
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions	
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	[p1]
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	[p3]
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	[p8]
Department of Education	[p14]
Department for Employment and Learning	[p48]
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	[p49]
Department of the Environment	[p54]
Department of Finance and Personnel	[p77]
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	[p81]
Department for Regional Development	[p91]
Department for Social Development	[p99]
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	[p109]
Written Answers	[p117]

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 20 February 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Implementation of EU Legislation and Regulation

Mr J Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister who is responsible in its Department for European affairs; and who is accountable for the implementation of EU legislation and regulation. (AQW 3849/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): OFMDFM Ministers take lead responsibility for co-ordinating engagement in Europe on behalf of the Executive. Within OFMDFM, Ministers are responsible for Departmental European policy and senior officials are accountable to Ministers for the implementation of EU relevant legislation and regulation.

Programme for Government Targets

Mr D McNarry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what risk assessment it has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4826/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Delivery Agreement for each of OFMDFM's Programme for Government (PfG) Public Service Agreements (PSAs) set out the Department's strategy for the management of the risk. As PSAs are cross-cutting in nature, this will include the management of any identified risks to the achievement of targets that fall to other Ministers and their departments to deliver. As we approach the end of Year 1 of the 2008-11 PfG, we have commissioned a review of the PSA Delivery Agreements, and the risk management strategy set out in each PSA.

All of OFMDFM's PfG commitments and targets will be reflected in the Department's business plan. Within the business plan, each target will be subjected to a further risk assessment.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many meetings it has held with each of the three MEPs since devolution. (AQW 4857/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: A list of meetings between OFMDFM and MEPs is set out in the tables below.

Minister	MEP	Date	Purpose / context
Ian Paisley, Martin McGuinness	Jim Nicholson	19 July 2007	Briefing on Taskforce
Ian Paisley, Martin McGuinness	Bairbre de Brún	19 July 2007	Briefing on Taskforce
Ian Paisley, Martin McGuinness	Jim Nicholson, Bairbre de Brún	10 September 