Principal	49	55
Accountant DP	10	12
Auditor DP MIIA or BATS	2	2
Auditor DP MIIA & BATS	1	1
Deputy Economist	1	4
Deputy Principal Info Officer	2	1
Senior Scientific Officer	1	0
ICT Level 6	0	1
Senior Systems Analyst	1	0
Dep CHF Trading Stnd Officer	1	2
Principal (G7)	28	24
Accountant Grade 7	1	2
Development Executive	1	0
Principal Economist (G7)	1	2
CH Inspt Trading Standards (G7)	1	1
Principal Information Officer (G7)	0	1
Senior Principal (G6)	1	1
ICT Level 7	0	1
SP Economist (G6)	1	1
Assistant Secretary (G5)	6	6
Under Secretary (G3)	2	2
Special Adviser	0	1
Permanent Secretary (G2A)	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>544</b>

(iii) Numbers of Agency workers employed at May 2007 & January 2009 – NIL

### Project Kelvin

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if there were technical, cost or engineering reasons for the decision to locate the Project Kelvin Broadband Cable at Portrush rather than Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 4947/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The main reasons for the contractor selecting Portrush for the submarine cable landing point are environmental. There were also technical and commercial considerations, for example, the distance from the existing Hibernia North submarine cable and topography of the seabed.



Londonderry will have a fibre optic cable connecting it to the submarine cable, as will seven other locations in Northern Ireland.

### Capital Projects

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if there are any major capital projects in her Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 5001/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, including its Non Departmental Public Bodies, does not have any major capital projects which were due to commence in the current financial year but have been delayed either by lack of finance due to the recession; or a backlog of work in Planning Service.

### Economic Downturn

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the current economic downturn is having on Northern Ireland's per capita GDP; and the impact she projects for the next two years. (AQO 2031/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Last week my Department released its Quarterly Economic Review detailing our latest assessment of the impact of the economic downturn, both globally and in Northern Ireland.

Recent estimates suggest that Northern Ireland's output may contract by 1.6% in 2009. In addition, certain independent forecasters are suggesting that the local economy may return to marginal growth in 2010.

Output, GVA, per head, is a broad measure of economic prosperity and Northern Ireland has remained at or around 81% of the UK average. Recent forecasts estimate that this will remain largely the same during the downturn.

### Enterprise Guarantee Scheme

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of how the Enterprise Guarantee Scheme is helping small and medium size businesses to offset job losses and business closures. (AQO 2032/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Enterprise Finance Guarantee was part of a package of financial measures announced by the UK Government on 14 January 2009 designed to address the cash flow, credit and investment needs of small and medium businesses.

The Scheme is available through a number of high-street banks. Its delivery, in particular decisions on the approval or rejection of proposals, is a matter for the participating lenders and, as such, I have no specific evidence of the uptake of the scheme so far.

As you will appreciate, as the scheme has only been operational for a few weeks it will take time to before its impact is determined.

In respect of Invest NI's clients, which represent only a small proportion of NI's overall business base, several have indicated their intention to pursue an application with the relevant lender and Invest NI will monitor their progress in this respect.

### Accessing Credit

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the ability of companies to access credit for investment; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure that companies are able to access credit over the coming months. (AQO 2033/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** There is no doubt that accessing credit has become much more difficult as banks seek to restructure their risk profile. Through discussions with Invest NI, and directly with their clients, I'm aware that an increasing number are experiencing difficulties in securing affordable credit to allow them to undertake investment and development projects.

The worrying aspect of this trend is that even viable and profitable businesses are facing more onerous credit arrangements which, in turn, are putting increasing pressure on their working capital and competitiveness.

In December, I, along with the First and deputy First Ministers and the Minister for Finance and Personnel, met the Chief Executives of the four main banks in Northern Ireland to discuss the general state of the local financial sector and lending policies to consumers and businesses.

I intend to meet with the four local banks again in the near future to discuss a number of issues including progress in participating in the UK-wide package of finance measures announced in January 2009 to meet the needs of the changing economic environment and address the cash flow, credit and capital needs of businesses. I will particularly encourage them to maximise the potential offered by the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme

### Inward Investment

**Mr S Neeson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an assessment of her Department's plans to make Northern Ireland attractive to inward investment. (AQO 2034/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Northern Ireland is an attractive location for inward investment. Its selling messages continue to be based on access to skills, competitive operating costs and an excellent infrastructure.

Since 2002 Invest NI has offered assistance of £253 million to 199 inward investment projects, contributing towards £1.3 billion of planned investment and promoting almost 16,000 new jobs whilst safeguarding nearly 12,000 existing jobs.

This year inward investment activity levels have remained encouraging high particularly during the first half of the year, primarily due to the goodwill that flowed from the US/NI Conference in May 2008. Follow-up to the conference continues but following the financial turmoil which began last autumn, and global economic conditions Invest NI is seeing growing uncertainty and caution in the FDI market and companies are beginning to significantly tighten their belts. Companies are increasingly focusing on cost containment and indicating they are deferring investment decisions. As a result the early-stage pipeline of new FDI prospects is significantly reduced in comparison to the same point last year.

Despite the current economic conditions, Invest NI is working towards meeting the challenging 2008-09 inward visit, investment project and employment targets.

### Job Creation

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what is her Department's projected total figure for (i) job losses; and (ii) job creation, over each of the next three years. (AQO 2035/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** As part of working with the Economic Development Forum, my Department commissioned updated economic forecasts on a range of variables, including net job losses. The latest forecast suggests that net job losses in 2009 could be in the region of 14,000, with further losses expected in 2010, albeit at a lower level.

However, it should be recognised that, given the rapidly changing global economic conditions, these forecasts are subject to change. In that light, I have asked to be provided with updated economic forecasts as they become available. I expect to discuss the latest forecasts when I chair the Economic Development Forum meeting on Thursday

I would also stress that I continue to do all that I can to promote job creation opportunities in Northern Ireland. For example, I recently announced the creation of 132 new consultancy positions and 10 new managerial positions in the Newry-based consultancy and software solutions company, First Derivatives. This investment, with financial support from Invest NI, will generate an additional £11.6million in salaries over the next two years.

## Renewable Technologies

**Mr T Gallagher** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what target her Department has set for the number of jobs to be created in the development and production of renewable technologies over the next ten years; and what steps are being taken, along with the Department for Employment and Learning, to ensure that the necessary capabilities will be in place to enable such development and production. (AQO 2038/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** My Department has not set a target for jobs created over the next 10 years in respect of the development and production of renewable technologies.

Nonetheless, the Energy and Environmental sector in Northern Ireland has experienced strong growth in recent years and I am confident that it will offer many opportunities for business in the areas of design, installation and the manufacture of component parts.

There is huge potential for the creation of 'green jobs' in the region, which has already demonstrated its ability to pioneer new technologies with the successful Sea Gen project, located in Strangford Lough.

My Department, including Invest NI, is actively engaged with the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK Renewables and the UK Renewables Deployment Group in the targeting of renewables as a growth sector. Invest NI is also developing a strategy to maximise the potential economic benefits of the Energy and Environmental sector targeted for completion by the end of 2009.

Now is the right time to encourage investment in renewable technologies for the future. My Department will be consulting shortly on a new Strategic Energy Framework. This will include a focus on renewable technologies and how they can help deliver security and diversity of energy supply, address climate change and create local employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the recently established Inter-Departmental Working Group on Sustainable Energy, which I chair, has agreed to set up a sub-group looking specifically at opportunities for 'green jobs' and skills development within Northern Ireland.

## Northern Ireland Tourist Board

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is doing to attract visitors from the Republic of Ireland. (AQO 2039/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board had a calendar of activity during 2008 that ensured exposure for Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland throughout the whole year, and 2009 will be equally intense.

In 2008 NITB focused on awareness campaigns to challenge directly some of the barriers that research had identified - for example that Republic of Ireland residents would consider a break to Northern Ireland but lacked awareness of things to see and do.

The Spring campaign consisted of generic Northern Ireland advertising along with a series of regional advertorials which concentrated on specific activities and attractions.

The Summer campaign targeted international visitors to the Republic of Ireland to encourage them either to take a trip to Northern Ireland during their stay or to extend any planned trip here.

As well as traditional advertising, NITB used a number of innovative methods to get the message across to consumers. These included a mobile Tourist information centre in the form of a Winnebago which covered all the major events in the Republic of Ireland throughout the summer and afforded a real opportunity to meet prospective consumers face to face.

The Autumn 2008 campaign in both Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland used new creative designs to encourage customers to 'explore more' in Northern Ireland, promoting the sense of the 'undiscovered' and the uniqueness of Northern Ireland.

In 2009, NITB will launch an extensive Spring campaign at the beginning of February in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The campaign will use two new TV adverts as well as press advertising, outdoor, on-line and PR, and will continue the development of the new creative designs. There are also plans to carry out face to face promotion through shopping centre promotions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern

Ireland border areas to encourage Republic of Ireland residents who are already coming to Northern Ireland for the day to shop, to extend their stay and take a short break. Exploiting the euro / sterling rate will be a key priority.

Thereafter NITB is developing plans for a summer Gateway campaign and an autumn campaign to ensure consistent exposure for the Northern Ireland product in the Republic of Ireland.

### Value of Trade Coming into Northern Ireland

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what is the estimated total annual value of trade coming into Northern Ireland as a result of shopping by visitors from the Republic of Ireland.

(AQO 2041/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Information on the total annual value of trade coming into Northern Ireland as a result of shopping by visitors from the Republic of Ireland is not collected via any DETI survey and therefore relevant figures are not available.

My Department does, however, continue to promote Northern Ireland as a key shopping destination. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board had a calendar of activity during 2008 that ensured exposure for Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland throughout the whole year, and 2009 will be equally intense.

In 2009, NITB will launch an extensive Spring campaign at the beginning of February in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The campaign will use two new TV adverts as well as press advertising, outdoor, on-line and PR, and will continue the development of the new creative designs. There are also plans to carry out face to face promotion through shopping centre promotions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland border areas to encourage Republic of Ireland residents who are already coming to Northern Ireland for the day to shop, to extend their stay and take a short break. Exploiting the euro / sterling rate will be a key priority.

NITB is developing plans for a summer Gateway campaign and an autumn campaign to ensure consistent exposure for the Northern Ireland product in the Republic of Ireland.

### Social Economy

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the importance of the social economy, given the current economic downturn.

(AQO 2042/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Government values the distinctive role played by social economy enterprises in NI arising from their social and economic objectives, and their impact on local communities and particularly disadvantaged people, groups and disadvantaged areas.

In recognising the importance of the sector, my Department led the development of the Executive's cross-departmental strategy entitled "Developing a Successful Social Economy". We are currently finalising the follow-up to that strategy, working closely with the sector and other key stakeholders with a role to play in supporting its development. Given the cross departmental nature of the strategy, the ETI Committee is currently consulting with other relevant Departmental Committees.

The new strategy will continue the Executive's commitment to three strategic objectives – to increase awareness of the sector, develop its business strength and provide a supportive environment in which it can prosper. These continue to be relevant even in the current economic downturn.

We plan to put the strategy out to public consultation in Spring 2009.

The development of a strong and sustainable Social Economy Network, acting on behalf of the sector, is a key element in the Executive's strategy to develop the sector in Northern Ireland. My Department currently supports the development of the Network with a grant totalling £600,000 for the 4 year period up to 2011.

## Local Businesses

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what measures she is taking to support local businesses, including small businesses, in the current economic downturn, and what relevant representations are being made to other Departments. (AQO 2043/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** There are a number of initiatives underway to assist businesses during the downturn. Along with the Finance Minister, I met representatives of the local banks in December 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.

Invest NI has also developed a programme of initiatives designed to enable its clients to tackle the impact of a sustained economic downturn. At the end of September 2008, I launched Invest NI's £5 million 'Accelerated Support Fund' which can make fast track advice and assistance available to client companies to help them respond to the effects of the downturn.

Since the end of September we have held nine seminars on the theme of "Navigating through Challenging Times". These have attracted over 600 attendees from 460 Client Companies.

Participants at these events have the opportunity to discuss their individual business needs in detail and identify key projects to improve performance. This can result in the provision of up to five days of free specialist consultancy support for a diagnostic investigation to develop actions that can deliver significant benefits and help firms through the downturn. Where suitable projects are then identified clients can then obtain 50% support from the Accelerated Support Fund.

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. The website provides practical tools and guides on key business activities such as managing finances and securing extra sales. And, in partnership with Enterprise NI, District Councils and the NI Chamber of Commerce, we are now rolling out a programme of business information seminars specifically focused at non Invest NI clients having held five seminars to date with a further five scheduled for this month.

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 £3.2million funding under this scheme, and 95 free energy efficiency surveys completed.

As you know, the Start a Business Programme has now been operating for approximately nine months without grant and while there has been some reduction in the numbers coming forward, it is very difficult to say whether this is due to the absence of grant per se or the wider economic climate. However, I am keen that we monitor the impact of grant withdrawal on an ongoing basis, particularly given the rapidly changing economic climate. To this end, Invest NI has commissioned KPMG and Oxford Economics to carry out an independent review of the evidence to date and also to seek the views of clients that have dropped out of the programme over the past nine months. I hope to have this report by the end of this month, which I will share with you thereafter.

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.

## Giant's Causeway Project

**Rev Dr R Coulter** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Giant's Causeway project. (AQO 2044/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** I welcome the announcement that the Minister for the Environment has granted planning approval for the National Trust's proposals for a new visitor centre at the Causeway.

I would hope that the National Trust can now move forward in developing the centre and meet their target for opening in 2011.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Coastal Communities

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister of the Environment what his plans are to implement European Union planning policies that are intended to sustain coastal communities. (AQW 4108/09)

**Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson):** There are no European Union planning policies on this matter.

### Planning Policy Statement 21

**Mr J Wells** asked the Minister of the Environment what the differences are between Policy CTY6 in Draft Planning Policy Statement 21 and the equivalent policy in the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland. (AQW 4280/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** There are no salient differences between Policy CTY 6 of Draft PPS 21 and the equivalent policy (HOU 12) in the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland. The amplification text with this policy does however set out the type of information an applicant may wish to submit in support of a planning application made under this policy provision.

### Divisional Planning Offices

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW 2993/09, if Divisional Planning Offices have a legal duty to refuse applications for housing development, specifically where it is an extension to a home that would be too close to overhead electricity cables. (AQW 4385/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** My Department is duly bound to process each planning application on its individual merits. My Department's guiding principle in determining applications is that 'development should be permitted, having regard to the development plan and all material considerations, unless the proposed development will cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance' (PPS 1: General Principles, Paragraph 59). The Planning Service has no legal duty to refuse applications for housing development including where it is an extension to a home close to overhead electricity cables.

My Department ensures that Northern Ireland Electricity plc (NIE) is consulted on all individual planning applications on land crossed by existing overhead power lines. NIE will provide advice on operational safe clearances for development proposals.

### Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment whether all planning applications that add to the capacity of storm and foul sewers in Newcastle are to be put on hold, at the request of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. (AQW 4463/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Planning Service have not put all planning applications that add to the capacity of foul and storm sewers in Newcastle on hold. However, some applications are still under consideration pending further discussions between Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Northern Ireland Water (NIW).

Whether or not a planning application should be granted approval is solely a matter for Planning Service. However, recommendations and decisions are guided by the advice from our consultees such as Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Northern Ireland Water (NIW).

### Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment why the Northern Ireland Environment Agency failed to consult with elected representatives and Planning Service prior to their announcement of Tuesday 20th January 2009. (AQW 4464/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) did not make an announcement on 20 January 2009 but has been expressing concern over further development in Newcastle to Planning Service since 2006. It recommended to Planning Service in February 2008 that all future development in Newcastle be refused until the Waste Water Treatment Works and sewer network upgrades were in place, but decisions on planning applications are, however, a matter for Planning Service.

### Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment when the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 will be adopted. (AQW 4485/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) was published in November 2004. The Public Inquiry commenced in April 2007 and concluded in May 2008.

The PAC is currently considering all the information before it prior to completing its report and making its recommendations to the Department. The PAC has indicated a preliminary timescale for delivery of the report to Planning Service as early summer 2010. However, the Commission would hope to be in a position to announce a firmer timescale later this year. Any review of timescales undertaken by the PAC may advance the Report or elements of the Report.

Upon receipt of the report, Planning Service will consider the recommendations of the PAC and prepare the Plan for adoption.

In October 2008, the Department wrote to the PAC and requested the early release of that part of the BMAP Report relating to strategic retail issues, including Sprucefield. The PAC took the view that this was a discrete issue and, as the public sessions of the Inquiry were complete, it could comply with the Department's request. The Commission issued the report to the Department on 21 January 2009. It is anticipated that this report will be made available to the public when the Minister has made a decision on the process to be followed in respect of Sprucefield.

### George Best Belfast City Airport

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment if he has held any discussions with the management of the George Best Belfast City Airport on the proposed extension of the runway. (AQW 4486/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I have held no discussions with the management of the George Best Belfast City Airport on the proposed extension of the runway.

### Hydro Turbines

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 3807/09, to detail the locations of the seven hydro turbines. (AQW 4496/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The locations of the 7 planning applications received by my Department for hydro-electric turbines between 1st April 2002 and 30th September 2008 are as follows:

1. X/2005/0786/F – Glenvale Conservation, Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards, Co Down
2. E/2006/0396/F – Salmon Leap, accessed through Ballyness Park, Bushmills, Co Antrim
3. R/2006/0705/F – Viewpoint, Glen River, 65m north east of 7 King Street, Newcastle, Co Down
4. J/2007/0072/F – 190m south east of 26 Letterbratt Road, Plumbridge, Co Tyrone
5. K/2007/0035/F – Land adjacent to the Camown River in Stranamullagh Recreation Area, Omagh, Co Tyrone
6. Q/2007/0758/F – Hazelbank Mill, Lawrencetown, Banbridge, Co Down
7. B/2008/0324/F – Site adjacent to the flood bank of Tircreven Burn, running 500m downstream and 900m upstream of the point Tircreven Burn crosses the Duncurn Road, Limavady, Co Londonderry

### Applications for Enforcement Action

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment how many applications for enforcement action are still outstanding in the North Down constituency. (AQW 4520/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** At present there are 236 live enforcement cases in the North Down constituency.

### Greenbelt Foundation

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of the Environment the legal status of maintenance agreements entered into by residents of housing developments with the Greenbelt Foundation given that, the company is not (i) a charitable trust registered by the Charity Commission; nor (ii) a management company supported by such a trust as required in Planning Service's Planning Policy Statement 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation; and how his Department will view this company in relation to future agreements with residents of housing developments. (AQW 4538/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The legal status of maintenance agreements entered into by residents of housing developments with the Greenbelt Foundation or any other management company is a matter entirely between the company in question and the residents.

Policy OS2 of Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation advises that if an applicant wishes to follow an alternative management approach they will have to demonstrate to my Department how such an approach can meet the policy requirement for the open space to be managed and maintained in perpetuity.

In relation to future planning applications where developers wish to make use of the Greenbelt Foundation to manage and maintain areas of open space, these will continue to be assessed on their merits against relevant policy relating to the provision of open space in new residential developments. Developers are required to satisfy the Department that suitable arrangements will be put in place for the future management and maintenance, in perpetuity, of any areas of open space that are to be provided.

### House Sparrows

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment if he is aware of the decline in the numbers of house sparrows; and if his Department has made any enquiries into the issue. (AQW 4560/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Currently available data does not make it clear that the population of House Sparrow is declining in Northern Ireland.

The Department is not aware of any studies which have been undertaken in Northern Ireland to look at factors affecting the population of House Sparrow. The Department is, however, continuing to support surveys which provide important data on all breeding and wintering bird populations, including House Sparrow.

As a result of the declines in House Sparrow populations in the UK as a whole, it is treated as a priority species in Northern Ireland. A Species Action Plan has been published that includes a range of actions being undertaken to benefit this species.

### Gracehill Golf Club in Stranocum

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment when a decision will be made on the application for a (i) greyhound racing circuit; (ii) horse training track; and (iii) four star hotel at Gracehill Golf Club in Stranocum. (AQW 4608/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Department is not yet in a position to make a determination on this application as additional information that was requested up to a year ago on Environmental Health issues, and also clarification of ownership and need that was asked for in March 2007, is still awaited. The Department has also recently had to request detailed landscape proposals and a landscape management plan.



### Demolition of 2-4 Station Road, East Belfast

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of the Environment for a statement on the demolition of 2-4 Station Road, East Belfast. (AQW 4636/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I understand that numbers 2 and 4 Station Road, Sydenham were demolished on 18 January 2009. Although Building Preservation Notices were served on the houses on 16 July 2008, these expired after 6 months. During those 6 months and following further detailed assessment of the architectural and historic interest of the buildings, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) determined that the buildings did not meet the statutory and criteria based standard for 'full and formal' listing as buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

As a result there was no requirement for further consent or input from NIEA and the owner decided to demolish them.

### Fish Kills

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4006/09, to detail the other ten 'high severity' incidents which did not involve fish kills. (AQW 4637/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Further to the details provided to you in response to AQW 4006-09, the attached table gives details of the 10 'high severity' pollution incidents recorded by Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), for 2008, which did not involve fish kills.

#### 2008 – HIGH SEVERITY POLLUTION INCIDENTS INVESTIGATED BY NIEA - (NO FISH KILLS)

Date	Alleged Source of Pollution	Details
08/01/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone.
25/01/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone.
28/01/2008	Farm Near Dromore Co Down	Silage effluent was discharging into the river lagan via the storm drainage system. (Source was traced; farmer was prosecuted and fined £ 200. )
07/02/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone.
08/02/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone .
08/02/2008	Farm - Near Kilmore Co Armagh	Sewage fungus was detected by niea staff in the tall river and source was traced to a farm yard at kilmore. (Source was traced; farmer was prosecuted and fined £ 750. )
11/02/2008	Farm - Near Cookstown	Pig slurry in waterway at grange road cookstown traced to a farm. A file is being prepared for submission to the pps recommending prosecution.
06/03/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone.
10/04/2008	Unknown – Farm Source Suspected	High ammonia levels reported by ni water as being present in the intake water at derg water treatment works near castlederg co tyrone.
25/07/2008	Engineering Company – Co Londonderry	A spill of acid occurred when a container fell off a forklift truck. The fire and rescue service employed a number of remedial measures. The incident was reported by the owner of the firm and a warning letter was issued by niea.

### Planning Applications

**Mr R McCartney** asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications, both domestic and commercial, are awaiting approval in each Divisional Planning Office. (AQW 4663/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** While it is not known how many applications will be approved the breakdown of domestic and commercial planning applications which are being processed and still have to be decided in each Divisional Planning Office at 30th September 2008 is as follows:

Divisional Planning Office	No of Domestic Applications	No of Commercial Application
Ballymena	1211	112
Belfast	1317	238
Coleraine	780	72
Craigavon	2070	177
Downpatrick	2253	198
Enniskillen	567	49
Headquarters	20	44
Londonderry	441	118
Omagh	1419	137

These figures are extracted from my Department's published Development Management Statistics Northern Ireland 2008/09 Second Quarterly Statistical Bulletin (July to September 2008) published in December 2008 and exclude those applications deferred due to the former Draft PPS14 and current PPS21. The next Development Management quarterly statistics are due for publication in March 2009.

### Planning Applications

**Mr R McCartney** asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications, both domestic and commercial, have been awaiting approval in each Divisional Planning Office, for more than 12 months.  
(AQW 4664/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The breakdown of domestic and commercial planning applications in the planning system for over 12 months in each Divisional Planning Office at 30 September 2008 is as follows:

Divisional Planning Office	No of Domestic Applications (Over 12 months)	No of Commercial Applications (Over 12 months)
Ballymena	253	32
Belfast	284	55
Coleraine	173	20
Craigavon	821	62
Downpatrick	537	60
Enniskillen	138	14
Headquarters	6	29
Londonderry	143	37
Omagh	305	28

These figures are extracted from my Department's published Development Management Statistics 2008/09 Second Quarterly Statistical Bulletin (July to September 2008) published in December 2008 and exclude those applications deferred due to the former Draft PPS14 and current PPS21. The next Development Management quarterly statistics are due for publication in March 2009.

### Planning Applications

**Mr R McCartney** asked the Minister of the Environment what targets are set by his Department for processing planning applications. (AQW 4665/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Key Ministerial targets for Planning Service are set out in my Department's Public Service Agreement (PSA). These set the time taken to process planning applications or withdrawal by March 2011 and are as follows:

- 60% of Major planning applications processed in 23 weeks;
- 70% of Intermediate planning applications processed in 31 weeks; and,
- 80% of Minor planning applications processed in 18 weeks.

In addition to the PSA targets, the Planning Service Business Plan 2008/09 includes operational targets for validating applications, issuing decisions and for reducing the number of long outstanding applications. These are as follows:

- 75% of all applications to be validated within 6 days;
- 95% of all applications to be validated within 10 days;
- 75% of decisions to issue within 2 weeks of last Council consultation;
- 95% of decisions to issues within 4 weeks of last Council consultation;
- 15% reduction in the number of applications in the system for longer than 12 months; and
- Decide all large scale investment planning proposals within 6 months, provided there has been formal pre-application discussion.

### Planning Applications

**Mr R McCartney** asked the Minister of the Environment what is the average length of time for processing planning applications in each Divisional Planning Office. (AQW 4666/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Publicly available average processing times for each Divisional Planning Office for 2007/08 and 2006/07 are contained within the Annual Development Management Report available on my Department's website. Processing times for 2008/09 will be available in October 2009.

The average number of weeks taken to process planning applications in 2007/08 by Divisional Planning Office is shown in the table below:

Divisions	Major (average no of weeks)	Intermediate (average no of weeks)	Minor (average no of weeks)
Ballymena	21	19	12
Belfast	24	22	12
Craigavon	38	54	19
Downpatrick	32	27	18
Headquarters	45	0	0
Londonderry	31	24	18
Omagh	29	23	16

### Professional and Technical Officers

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister of the Environment how many casual professional and technical officers are employed by the Planning Service. (AQW 4702/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** There are currently 34 casual professional and technical officers employed by the Planning Service.

## Professional and Technical Officers

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister of the Environment when professional and technical officers who were successful at the recent recruitment process will be taking up their posts. (AQW 4703/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The only current competition for professional and technical planners is for the Professional and Technical Officer (PTO) grade. The competition is now reaching its final stages.

Against the background that there has been a significant drop in the number of planning applications in recent months, the Agency is presently considering its staffing requirements. While those considerations are ongoing, it has been decided to suspend recruitment from this competition.

## Creation of Artificial Reefs

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the planning process in relation to the creation of artificial reefs on the coastline to develop (i) fisheries management; (ii) coastal protection; and (iii) marine recreation. (AQW 4752/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** In Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK, planning control only extends to the Mean Low Water Mark, therefore Planning Service has no jurisdiction in terms of the sea bed.

However, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency is required to control the deposition of materials below the High Water Mean Spring Tide Mark, under Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA).

A FEPA licence would be required for the creation of any artificial reef or structure on the coastline whether it be for the purpose of fisheries management, coastal protection or marine recreation.

## Enforcement Orders

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of the Environment what is the legal time frame his Department has to conclude issuing an enforcement order. (AQW 4782/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Department must issue and serve an enforcement notice relating to breach of planning control within the time limits on enforcement action generally in Article 67B and the period for service of a notice in Article 68(3) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Where the breach of planning control consists of the carrying out of building, engineering or mining operations in, on, over or under land, the enforcement notice must be issued within 4 years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed.

Where the breach consists of the change of use of any building to use as a single dwellinghouse, the enforcement notice must be issued within 4 years beginning with the date of the breach.

In the case of any other breach of planning control, the enforcement notice must be issued within 10 years beginning with the date of the breach.

Where the enforcement notice relates to unauthorised works to a listed building or demolition of a building in a conservation area, Articles 51(5) and 77 – 79 of the 1991 Order apply and there is no period specified with which the Department must issue the notice.

In all cases, once issued, the service of the notice must take place not more than 28 days after its date of issue; and not less than 28 days before the date specified in it as the date on which it is to take effect.

## Mourne National Park

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made in setting up the Mourne National Park; and when the legislation will be brought to the Assembly. (AQW 4804/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I am considering National Parks very seriously and will wish to discuss the issue with my Executive colleagues in due course. 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.

## Programme for Government Targets

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of the Environment what risk assessment he has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4885/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** As part of the development of my Department's PSA contribution to the Programme for Government, Delivery Agreements were produced for each related target. This included a Risk Management Strategy which summarised the key risks to the successful delivery of each target and the strategy for managing these risks.

## DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

### Ulster Scots Academy

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much money his Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4544/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds):** The Department of Finance and Personnel has not provided funding to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; or (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in the last two years.

### HR Connect

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much HR Connect receives from his Department per annum and what services it provides. (AQW 4658/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The HRConnect service provider has received the following capital milestone and service charges:

Financial Year	Capital Milestones (£000s)	Service Charges (£000s)	Total (£000s)
2006/07	£15,337	£0,000	£15,337
2007/08	£11,463	£4,000	£15,463
2008/09*	£5,200	£6,000	£11,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£32,000</b>	<b>£10,000</b>	<b>£42,000</b>

\* The 2008/09 capital milestone and service charges are estimates.

Additional capital milestone payments of £5.75m are due to be made to HRConnect during 2009/10 as the remaining services come on stream. Following full implementation of the HRConnect services the estimated annual service charges due will be £12m per annum.

The services currently being provided by HRConnect are External Recruitment, Employee Relations, Exit and HR Data Management, Absence Management and Non-Industrial Payroll. HRConnect is also delivering the ICT functionality to support Welfare, Learning and Development and Health and Safety. The industrial payroll, internal resourcing and performance management services are currently being implemented.

### Civil Service

**Mr D O'Loan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if some Civil Service employees received their January 2009 salary late; and to state the extent and cause of this problem. (AQW 4779/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** An analysis of the January 2009 pay run shows that 39 civil service staff out of the 27,400 staff paid through HRConnect did not receive their salary on the due date which was Wednesday 28th January 2009. All of these staff have now received a salary payment.

The two main causes of these non-payments were staff who commenced employment in the civil service after the January pay run cut-off date and a number of staff returning from career breaks who were not identified by the system.

### Varney II Report

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what was the response of the Executive to the Varney II report. (AQW 4971/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The Executive issued its formal response to the second Varney report on 7 January 2009. In that response we reiterated our disappointment at the failure to acknowledge the need to offer some form of fiscal dispensation to Northern Ireland. Most of the recommendations in this second report relate to policy areas within the Executive's remit, and many are already being addressed by the Executive in existing policies.

The second Varney report endorsed the Executive's Programme for Government with its emphasis on promoting regional productivity and competitiveness. We now need to ensure that relevant policies are pursued vigorously.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### Adults with Autism

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there is a designated professional contact person with relevant qualifications specifically assigned to deal with the needs of autistic adults. (AQW 4371/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey):** Whilst there is no such designated professional contact person within my Department to deal with the need of adults affected by autism, there is a professional who has worked as a clinician in the field of learning disability and who has had frequent contact with children and adults affected by autism.

The Department has also established a Regional ASD Group which will oversee the implementation of the ASD Strategic Action Plan. The membership of this group includes a lead Director for ASD within each HSC Trust. This Group will be chaired by Dr Stephen Bergin, Consultant in Public Health Medicine in the Southern Health and Social Services Board.

### Adults with Autism

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many adults with autism there are in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4372/09)

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

### Adults with Autism

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many adults were diagnosed with autism in each Health and Social Care Trust in the last two years. (AQW 4373/09)

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

### Adults with Autism

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available for adults with autism in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4374/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** All Health and Social Care Trusts provide a range of services for adults with autism. Services provided range from assessments and interventions carried out by Clinical Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists to day support and residential placements.

Due to the number of different settings in which assessment can take place and the professional skills involved, the services will be identified through individual care planning processes, involving the full multi-disciplinary team as appropriate.

### Adults with Autism

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are specifically employed to diagnose and treat adults with autism in each Health and Social Trust area. (AQW 4375/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There are no staff specifically employed to diagnose and treat adults with autism in each of the Health and Social Trust areas.

### South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the capital budget is for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the next three years. (AQW 4376/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Capital allocations beyond the current financial year have not yet been formally advised to Trusts until details of the financial profiles are finalised. However, the current planned allocations for the remainder of the CSR are as follows;

	2009/10	2010/11
Planned allocation	£33m	£40m

Within these planned allocations, funding is profiled for projects currently in progress as well as those being planned. Expenditure cannot be incurred on any of these schemes until the respective business cases have been assessed and approved and contracts have been finalised as appropriate.

No annual capital budget allocations have been identified beyond 2010/11 which ends the current budget period.

### South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what are the capital projects scheduled for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the next three years. (AQW 4377/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Capital allocations beyond the current financial year have not yet been formally advised to Trusts until details of the financial profiles are finalised. However, the current planned allocations for the remainder of the CSR are as follows;

	2009/10	2010/11
Planned allocation	£33m	£40m

Within these planned allocations, funding is profiled for projects currently in progress as well as those being planned. Expenditure cannot be incurred on any of these schemes until the respective business cases have been assessed and approved and contracts have been finalised as appropriate.

No annual capital budget allocations have been identified beyond 2010/11 which ends the current budget period.

### Accident and Emergency Departments

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in respect of the last year, the total number of patients presenting at Accident and Emergency departments that were sent home and told to return the next day, broken down by A&E department. (AQW 4395/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Information on the number of patients presenting at Accident and Emergency departments that were sent home and told to return the next day is unavailable.

### Children with Speech Difficulties

**Mr S Moutray** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children have speech difficulties. (AQW 4396/09)

**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.

### Respite Care

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provisions are available for respite care for (i) adults with a learning disability; and (ii) children with a learning disability, in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4410/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Health and Social Care Trusts (Trusts) have responsibility for the provision of services in Northern Ireland.

The Western Trust provides a range of respite provisions as follows –

- (i) within adult services provision is made for statutory overnight respite, overnight stays and day respite with the host family scheme, summer respite, respite for individuals with complex health care needs and respite through the Crisis Intervention Service and the Direct Payments Scheme, and
- (ii) within children's services provision extends from residential respite services to innovative carer support which is provided directly to families through the Direct Payments Scheme, creating more flexibility of choice.

### Respite Care

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what are the waiting times for respite care provision for (i) adults with a learning disability; and (ii) children with a learning disability, in each Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 4411/09)

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

### Waiting Lists for Treatment

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action has been taken to reduce the waiting list for treatment for people with age-related macular degeneration in one eye. (AQW 4415/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** On 21 October 2008, my Department endorsed NICE guidance recommending the use of Lucentis as a treatment option for wet age related macular degeneration (wet AMD) where a patient meets specified clinical criteria and where the manufacturer of the product meets the cost of treatment beyond 14 injections in the treated eye. The circular asked the HSC to put plans in place within 3 months to facilitate implementation of the guidance.

Health and Social Services Boards have, since April 2007, provided funding for treatment for wet AMD patients with the greatest clinical priority. In the main, these are patients who have already lost sight in one eye, although other exceptional circumstances may be considered.



I have allocated £39 million in 2008-11 for hospital and specialist drugs, which will allow the health service to improve access to specialist therapies for a range of conditions, including wet AMD. It is estimated that the introduction of wet AMD treatments in Northern Ireland will cost in the region of £8 million over the next three years.

Providing treatment to patients in line with the NICE guidance requires a significant expansion of the existing service and HSC Trusts are currently in the process of recruiting the additional staff who will be required to deliver this expanded service. Patients with the disease in the first eye will be recalled by the Trusts when the service is established.

### Neurologists

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many neurologists are working on a permanent basis compared to January 2008. (AQW 4416/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** As at January 2009, there are 14 (13.5 Whole-Time Equivalent) Consultant Neurologists employed on a permanent basis within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts, compared with January 2008 when there were 15 (14.3 Whole-Time Equivalent) Consultant Neurologists employed on a permanent basis. The vacant post in the Belfast Trust will be filled in March.

The figures above for both January 2008 and January 2009 include 1 (0.5 Whole-Time Equivalent) joint appointment with Queen's University Belfast. The information for this question was supplied by the five HSC Trusts.

### Health Bodies Affected by the Review of Public Administration

**Mr D O'Loan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has for the location of health bodies affected by the Review of Public Administration and the restructuring of the Health Service; and whether consideration of this issue is being conducted in the terms of the recommendation of the report by Sir George Bain on the Review of Policy on Location of Public Sector Jobs. (AQW 4420/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I have noted the recommendations in Professors Bain's Report and am aware that decisions around the future location of public sector jobs could have important implications for communities throughout Northern Ireland. Indeed, the wide dispersal of 70,000 health and social care sector jobs in NI, particularly high quality jobs outside Belfast, is already in evidence.

I will engage with colleagues on the Executive in response to the recommendations of the Bain Review, but this process will inevitably take some time. In the interim, it is imperative that the Department continues with its work, in line with current guidance, to determine the location of the new health and social care bodies from April 2009 and address the concerns of staff that are affected. On completion of the necessary approvals and equality screening, I therefore intend to announce my final decisions on the location of the new Health and Social Care bodies in the next few weeks.

### Children Gone Missing from Care

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 3498/08, how many children have gone missing from care, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4424/09)

**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.

### Neonatal Nursing Staff

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment he has made of the risk that the shortage of neonatal nursing staff represents to patients. (AQW 4425/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/2661/09.

### Neonatal Nursing Staff

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken to address the shortage of qualified neonatal nurses. (AQW 4426/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/2661/09.

### Neonatal Nursing Staff

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his Department's assessment of the training and recruitment processes that will be necessary to increase the number of neonatal nurses. (AQW 4427/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/2661/09.

### Neonatal Nursing Staff

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional investment is being assigned to tackle the shortage of qualified neonatal nurses. (AQW 4428/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW/2661/09.

### Christmas Card Costs

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff received a Christmas card with their December pay slips and the total cost incurred. (AQW 4439/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** None of my Departmental staff received Christmas cards with their pay slips.

### Western Health and Social Care Trust

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to breakdown by religion the Director level staff of the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4440/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** This information cannot be provided as it is not held centrally.

### Altnagelvin Hospital

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) the total cost of placing new plasma televisions in Altnagelvin Hospital; and (ii) the total number of televisions purchased. (AQW 4441/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Western HSC Trust has spent £15,154 for 72 LCD televisions for ward areas in Altnagelvin Hospital. This purchase was funded from donations made by the public under Endowments and Gifts.

### Efficiency Savings

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will veto any areas of the Health and Social Care Trusts efficiency savings plans, if they effect front line services. (AQW 4452/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Consultation on key proposals is currently ongoing and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to make an assessment of the proposals until that process is complete. The impact on front line services will be an important part of my assessment after the consultation processes have been concluded.

All the resources released by DHSSPS through greater efficiency will be reinvested in Health. To the extent that the efficiency savings are not achieved, planned CSR investments in existing commitments and new services cannot happen.

### Regional Fostering Scheme

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps it is taking to deliver a Regional Fostering Scheme in with special reference to finding the 300 foster parents that are needed.

(AQW 4462/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Regional Fostering Recruitment and Training Co-ordination Service was established in November 2007 to help raise the profile of fostering in Northern Ireland and assist each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust with the recruitment and training of their foster carers. Since its creation a number of initiatives have been introduced which include:

- The introduction on 1 February 2008 of a free 24/7 Regional Helpline.
- The development of a Regional Marketing Recruitment Strategy running from 2008 – 2013.
- The production of an on going televised fostering advertisement campaign
- The establishment of a HSC website, [www.fostering.hscni.net](http://www.fostering.hscni.net)
- A total of 128 regional enquiries were made between April and November 2008. Of these 75 can be directly attributed to the TV AD Campaign (55) and the website (20)

These new initiatives have contributed to the achievement of PSA target 4 which had been set to increase by 31 March 2010 the number of foster carers across Northern Ireland by 300 from 31 March 2006 baseline figure of 1528. At 31 December 2008 there were 1,812 registered foster carers in Northern Ireland.

### Hospital Acquired Infections

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if consideration has been given to the compulsory testing of all levels of medical staff for spores of hospital acquired infections, such as Clostridium Difficile and MRSA.

(AQW 4484/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Clostridium difficile can form spores, but MRSA does not form spores.

There is currently no clinical evidence or evidence about cost effectiveness that would support routine screening of all staff for MRSA. Screening for Clostridium difficile is not feasible. Trusts will undertake screening of staff for MRSA in the context, for example, of clusters of infection or outbreaks.

The rigorous application of the following measures are known to contribute to a reduction in the spread of Clostridium difficile diarrhoea and MRSA:

- hand hygiene,
- environmental cleaning,
- isolation/cohort nursing,
- use of personal protective equipment by staff and
- prudent use of antibiotics.

### Child Protection

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the issue of child protection on an all island basis.

(AQW 4515/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council, a cross-border group of officials has been established to intensify co-operation on child protection issues and areas for co-operation on children's services emerging from the North South Feasibility Study on health and social services.

Specific initiatives have been identified and are being taken forward jointly through a sub-group structure. These are:

- Vetting and Barring – to be led by DHSSPS;
- Research - to be led by DHSSPS;
- Internet Safety – to be led by ROI;
- All-island media awareness group - to be led by ROI; and
- Protocol for the movement of children and vulnerable families across our borders - to be led by ROI.

Regular progress reports on each area are being provided to the North South Ministerial Council.

### Child Protection

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to meet with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland to advance child protection issues on an all island basis. (AQW 4516/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council I, along with other Ministerial colleagues from Northern Ireland meet with Ministerial counterparts from the Republic of Ireland to discuss a wide range of interests which are of mutual benefit to both jurisdictions. Child Protection forms part of these discussions.

We have established a cross-border group of officials to intensify co-operation on child protection issues and areas for co-operation on children's services emerging from the North South Feasibility Study on health and social services.

I and my counterpart in the Republic of Ireland have commissioned the North South Feasibility Study on health and social services. The main objective of the Study is to develop a strategic framework for taking forward future collaborative work in health and social care and in planning and delivering health and social care services, where appropriate, on a North-South basis.

Consideration is also being given to including child protection as part of the work of the British Irish Council. Both Councils provide a framework for discussion of child protection issues as they impact across jurisdictions.

### Respite Care

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the projected increase in the need for respite care, in the next ten years. (AQW 4522/09)

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

### Respite Care

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many respite care beds are available in the North Down constituency. (AQW 4524/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Information provided by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust indicate at 2 February 2009, there were 41 respite care beds available in the North Down constituency.

### Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, for legal advice, in the last financial year. (AQW 4527/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts for legal advice in 2007-08 are set out in the table below:

HSC Trust	2007-08
Belfast HSC Trust	£814,120
Northern HSC Trust	£646,753
Southern HSC Trust	£623,713
South Eastern HSC Trust	£818,750
Western HSC Trust	£611,999

### Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, of cancelled clinics, in the last financial year. (AQW 4528/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The cost of clinics that have been cancelled is not available centrally.

### Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, of cancelled operations, in the last financial year. (AQW 4529/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The cost of operations that have been cancelled is not collected centrally.

### Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, for car loans to staff, in the last financial year. (AQW 4530/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The costs, in the last financial year, to the five Health and Social Care Trusts for car loans to staff were NIL.

### Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the costs to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, of providing cars for staff. (AQW 4531/09)

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

### Road Rescue Team

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the reasons why five officers resigned from the proposed dedicated Road Rescue Team of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service due to commence on 1 February 2009. (AQW 4539/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has advised that there have been no resignations associated with the new Road Rescue Team, which is scheduled to take up its role on 9 February.

## Asperger's Syndrome

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what pathways Health and Social Care Trusts have to enable adults with Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning Autism to access assessment and support. (AQW 4548/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Assessment and support pathways for adults with Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning Autism currently vary across the Health and Social Care Trusts.

As you will know, on 17 September 2008 I launched an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan for a 3 month public consultation period. This consultation period ended on 12 December 2008. A summary of responses is currently being prepared and a revised ASD Strategic Action Plan will be prepared and is expected to be available from April 2009.

The Action Plan outlines the proposed actions to be taken to improve autism services across Northern Ireland. These actions include:

- The adoption by all Health and Social Care Trusts of standardised referral processes / protocols across Northern Ireland for cases where there is a suspicion of ASD.

All Health and Social Care Trusts will therefore be expected to standardise their pathways in line with the Action Plan once it comes into force.

## Autistic Spectrum Disorders

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what training health professionals receive for adults with autism. (AQW 4549/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Different types of training on Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are available from a range of sources for separate groups of health professionals. Individual groups of staff require different types of training.

The need to develop and implement an ASD training strategy was referred to in the draft ASD Strategic Action Plan recently published for consultation. The Action Plan refers to the need to develop a skilled workforce with training on the needs of children and adults affected by ASD. This training can be provided in house or through suitable external providers. The recently established ASD Regional Group will develop and implement a training strategy. This will range from awareness training to more specific training appropriate to particular groups of staff.

## Autistic Spectrum Disorders

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many adults suffer from Autistic Spectrum Disorders. (AQW 4550/09)

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

## Autistic Spectrum Disorders

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action has been taken to achieve an accurate picture of the number of adults with Autistic Spectrum disorders. (AQW 4551/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The need for more detailed information on the numbers of children and adults affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder is widely accepted. The newly established Regional ASD Group will be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the ASD Strategic Action Plan, which will be published in April. This multi disciplinary, multi agency group will help develop and implement plans for the collection of data in relation to all those affected by ASD including adults.

## Foster Parents

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to encourage young couples to become foster parents, considering the statement by Barnados that showed a need for 350 foster parents. (AQW 4559/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Any adult who genuinely cares about children can become a foster carer provided they meet the necessary requirements whatever their marital status, sexual orientation, religious or ethnic background, whether they have a disability or medical condition and whether or not they work.

To enhance the ability of Trusts to recruit more foster parents a range of steps have been taken. These include:

- The establishment of a Regional Fostering Recruitment and Training Co-ordination Service.
- The introduction of a free 24/7 Regional Helpline.
- The production of an ongoing televised fostering advertisement campaign
- The establishment of a HSC website, [www.fostering.hscni.net](http://www.fostering.hscni.net)
- Payment of Foster Care allowances and other ad hoc payments

My Department is committed to increasing the number of foster carers and at 31 December 2008 there were 1,812 registered foster carers in Northern Ireland compared to 1528 at 31 March 2006.

## Respite Beds

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many respite beds there are in each (i) Health and Social Care Trust Area; and (ii) constituency. (AQW 4616/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

- (i) Information provided by the Health and Social Care Trusts is detailed below.

### NUMBER OF RESPITE BEDS IN EACH HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST AT 5TH FEBRUARY 2009

HSC Trust	Number of Respite Beds *
Belfast	**
Northern	66
South Eastern	105
Southern	80
Western	41

\* Information is currently provisional and may be subject to change.

\*\* Information could not be provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

- (ii) The information is not available in the form requested.

## Senior House Officers and Registrars

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if Senior House Officers and Registrars are allowed to hold outpatient clinics if the consultant is on leave. (AQW 4617/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** In keeping with the General Medical Council's guidance for all doctors, Good Medical Practice, consultants must be satisfied that, when they are off duty, suitable arrangements have been made for their patients' medical care. When they delegate care, including out-patient care, to doctors in training they must satisfy themselves that the degree of supervision and support available is consistent with the level of experience of each of the training grade doctors.

### Proposals for a New Complaints System

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his proposals for a new complaints system. (AQW 4618/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The new Complaints in Health and Social Care: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning becomes effective from 1 April 2009. A draft version giving details of the new system is currently available on <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/complaints-hsc-standards-guidelines-resolution-learning-july08.pdf>

### Patients at Risk from Self-harm or Suicide

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has implemented a system whereby a card stating that a patient may be at risk from self-harm or suicide, is on file, before the patient leaves hospital. (AQW 4619/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Where a patient has presented at hospital and been assessed to be at risk of suicide or self-harm their hospital records are annotated accordingly.

### Patients at Risk from Self-harm or Suicide

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is considering giving a follow-up appointment within a week, to outpatients who are considered to be at risk of suicide or self-harm. (AQW 4620/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** My Department has tasked the South Eastern HSC Trust to co-ordinate work to develop a regional "Card Before You Leave" system, whereby patients leaving either an in-patient, or an A&E setting, who are considered to be suicidal or at risk of self-harm will receive details of a follow-up appointment prior to their discharge. The aim is to have a system in place by April 2009. In support of this the following target is included in my Priorities for Action for 2009/10:

From April 2009, all mental health patients discharged from hospital who are to receive continuing care plan in the community should receive a follow up visit within seven days of discharge.

### Complaints Procedures

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Mater Hospital clearly advertises its complaints procedures to patients, so that they do not have to ask staff. (AQW 4621/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Posters and leaflets explaining to patients the arrangements for complaints handling are displayed in public areas, including the Accident and Emergency Department, within the Mater Hospital.

### ME Sufferers

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how are ME sufferers catered to in the Health Service in terms of specialist care. (AQW 4837/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** A range of treatment and support options is available for people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME). Decisions on the specific care of an individual patient will normally be taken in conjunction with their medical practitioner or hospital consultant. Their care will be tailored according to their condition and its severity.

Patient care is for the most part provided by GPs, however patients may access other areas of the health service including community care and support, neurology services and mental health services which can provide treatment like cognitive behaviour therapy, which is thought to help manage the illness. All patients with ME may be referred to general clinics or neurology clinics for treatment.



I am advised that there is no clear clinical consensus on the best form of treatment for CFS/ME and to date the Department has not received any proposals for the introduction of specialist ME or CFS services. A CFS assessment clinic in the Belfast area for mild to moderate sufferers is run by a psychiatrist with a special interest in CFS/ME, although it only take referrals from the catchment area for the Belfast Trust. Severe cases, from any part of Northern Ireland, may be referred to specialist clinics in the rest of the UK with the prior approval of the appropriate Health and Social Services Board.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of civil service staff employed by his Department, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) core departmental staff; and (iii) agency workers, at (a) May 2007; and (b) January 2009. (AQW 4851/09)

#### Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

##### DHSSPS STAFF IN POST @ 1 MAY 2007

Grade	Core Dept	Health Estates Agency	Total
G5 +	32	2	34
SP	23	4	27
G7	65	26	91
DP	136	27	163
SO	156	20	176
EO1	104	11	115
EO2	120	9	129
AO	109	4	113
AA	113	13	126
<b>Total</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>974</b>

##### Notes:

Data sourced from HRMS at 1st May 2007

Excludes those on career break

##### DHSSPS STAFF IN POST @ 1 JANUARY 2009

Grade	Core Dept	Health Estates Agency	Total
G5 +	28	2	30
G6	15	7	22
G7	75	22	97
DP	139	26	165
SO	161	17	178
EO1	86	11	97
EO2	113	11	124
AO	81	5	86
AA	70	7	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>876</b>

##### Notes:

Data sourced from HR Connect at 1st January 2009

Excludes those on career break

### Craigavon Area Hospital

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the difficulties facing maternity staff in Craigavon Area Hospital. (AQW 4919/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The maternity unit at Craigavon remains busy, however the obstetric and midwifery staff continue to manage these pressures effectively. The Chief Nursing Officer visited the unit on Thursday evening and spoke to a wide range of staff and management.

The situation on Monday (9/2/09) was as follows:

	Beds	
	Occupied	Vacant
Ante-Natal Ward	14	2
Post-Natal Ward	19	3
Midwife Led Unit	1	8
Delivery Suite	2	4

### Multi Systemic Therapies

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following recent announcements of £16m allocated for Multi Systemic Therapies (MST); (i) how much money his Department will receive; and (ii) if there are any units already carrying out MST, if so, (a) where; and (b) who funds them; and (c) what is the future plans for the programme. (AQW 4931/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The allocation for Multi Systemic Therapies was to establish a further 10 pilot sites in England. There was no allocation for Northern Ireland.

There is one unit providing MST in Northern Ireland. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has a contract with Extern for the provision of MST through the Linden Services Unit based in Newtownabbey. It provides services for children in the whole of the Northern Trust area. This includes a 6 bed short term residential unit, a 24/7 service to families in the community and youth support services.

There are currently no plans to extend MST in Northern Ireland. However, additional resources of £2.9m, £3.4m and £7m have been secured for the current CSR period to develop psychological therapy services. These resources will enhance access to psychotherapeutic interventions, including family therapy.

### Capital Projects

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any major capital projects in his Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 5004/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I have available a total budget of just under £700m for the CSR period 2008/11. This is considerably less than the £1 billion for which I made bids. A large proportion of the £700 million is needed to meet contractual commitments and unavoidable expenditure leaving little scope to start new projects during the CSR period. In this light no major projects have been delayed by lack of finance due to the recession.

Planning Service have advised that they are not aware of any proposals from NI Departments for major capital projects which are being delayed in the planning application process.

### Craigavon Area Hospital

**Mr J O'Dowd** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4236/09, how many midwives will be recruited by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, to cover the vacant 88 hours at Craigavon Area Hospital. (AQW 5044/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The vacant 88 hours will be covered by the recruitment of 3 midwives (2.74 whole time equivalent).

### Parking Provisions

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what parking provisions are available for people who urgently have to attend hospital when no regular spaces are available. (AQW 5088/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** In such circumstances Trust staff will respond appropriately to ensure that risks and inconvenience to patients and visitors are minimised.

## DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Northern Ireland Water

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Regional Development if Northern Ireland Water will withhold comment on all planning applications in Newcastle until instructed otherwise by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. (AQW 4465/09)

**Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that they will withhold comment on new planning applications for an interim period pending clarification on the ongoing upgrade of the sewer network with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. NIW is endeavouring to clarify the environmental issues as speedily as possible and would not see a sustained period without comment.

NIW is not in a position to withhold all applications as Planning Service has advised that previously approved planning applications cannot be refused without risk of significant challenge. Ultimately the decision on whether a planning application is approved rests solely with The Planning Service.

### Traffic Calming Measures

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development if Roads Service would consider putting traffic calming measures, including road humps, on the Gortahar Road next to St. Patrick's Primary School in Rasharkin. (AQW 4483/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I understand the Member has already raised this issue with my Department's Roads Service and that a commitment was given to assess this particular route for possible traffic calming measures.

I have asked the Divisional Roads Manager to write to you, when the outcome of the assessment is known.

### Departmental Claims Unit

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many claims have been received from his Department's claims unit from the Strangford constituency in each of the last three years. (AQW 4508/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Unfortunately, my Department's Central Claims Unit does not hold the information in the format requested. However, Central Claims Unit does maintain a record of the number of claims for each Roads Service Section Office. The area of the Strangford constituency includes almost all of the Ards Section Office plus small areas of the Down and Castlereagh Section Offices. The following figures show the total number of compensation claims received by the Central Claims Unit from the Ards Section Office

area for each of the last three calendar years. The figures relating to the small areas from Down and Castlereagh Section Offices and the small area of Ards Section Office not included in the Strangford constituency could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

	Number of Claims
2006	94
2007	88
2008	73

### Unpaid Parking Fines

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he intends to have with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland about unpaid parking fines from Republic of Ireland registered drivers, including how to secure these payments. (AQW 4521/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has been working closely with the northern and southern vehicle licensing authorities to resolve the current difficulties in acquiring keeper details for vehicles in the South, who have been issued with parking tickets in the North.

I am content that Roads Service is doing everything in its power to move the issue forward, and it is hoped that a solution will be in place as soon as possible, that will allow the Department to pursue the outstanding penalties issued to southern drivers.

### Blue Badge Holders

**Dr W McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development why blue badge holders are given a penalty charge notice if their badge is displayed upside down. (AQW 4669/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I can advise that, when making use of parking concessions available under the Disabled Persons Badge Scheme, the blue badge must be correctly displayed so that the relevant details, that is, the serial number and expiry date are legible from outside the vehicle. Where a badge is incorrectly displayed and a traffic attendant is unable to determine if the badge is valid, a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) may be issued. This procedure has been agreed with groups representing people with disabilities, including the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC).

### Road Signs

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development to confirm if the defacing of road signs is illegal. (AQW 4680/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** It is an offence under Article 33 of the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1981 for a person to unlawfully and intentionally interfere with or damage a traffic sign.

### Road Signs

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to stop the defacing of road signs. (AQW 4681/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that any one caught defacing road signs will be prosecuted. However, you will appreciate the many difficulties in proving a case in this regard, as the courts will require substantial and clear evidence before an effective prosecution can be brought.

## Road Signs

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what investigation his Department has taken into the obliteration of 'London' in 'Londonderry' on road signage, particularly in the East Londonderry, Foyle and West Tyrone constituencies; and (ii) how long does it take to remove or replace damaged signs.

(AQW 4682/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I can advise that, in the subject constituencies, no formal investigations, into specific incidents, have been carried out by Roads Service and no prosecutions taken. However, where there have been incidents of sign theft, these have been reported to the PSNI.

I should explain that, Roads Service carries out regular inspections of all public roads and footways, to ensure that essential maintenance needs are identified and remedial work is completed as necessary. During these inspections all defects are noted, including defective or vandalised signs, as well as, those signs that require cleaning to improve their visibility. The frequency of these inspections depends on the type of road and the volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Town centres and major traffic routes are inspected monthly, while all other roads and footways are inspected at either two or four monthly intervals.

It normally takes around six weeks to replace a directional sign, as it has to be ordered from a sign supplier. Other regulatory or warning signs are usually held in stock and can be replaced within a few days of being identified as damaged or missing.

## Road Signs

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how much did deliberate damage to road signs cost his Department in each of the last three years; and (ii) how many prosecutions there have been in relation to this offence.

(AQW 4683/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Roads Service has advised that the cost of replacing road signs, that have been vandalised or stolen, is not recorded separately from other maintenance activities and that there have been no prosecutions in relation to this offence.

## Road Signs

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development if (i) he condemns the deliberate damage to road signage; (ii) he will increase measures to repair damaged signs; and (iii) he will prosecute those responsible for perpetrating these acts of vandalism.

(AQW 4684/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I can advise that I do condemn the deliberate damage to road signage as it is an offence under law. I can also advise that any damaged signs will continue to be identified by Roads Service, as part of its routine inspections and prioritised for replacement or repair as necessary. If adequate evidence is available, Roads Service will prosecute those responsible for carrying out these acts of vandalism.

## Blue Badge Holders

**Dr W McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development how long is a blue badge holder allowed to park in a disabled parking bay, in any one day; and to detail the locations where there is variation in these arrangements.

(AQW 4685/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that, where a blue badge is correctly displayed, a vehicle may remain in an on-street disabled persons' parking space for as long as indicated by the signage for the relevant space. Where no time restriction is applicable, the vehicle may remain without restriction.

In addition to these arrangements, where a blue badge is correctly displayed, a vehicle may park free, and without time limit, in charged on-street parking areas, and also park on single and double yellow lines, with some exceptions, for up to three hours. However, displaying the blue badge does not provide free parking in Roads Service's off-street car parks.

### Blue Badge Holders

**Dr W McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development why parking attendants take down blue badge holders' car registrations; and for what purpose is this information used. (AQW 4686/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that noting vehicle registrations is normal procedure for parking enforcement operations. For blue badge holders, noting the registration number will assist in determining if a parking contravention has occurred, for example, if a vehicle been parked on yellow lines for more than three hours. In addition, when a Penalty Charge Notice is issued, but subsequently not paid, the registration number is required to obtain name and address details from the Driver and Vehicle Agency for enforcement purposes.

### Traffic Calming Measures

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4087/09, to provide details of the proposed traffic calming measures for Rathenraw and Stiles. (AQW 4731/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** A traffic calming scheme was introduced in the Stiles Estate / Stiles Way area of Antrim in 2008. These works are Phase 1 of a scheme, to address traffic calming concerns in both the Stiles estate and Rathenraw. The scheme included 'bus friendly' road humps along the main spine road in the Stiles estate as well as the introduction of pedestrian refuge islands on Stiles Way which is aimed at assisting pedestrian movements in the vicinity of bus stops. Details of this scheme were included in the Roads Reports which were presented to Antrim Borough Council in July and November 2008.

Roads Service has advised that Phase 2 of the scheme, covering Rathenraw, is planned for the 2009/10 financial year, with work due to commence in April 2009. The detailed design for Phase 2, which is still being discussed, is due for inclusion in the Spring Roads Report to the Antrim Borough Council.

### Roadworks

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to imposing a fine or charge when roads have not been resurfaced to an appropriate standard following roadworks. (AQW 4737/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that Utilities have a statutory right to open roads and footpaths for the purpose of installing and maintaining their equipment. Whilst Roads Service has no control over the number of these openings, it does have the power, under the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, to regulate the process.

Roads Service undertakes regular inspections of utility reinstatements, to ensure that these works are completed in accordance with the technical requirements set out in the statutory reinstatement Code of Practice, "Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Roads". This prescribes the materials to be used and the standards of workmanship to be observed when reinstating roads and footways, following roadworks. Where a Utility fails to meet the specified criterion, Roads Service will request that they repair or replace this reinstatement so as to conform to the specification.

However, I can confirm that Roads Service has a policy to seek prosecutions, through the courts, that result in fines for other breaches of Street Works regulations in relation to public safety.

### Unightly Wooden Fencing in Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to remove unightly wooden fencing in Kilcooley Estate, Bangor. (AQW 4814/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I understand that officials from my Department's Roads Service will be meeting with the Member, on the 13 February 2009, to discuss proposals for the perimeter fence around Kilcooley Estate, Bangor.

I hope that this meeting will help address the Member's concerns.

### Cycle to Work Scheme

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development if the 'cycle to work scheme' is available to Translink employees; and what is the eligibility criteria used to determine who can lease a bicycle. (AQW 4817/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I can confirm that Translink operates a cycle to work scheme which is available to all full or part time staff after six months of employment. The criteria for the scheme are, that applicants must be:-

- eligible for the tax benefits resulting from the salary sacrifice arrangement;
- earning a salary that after deductions remains above the national minimum wage;
- 18 years of age or over;
- a UK taxpayer, who can benefit from the tax efficiencies of the scheme;
- more than a year from retirement.

### Directional Signs

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many unapproved directional signs were removed in 2008, broken down by District Council. (AQW 4819/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not record details of the number of unapproved directional signage removed from the road network and, in these circumstances, I am unable to provide you with the information that you have requested.

### Directional Signs

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost to his Department of removing an unapproved directional sign. (AQW 4820/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it costs £50 to remove an unapproved sign from the road network.

### Meetings with MEPs

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many meetings he has had with each of the three MEPs from 2007 to date. (AQW 4894/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have not met with any of the three MEPs since taking up my Ministerial post.

### Capital Infrastructure Projects

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to list all capital infrastructure projects (i) under construction; (ii) in the procurement process; or (iii) to be advertised in this financial year, in the Strangford constituency and to detail the aggregated value of each. (AQW 4896/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that in the 2008/09 financial year two major road schemes were under construction within the Strangford constituency, these are listed in the table below:-

Project	Cost	Start Date	Finish Date
A20 Newtownards Southern Distributor	£20.5M	March 2008	On-going
A20 Newtownards Frederick Street Link	£2.4M	June 2008	November 2008

There are no further Major Works schemes for the Strangford constituency in the procurement process, or due to be advertised this financial year.

Roads Service does not hold details of capital infrastructure projects on a parliamentary constituency basis. However, all information on other capital infrastructure projects in the Strangford constituency are included in the Autumn 2008 Council Reports for Castlereagh, Ards and Down, which can be viewed on the Roads Service internet site using the link below:-

[http://www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council\\_reports.htm](http://www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm)

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it does not hold details of capital infrastructure projects broken down by parliamentary constituency. Projects with a total estimated value of £13.75 million are currently under construction in the Ards Borough Council Area, which covers most of the Strangford area, are listed in the table below:-

Location	Project
Portaferry	Wastewater Treatment Works
Ballywalter	Wastewater Treatment Works
Cloughy	Wastewater Treatment Works
Portaferry	Drainage Area Plan
Carrowdore	Sewer Replacement
Carrowdore	Wastewater Treatment Works
Ards North Zone	Watermain Improvements
Moss Road, Millisle,	Sewer and Watermain Replacement
Castle Street, Comber	Storm Sewer
Longisland Drive, Kircubbin	Sewerage Pumping Station Rising Main

The following projects are programmed for procurement this financial year with a total estimated value of £2.2 million:-

Location	Project
Ballyhalbert	Wastewater Treatment Works
Portavogie	Wastewater Treatment Works
Killinchy Street, Comber	Sewer Extension

### Fuel Supply Agreements

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 4389/09, for the start and end dates of all fuel supply agreements negotiated in each of the last five years. (AQW 4930/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** The start and end dates of all the fuel supply agreements negotiated in each of the last five years are:

- 24 Months April 2004 to March 2006
- 6 Months April 2006 to September 2006
- 6 Months October 2006 to March 2007
- 6 Months April 2007 to September 2007
- 6 Months October 2007 to March 2008
- 6 Months April 2008 to September 2008
- 3 Months October 2008 to December 2008
- 6 Months January 2009 to June 2009
- 3 Months July 2009 to September 2009
- 3 Months October 2009 to December 2009
- 6 Months January 2010 to June 2010



Each agreement covers gas oil and ULSD.

### Translink

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4355/09 and AQW 3742/09, (i) in which months of 2008 and 2009 did Translink pay above the market value for fuel; (ii) what was the market value for this fuel compared to the hedged price; and (iii) what were the dates when the hedged price was above the market price. (AQW 4968/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Translink have informed me that they paid above the market value for Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel (ULSD) and gas oil from October 2008 to the present. These are the same dates at which the hedge price was above the market price. From January to October 2008 the hedge price was below the market price.

It is not appropriate to release information regarding the price of the hedges, as it is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of both Translink and the other organisations involved in the hedge contracts. Translink believe that disclosure could inhibit or restrict future contract options.

### Capital Projects

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister for Regional Development if there are any major capital projects in his Department that were due to start but have been delayed either by (i) lack of finance due to the recession; or (ii) a backlog of work in Planning Service. (AQW 5006/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** No capital projects in my Department were delayed, as a result of a lack of finance, due to the recession or a backlog of work in Planning Service.

### Translink

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4930/09, if any price changes took place at the end of each agreement and to state, for each contract, if the negotiations resulted in an (i) increase; or (ii) decrease in the hedged price of fuel paid by Translink and the percentage of this change. (AQW 5017/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** The percentage changes to the net price per litre from each agreement to the next were as follows:

	ULSD	Gas Oil
• 12 Months April 2004 to March 2005	+17%	+3%
• 12 Months April 2006 to March 2006	-7%	-6%
• 6 Months April 2006 to September 2006	+238%	+213%
• 6 Months October 2006 to March 2007	+3%	+2%
• 6 Months April 2007 to September 2007	-0.5%	-8%
• 6 Months October 2007 to March 2008	-8%	-8%
• 6 Months April 2008 to September 2008	+50%	+49%
• 3 Months October 2008 to December 2008	+11%	+11%
• 6 Months January 2009 to June 2009	+24%	+25%
• 3 Months July 2009 to September 2009	-8%	-8%
• 3 Months October 2009 to December 2009	-0.4%	-0.3%
• 3 Months January 2010 to March 2010	-6%	-5%
• 3 Months April 2010 to June 2010	+0.5%	0%

\* Percentage changes up to September 2007 based on chart data and may be subject to a degree of error. Figures based on information supplied by Translink.

In view of the line of questioning I have asked Translink to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the hedging process employed.

## DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Housing Executive

**Mr D McClarty** asked the Minister for Social Development to explain the necessity of the cancellation of repair and improvement contracts by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, resulting in the potential unemployment of construction workers in the Coleraine borough area. (AQW 4018/09)

**Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie):** The collapse of the housing market combined with the credit crunch has resulted in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive having a significant lack of resources available to deliver its planned programme. 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, including all emergency and urgent tenant repairs.

### Housing Executive Properties

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties have been (i) sold; and (ii) built, in the Limavady Borough Council area in the last ten years. (AQW 4307/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Housing Executive had 720 house sales completions in Limavady in the period from 1998/99 to 2007/08.

During the period 1998/99 – 2007/08, 146 units of social housing were built in the Limavady Borough Council area: 142 by Housing Associations and 4 by the Housing Executive.

### Fuel Poverty

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are classified as living in fuel poverty, broken down by constituency, for each of the last three years. (AQW 4384/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is not available by constituency area or for the period requested.

The table below details households in fuel poverty by District Council area in 2001 and 2006 (taken from the Housing Executive's Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2006).

#### HOUSEHOLDS IN FUEL POVERTY BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

District Council area	Households in Fuel Poverty 2001	Households in Fuel Poverty 2006
	%	%
Antrim	34.6	23.6
Ards	22.0	39.5
Armagh	23.4	37.1
Ballymena	32.9	34.8
Ballymoney	37.7	35.2
Banbridge	26.6	31.1
Belfast	26.8	38.5

District Council area	Households in Fuel Poverty 2001	Households in Fuel Poverty 2006
Carrickfergus	23.9	30.7
Castlereagh	18.7	27.4
Coleraine	28.4	30.7
Cookstown	29.2	41.2
Craigavon	38.6	31.9
Derry	26.3	30.0
Down	24.2	30.5
Dungannon	19.6	38.7
Fermanagh	29.3	36.3
Larne	26.9	43.1
Limavady	34.0	39.9
Lisburn	26.6	29.4
Magherafelt	37.4	34.2
Moyle	33.0	45.3
Newry & Mourne	24.8	39.2
Newtownabbey	28.1	26.3
North Down	19.2	33.6
Omagh	31.5	33.9
Strabane	36.9	40.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>34.2</b>

**Notes:**

\* Source: Housing Executive's Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2006.

# The total number of households in Northern Ireland was:  
 - 611,230 in 2001  
 - 658,730 in 2006

### Hospital Lane Improvement Scheme

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Social Development to update the funding situation in relation to the Hospital Lane improvement scheme in Limavady. (AQW 4414/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The first phase of this scheme was programmed to commence in August 2009. However due to budgetary pressures in this financial year and in anticipation that these will continue into 2009/10, decisions will be taken with regards to all Multi Element Improvement Schemes, such as the one at Hospital Lane, when budgets are finalised.

### Applications for Allowances

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development what is the current waiting time for processing an application for (i) Jobseekers Allowance; (ii) Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance; (iii) attendance allowance; (iv) carers allowance; (v) child tax benefit; (vi) disability living allowance; (vii) income support; (viii) housing benefit; (ix) pension credit; and (x) working tax credit; and how this compares with the same period last year. (AQW 4423/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is not available in the exact form requested. However the table below sets out the average year to date (April to December) clearance times for processing new

claims to benefit from the date of their receipt by the Social Security Agency and in the case of Housing Benefit by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am unable to provide information on Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit as these are administered by HM Revenue and Customs.

	Target 2007/08 (Days)	Year to date performance at December 2007 (Days)	Target 2008/09 (Days)	Year to date performance at December 2008 (Days)
Jobseekers Allowance	12	8.8	12	11.3
Incapacity Benefit *	22	19.4	22	21.8
Employment and Support Allowance **	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	13.8
Attendance Allowance	45	28.1	40	29.8
Carers Allowance	35	26.2	30	22.3
Disability Living Allowance	50	45.0	47	40.9
Income Support	12	9.2	12	10.6
Housing Benefit ***	100%	94.3%	100%	82%
State Pension Credit	12	11.7	15	15.0

As can be seen, while there has been some slippage in a year in which the SSA has introduced two new benefits, we are on target in each area and the targets are kept under continuous review.

\* The Year to date performance reported covers the period 1 April to 31 October. Incapacity Benefit was replaced by Employment and Support Allowance for new claimants from 27 October 2008.

\*\* Employment and Support Allowance was introduced on 27 October 2008 and a clearance time target has not yet been set.

\*\*\*Housing Benefit is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The target and performance for this benefit is expressed as the percentage of cases assessed within 14 days.

### Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development if plans by her Department for social housing and disabled adaptations in Newcastle will be suspended until the Northern Ireland Environment Agency removes the current restriction on all planning applications. (AQW 4466/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** In relation to the Social Housing Development Programme, one new build scheme for 35 units is currently programmed to start on site in 2010/11. A planning application has not yet been submitted for this scheme. With regard to Disabled Adaptations to Housing Executive stock, there are currently no delays in terms of obtaining Planning Permission for any in the Newcastle area.

### Housing in North Antrim

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the waiting list for housing in North Antrim, broken down by (i) electoral ward; (ii) religion; (iii) those with dependants; (iv) those without dependants; (v) those with disabilities; and (vi) those without disabilities, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4481/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Northern Ireland Housing Executive does not collate waiting list information by electoral ward or on the basis of whether an applicant is a person with a disability. For the purposes of this question North Antrim has been defined as including the geographical areas within the Housing Executive's Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle District Office areas.

The following tables sets out information for the last two years:-

- Table 1 - Applicants on the waiting list for social housing in North Antrim
- Table 2 - Applicants on the waiting list for social housing in North Antrim by religion.
- Table 3 - Applicants on the waiting list for social housing in North Antrim by household type.

**TABLE 1.**  
**#APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTH ANTRIM**

District	at 31st March 2007	at 31st March 2008
North Antrim Total	2,189	2,526

# Refers to Position 1 Applicants on the Social Housing Waiting List.  
(Position 1 refers to the person appearing first on the General Housing Application Form)

**Notes:-**

1. The breakdown of the waiting list is a snapshot of applicants for social housing on the waiting list on the last day of the month shown.
2. This dataset does not include Housing Executive transfers or Housing Association transfers.

**TABLE 2.**  
**#APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTH ANTRIM BY RELIGION**

	at 31st March 2007	at 31st March 2008
Catholic Applicants	563	598
Other Applicants	135	160
Protestant Applicants	1,231	1,239
Undisclosed Applicants	260	529
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,526</b>

# Refers to Position 1 Applicants on the Social Housing Waiting List.  
(Position 1 refers to the person appearing first on the General Housing Application Form)

**Notes:-**

1. The religious composition of households is based on 'self reported' answers to the question held in the General Housing Application Form. The religion of the Position 1 individual (i.e. the person appearing first on the General Housing Application Form) in the household is assumed as a proxy for the religion of all individuals in the household.
2. The Equality Unit is currently unable to identify 'mixed' religion households although we are aware that a number of households currently described as 'Roman Catholic' or 'Protestant' would clearly fall into a 'Mixed' category.
3. The breakdown of the waiting list is a snapshot of applicants for social housing on the waiting list on the last day of the month shown.
4. This dataset does not include Housing Executive transfers or Housing Association transfers.

**TABLE 3.**  
**#APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTH ANTRIM WITH/WITHOUT DEPENDANTS**

	Without dependants		With dependants	
	At 31st March 2007	At 31st March 2008	At 31st March 2007	At 31st March 2008
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>1726</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>800</b>

# Refers to Position 1 Applicants on the Social Housing Waiting List.  
(Position 1 refers to the person appearing first on the General Housing Application Form)

1. The breakdown of the waiting list is a snapshot of applicants for social housing on the waiting list on the last day of the month shown.
2. This dataset does not include Housing Executive transfers or Housing Association transfers.
3. Single includes single males and females aged 16 to 59, Small Adult includes 2 adults aged 16 to 59, Small Family includes 1-2 adults and 1-2 children, large family includes 1-2 adults with 3+ children and 3 adults with 2+ children, large adult includes 3+ adults and 0-1 children, Older People include households with members aged 60+.

## Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

**Mr F McCann** asked the Minister for Social Development what plans are in place to take forward neighbourhood renewal strategy after 9 March 2009, and, in particular, what the situation is in relation to Category 2 posts. (AQW 4497/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department has committed significant funds, until 2011, to provide services to Neighbourhood Renewal areas. It is also my intention to build on our existing work with local

government and give greater responsibility for Neighbourhood Renewal to Councils as part of the new vision for local government in Northern Ireland.

My Department has been in discussion with other Departments in relation to the long-term provision of some services in Neighbourhood Renewal areas, currently supported by DSD but which fall under the functional responsibility of others. I will be making an announcement in the near future on the outcome.

### Employment and Support Allowance

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Social Development how she plans to address the £25 shortfall in a disabled client's income arising from the changes between the previous incapacity rules and the new Employment and Support Allowance rules. (AQW 4537/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** I assume the Member is referring to the disability premium which is not part of the new employment and support allowance. It is not that employment and support allowance ignores the needs of people with disabilities; rather it takes account of these needs in a different way through the work-related activity or support components. Many people will be entitled to the new components sooner than they would have been entitled to the disability premium under the previous system: after 13 weeks rather than having to wait 28 or 52 weeks. Many of the poorest and most severely disabled claimants are nearly £16 a week better off under employment and support allowance than they would have been on incapacity benefits. Over the first five years it is estimated that over £15m more will be paid in benefits under employment and support allowance compared to what would have been paid through incapacity benefits.

### Employment and Support Allowance

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Social Development how many calls on average per week, in respect of Employment and Support Allowance, go unanswered. (AQW 4565/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** Overall the implementation of the new Employment and Support Allowance has been positive. As with all new programmes it will take time for the systems and processes to become fully operational and effective. Between 27 October 2008 and 23 January 2009 the ESA Centre received a total of 37,244 telephone calls. The Centre has answered 21,907 calls with the remaining 15,337 calls being unanswered.

The Centre operates both a New Claim telephone line and an Enquiry line. Since 27 October 2008 the New Claim line has received 13,108 calls. A total of 1,588 calls to that line were unanswered, an average of 123 calls each week.

During this same period the Enquiry Line has received 24,136 calls. A total of 13,749 calls to that line were unanswered, an average of 1,057 each week.

In line with developments in Great Britain, the call volumes for ESA in Northern Ireland are more than twice those anticipated at the initial planning stage. This demonstrates a high level of interest in the telephony based service. To ensure that customers receive the required level of service, an additional 18 staff have been recruited for the telephone teams which will significantly increase the ESA Centre's capacity to answer calls promptly.

### Housing Condition Surveys

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister for Social Development who won the tender for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 5 year housing condition surveys. (AQW 4598/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and its staff have responsibility for production of the House Condition Survey.

### Legislation to Protect Landlords

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister for Social Development what legislation is in place to protect landlords from tenants who vacate their properties without giving notice and without paying rent. (AQW 4607/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 introduced on 1 April 2007, requires both landlords and tenants to give four weeks written notice of their intention to end a tenancy. In addition a landlord/ tenant relationship is a contract and as such is enforceable through the courts.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many incapacity claimants have had their cases reviewed in the last three years and how many of those reviewed had their benefits removed. (AQW 4613/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested on the total number of reviews of Incapacity Benefit is not available. The figures provided in the table below relate to claims where entitlement to benefit was removed as a result of a review.

Year	Claims*
1/09/05-31/08/06	21,693
1/09/06-31/08/07	19,658
1/09/07-31/08/08	18,714

\* The figures include claims to Incapacity Benefit where an amount of Incapacity Benefit was in payment and where National Insurance credit only was awarded.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many incapacity claimants in the North Down constituency have had their cases reviewed in the last three years; and how many of those reviewed had their benefits removed. (AQW 4614/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested on the total number of reviews of Incapacity Benefit is not available. The figures provided in the table below relate to claims (for North Down Parliamentary constituency residents) where entitlement to benefit was removed as a result of a review.

Year	Claims*
1/09/05-31/08/06	611
1/09/06-31/08/07	499
1/09/07-31/08/08	515

\* The figures include claims to Incapacity Benefit where an amount of Incapacity Benefit was in payment and where National Insurance credit only was awarded.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Incapacity Benefit appeals were (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed, in the last three years. (AQW 4650/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The total number of Incapacity Benefit appeals (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed, in the last three years were as follows:

	Allowed	Disallowed	Total
2005/06	1,270	2,585	3,855
2006/07	1,616	2,790	4,406
2007/08	1,096	2,132	3,228

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Incapacity Benefit appeals from North Down claimants were (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed, in the last three years. (AQW 4651/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested cannot be provided as The Appeals Service does not maintain statistical data on the basis of constituency areas.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance appeals were (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed, in the last three years. (AQW 4652/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The total number of Disability Living Allowance appeals (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed, in the last three years were as follows:

	Allowed	Disallowed	Total
2005/06	1,546	3,758	5,304
2006/07	1,560	3,003	4,563
2007/08	1,716	3,307	5,023

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance claimants had their case reviewed in the last three years; and how many of these cases were (i) reduced; and (ii) removed completely, from the claimant. (AQW 4653/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The table below shows the number of Disability Living Allowance cases reviewed in each of the last 3 years, how many were reduced and how many were disallowed.

#### DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE

Year	Number of Reviews	Number Reduced	Number Disallowed
2005/06	15,486	194	349
2006/07	14,525	210	359
2007/08	19,317	210	427

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Disability Living Allowance claimants in North Down had their case reviewed in the last three years; and in how many of these cases was it (i) reduced; and (ii) removed completely, from the claimant. (AQW 4654/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is not available. While this information is available on a Northern Ireland wide basis (AQW 4653/09 refers) the data is extracted from the Department for Work and Pensions IT Systems which in this instance cannot be further broken down by Parliamentary constituency.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development what is the target timescale for processing Housing Benefit applications. (AQW 4655/09)



**Minister for Social Development:** The target timescale for new Housing Benefit claims is to process 100% of new claims (where all required information has been provided) within 14 days.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development the actual timescale for processing Housing Benefit applications, on average, for (i) Northern Ireland; (b) Cookstown District Council; and (c) Magherafelt District Council. (AQW 4656/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The figures below detail the percentage of new claims processed within 14 days (at the end of December 2008):

Northern Ireland	82%
Cookstown	80%
Magherafelt	82%

### Housing Benefit

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development how many housing benefit applications are still being processed in total for (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) Cookstown District Council; and (iii) Magherafelt District Council. (AQW 4657/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The figures below detail the number of claims still being processed in the areas in question (at the end of December 2008):

Northern Ireland	3781
Cookstown	64
Magherafelt	119

### Housing Executive

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many ASBOs were issued by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each year since their inception; and what was the cost to the NIHE for issuing them. (AQW 4674/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) was introduced in 2004. Since then the Housing Executive has applied to the Courts in two cases for the award and issue of an ASBO:

- 1 Interim Anti Social Behaviour Order was granted in May 2005.
- 1 Anti Social Behaviour Order was granted in December 2006.

Obtaining an Anti Social Behaviour Order would incur approximately £2,500 in legal fees but this would vary depending on the length and complexity of the case. The cost to Housing Executive resources involved in the preparation of cases is not available.

### Carers Review

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Carers Review; and when he expects to report the review. (AQW 4688/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The joint review with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety of support for carers is progressing well and I expect that the review will be completed in the near future.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many DLA appeals from North Down claimants in the last three years were (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed. (AQW 4697/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested cannot be provided as The Appeals Service does not maintain statistical data on the basis of constituency areas.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for Disability Living Allowance (i) have been received; (ii) went to appeal and (iii) had their appeals rejected, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4700/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is set out in the table below:

#### DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE

Year	*DLA Applications Received	Appeals Received	Appeals Rejected
2003/04	36,240	8,966	5,978
2004/05	38,844	6,584	3,790
2005/06	40,034	5,552	3,752
2006/07	39,320	5,442	2,985
2007/08	38,323	6,125	3,309

\* Figures include both new claims and renewal applications for Disability Living Allowance.

### Health and Well Being Programme

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment regarding the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone of the delivery of its Health and Well Being programme; and whether the Action Zone is the best delivery agent for the programme. (AQW 4701/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Health and Well Being Programme for the Armagh Neighbourhood Renewal Area, which was funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund, was promoted by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust using the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone as the delivery agent. I am aware that there have been some difficulties in terms of staff resources in the Health Action Zone. However, officials from my Department are engaging with both the Trust and Health action Zone and I am content that a wide range of programmes are being delivered to meet the health needs of the residents of the Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Communities

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact, on neighbourhood renewal communities in Armagh City, of Dungannon Health Action Zone having no project worker in place. (AQW 4704/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** I am aware that the health and well-being programme in Armagh, which is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment fund, has experienced some difficulties with the availability of staff resources. Officials from my Department are engaging with representatives from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone to ensure that the impact of these difficulties is minimised and a wide range of programmes has been delivered to meet the health needs of the residents of the Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister for Social Development if she is aware of any guidelines regarding how community groups should engage participants for courses and projects funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards. (AQW 4705/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** Community involvement is core to the ethos of Neighbourhood Renewal. Whilst there are no specific guidelines in place in relation to the role of community representatives as regards the engagement of participants for courses and projects funded through Neighbourhood Renewal it is considered that community representatives, with their extensive local knowledge, are well placed to be active partners in this regard. The overarching principle is that projects must benefit residents of Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact that the long term precautionary suspension of a neighbourhood renewal worker and other subsequent actions by Armagh City District Council will have on; (i) Armagh City neighbourhood renewal communities; (ii) relations between community representatives and Armagh City and District Council; and (iii) the Armagh Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board and sub groups. (AQW 4706/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** I am aware that there are tensions in the relationship between a number of community representatives on the Armagh Neighbourhood Partnership and Armagh City and District Council. Officials from my Department have been engaging with all the parties involved to ensure that the delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal programme in Armagh is not affected by the present situation.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the failure by the Chief Executive of Armagh City and District Council to respond to a letter from a senior official from her Department to try to resolve the breakdown on relations between community representatives, the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership board and Armagh City and District Council. (AQW 4707/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** A reply to the letter in question was issued on behalf of the Chief Executive of Armagh City and District Council on 30 January. However, some of the issues raised relate to an ongoing human resources case and the Chief Executive is unable to respond to these at this stage. Officials from my Department have been engaging on a bi-lateral basis, with both parties to ensure that the delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal programme in Armagh is not affected by the present situation.

### Cathedral Road Complex, Armagh City

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the renovation of the artificial pitch at the Cathedral Road complex, Armagh City; to outline if the project is on target and when it will be completed. (AQW 4708/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Cathedral Road playing field replacement project is progressing on target and is on schedule, subject to the normal considerations associated with a project of this nature, to be completed by its target date of 30 March 2009.

### Armagh Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister for Social Development if she will investigate the reasons for the failure of Mullacreevie Community Flat to be renovated for use in youth activities, as it has been on the Armagh Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan for over two years. (AQW 4709/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Housing Executive has leased flats 23a and 23b Mullacreevie to the Mullacreevie Development Association for use as a community base. The property at 23a was refurbished using Neighbourhood Renewal funding in 2004 and the Armagh Neighbourhood Partnership has endorsed a further

project to refurbish 23b to cater for youth activities within the estate. Sketch drawings have been completed and consultation with the community group on the final layout is ongoing. The Housing Executive proposes to submit an application for funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund with a view to carrying out the work in the 2009/10 financial year.

### Social Security Offices

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the general conditions of all Social Security Offices; and what plans there are for a modernisation programme. (AQW 4713/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Jobs and Benefits Project has modernised the estate of 25 of the 35 local offices. Working on behalf of the Social Security Agency and Department for Employment and Learning, the project is currently progressing the implementation of the final 10 Jobs & Benefits offices which will replace the last remaining Social Security Offices and Jobcentres with new Jobs & Benefits offices.

Work is already underway for the development of Jobs & Benefits offices in Andersonstown and Ballymena and these are scheduled for go-live early 2010. A procurement programme is currently ongoing to secure sites and developers or contractors for the remaining 8 offices and plans are at various stages of development for the respective locations.

Subject to the outcome of the Agency's Strategic Business Review public consultation, securing planning permission and the procurement of contractors, the remaining offices will be developed over the next number of years. The project is also taking forward further refurbishment work to the Foyle Jobs & Benefits office.

### Pension Credit

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Social Development how many pension credit applications (i) are currently in the system; and (ii) have been in the system for more than 4 weeks. (AQW 4721/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is set out below;

- (i) State Pension Credit applications cannot be processed until all necessary evidence has been received as required by the benefit legislation. This is to ensure entitlement is determined correctly. At February 3rd 2009 Pension Service had 471 applications with all supporting evidence and a further 2779 awaiting information from customers. The overall time taken to process a claim does not affect the start date of payment. Payment will be backdated to the point the claim was first submitted.
- (ii) It is not possible to provide information on individual cases which are over 4 weeks, as the clearance time for processing Pension Credit new claims is measured as an Average Actual Clearance Time from the point at which claimants have supplied all necessary supporting evidence. Since July 2008 an average of 1400 new Pension Credit claims have been received each month.

### Pension Credit Applications

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister for Social Development what is the average processing time for pension credit applications. (AQW 4722/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The average time to process State Pension Credit applications to date this year is 14.97 days and within the target of 15 days. This is measured from the point at which the customer has provided all necessary information to enable entitlement to be determined.

### Performance Report on the NIHE Wood Pellet Boilers Trials

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the findings from the Performance Report on the NIHE Wood Pellet Boilers Trials, and in particular, the costs to tenants in comparison to other heating systems. (AQW 4725/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** There has not been a Performance Report published on the NIHE Wood Pellet Boilers Trials. The initial Housing Executive trial scheme only involved the installation of 4 wood pellet

boilers. In total 26 wood pellet boilers have now been installed by the Housing Executive in pilot schemes. However, the Housing Executive does not consider that there is yet sufficient data regarding the ongoing maintenance costs of wood pellet boilers to allow a comprehensive analysis of its true lifetime costs. The Housing Executive will continue to evaluate the pilot schemes.

### Grants Office in North Down

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the budget for the grants office in North Down, Ards and Strangford for the 2009/10 financial year. (AQW 4738/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The budget for grants provision for the areas in question is not yet available. The detail of overall grants provision for 2009/10 is currently being formulated and will be made available after approval by the Housing Executive's Board.

### Strategy for Communities at Risk

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline her strategy for communities at risk, in particular Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee. (AQW 4751/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** I would refer the Member to his letter of 28 January and my response.

### Specialist Debt Advisers

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Specialist Debt Advisers her Department funds in each parliamentary constituency. (AQW 4755/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department does not directly fund Specialist Debt Advisers. Through the Community Support Programme which is delivered by local councils, my Department provides over £5 million of funding of which almost £2 million goes specifically for providing front line advice services. One of the key services provided by advice agencies is advice and representation on all matters regarding debt issues.

Additionally, Minister Foster from the Department of Enterprise Trade has invested in the provision of a free confidential face to face debt advice service since 2005. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Industry has recently renewed a contract with Citizens Advice to provide 12 full-time debt advisers across NI through to 2011. The locations of these advisers are as follows; three based in Belfast (Andersonstown, City Centre and East Belfast), three in Derry, and one in each of Coleraine, Antrim, Enniskillen, Lurgan and Newry.

### Social Security Benefit

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many Social Security Benefit Application forms were received that were subject to (i) staff error and; (ii) the loss and/or misplacing of information. (AQW 4758/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information sought is not available. Many individuals are able to complete their benefit application forms themselves. Others may seek help from an external advice body or they can seek assistance from a Social Security Agency member of staff. It is however the personal responsibility of each individual claimant to ensure that their application form is both accurate and completed in full.

Each year the Social Security Agency receives over 500,000 benefit and Social Fund applications including those made by telephone. Given such volumes, there may be occasions when an item is mislaid or not received. Where such instances are brought to the Agency's attention urgent steps are taken to locate the missing item, and if necessary, action is taken to obtain a replacement application form from the customer.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many housing benefit applications are still being processed in North Down Borough Council. (AQW 4769/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** 150 Housing Benefit claims were in the process of being assessed by the Housing Executive at the end of January 2009.

### Mortgage Payments

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Social Development if there have been changes in mortgage payments for the unemployed in receipt of income support to have the reconsideration period reduced from 40 to 13 weeks. (AQW 4774/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** From 5th January 2009 a package of measures was introduced to support vulnerable home owners who may face having their homes repossessed during the current economic downturn. The measures include shortening the waiting period in Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance for assistance with mortgage interest payments. The waiting period is shortened from 39 or 26 weeks to 13 weeks for new working age claims. There is an increase in the capital limit on loans from £100,000 to £200,000 for which assistance is available for new working age and certain Pension Credit claims.

These measures should go some way in helping to prevent the rise in repossessions.

### Programme for Government

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister for Social Development what risk assessment she has carried out of the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4786/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department has risk management processes in place and there is an objective based assessment of all risks. Progress against my Department's Programme for Government targets is formally monitored and an assessment is made of the impact and likelihood of any risk to the achievement of targets. For example, the pressures on the Housing programme due to the shortfall in capital receipts has the potential to impact on the provision of 10,000 social and affordable houses by 2013. Notwithstanding this, I am doing everything in my power to deliver the number of houses promised.

In relation to the Urban Regeneration work of my Department, difficulties in leveraging in private finance and disposing of assets due to the economic downturn has resulted in some work being re-phased, however this is not yet impacting directly on the Programme for Government Targets.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Project

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development when will her Department make a decision on the category 2 jobs through the Neighbourhood Renewal project. (AQW 4787/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is about providing services which most effectively address the causes of deprivation.

My Department has been in discussion with other departments in relation to the long-term provision of some services in Neighbourhood Renewal areas, currently supported by DSD but which fall under the functional responsibility of others. I will be making an announcement in the near future on the outcome.

### Funding Allocated by Department

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding her Department has allocated to the private sector, public sector, public and private partnerships and the community voluntary sector, since taking up post. (AQW 4807/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information relating to all funding by my Department is set out in the following table:

Funding allocated to:	Years 2007-08 & 2008-09 (£m)
Private Sector	13.28
Public Sector	854.05
Public/private partnerships	-
Community/voluntary sector	85.38
<b>Total funding allocated</b>	<b>952.71</b>

### Supported Housing Schemes

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development what level of co-operation exists between her Department and the Health and Social Care Trusts in providing supported housing schemes; and to list all proposed and existing schemes, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4809/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department, through the Housing Executive, is tied into well established Supporting People commissioning structures with the Health and Social Care Trusts, that prioritise supported housing schemes for entry to the Social Housing Development Programme.

There are 930 existing schemes in receipt of Supported People funding. I have arranged for a table detailing the schemes to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Proposed schemes are included in the Social Housing Development Programme. The new programme, covering the period 2009/10 to 2013/14, is currently under review and will issue during February. On issue, I will arrange for a table detailing the most up to date position to be placed in the Assembly Library.

### Queens Parade Project in Bangor

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Queens Parade project in Bangor. (AQW 4871/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department is currently reviewing a response to the Department's development brief from Karl Greenfarm Limited. This review is well advanced and is expected to be completed by the end of March 2009.

### SSA Strategic Business Review

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have written to her Department opposing the proposal to cut staff as described in the SSA Strategic Business Review. (AQW 4876/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Social Security Agency has not proposed any cuts in staff. As set out in the Strategic Business Review consultation documents no staff will be losing their employment.

Nevertheless, out of 235 responses received, 21 people (including 6 MLA's, representatives of 5 District Councils, 5 Voluntary Organisations, 3 Trade Union Councils, 1 member of the public and 1 from a local newspaper) have written to the Agency regarding potential cuts in staff and the Agency has replied to address these concerns.

### Capital Infrastructure Projects

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development to list all capital infrastructure projects (i) under construction; (ii) in the procurement process; or (iii) to be advertised in this financial year, in the Strangford constituency and to detail the aggregated value of each. (AQW 4897/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information on infrastructure projects in my Department relevant to the Strangford constituency, is as follows:

- (i) There are five capital infrastructure Housing projects under construction in the Strangford Constituency as follows:-
- a) 1 general needs housing unit at 4 Inisharoon Court, Newtownards
  - b) 40 general needs housing units at 31-35 Donaghadee Road, Newtownards
  - c) 20 Category 1 Elderly units Church Street, Newtownards
  - d) Environmental Improvement scheme at Bowtown Phase 1 – total cost £853,000
  - e) Estate infrastructure scheme, Rectory Road parking – total cost £264,000

For reasons of commercial sensitivity the Housing Executive does not release individual scheme values with regard to the Social Housing Development Programme.

- (ii) There are four capital infrastructure projects in the procurement process in Strangford Constituency as follows:-
- 1 general needs housing unit at 60 The Old Mill, Killyleagh
  - 10 Category 1 Elderly units at 38 Belfast Road, Comber

Both of these schemes have received full scheme approval by the Housing Executive and 38 Belfast Road also has full planning approval. In addition there are a further two Urban Regeneration projects at the procurement stage as follows:

- Ards Development Bureau and Community Network - £1.1m
- Peninsula Healthy Living (build in Portaferry) - £0.06m, although no construction is expected before June 2008.

- (iii) There are no further projects to be advertised in this financial year.

The Member may also wish to note that plans for work to Newtownards Social Security Office are at an early stage and currently focus on the redevelopment of the Social Security Agency site at East Street in the town. Once office requirements are decided and planning permission approved, a procurement exercise will be required to secure a building contractor. Current planning assumptions suggest that the earliest possible start date for the Newtownards office development is likely to be December 2010, with costs expected to be in the region of £3.62m.

### Good Morning Project

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 4438/09, if her Department is planning to fund the Good Morning Project in Belfast. (AQW 4927/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** As previously stated a potential funding package has been identified for this project. My Department is one of the potential funders and will contribute subject to the required economic appraisal and a full funding package being confirmed.

### Social Security Benefits

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development what sub-categories are contained in the definition of “error” in relation of the administration of social security benefits. (AQW 4945/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** In the administration of social security benefits error divides into two subcategories of official error and customer error as defined below.

Official error occurs when benefit awards are miscalculated as a result of an official not applying the benefit specific rules correctly or not taking into account all the circumstances applicable to an individual.

Customer error occurs where there has been a failure by the customer to notify a reportable change that affects the benefit in payment but there is no suspicion of fraud/fraudulent intent.



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## NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

### Ormiston House

**Mrs N Long** asked the Assembly Commission to outline its current plans for Ormiston house, the current position on the development plans and when a formal planning application will be lodged. (AQW 4622/09)

**The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson):** A range of options for the future use of the Ormiston House site are currently being considered by the Commission.

One of the options being considered is a proposal for residential development on the site, in conjunction with the restoration of the listed buildings, in order to maximise the potential value of the site. An application to formally enter into pre-application discussion (PAD) in respect of this proposal has been submitted to the Planning Service.

No formal planning application has been made nor will one be made until further consideration is given to all of the potential options.



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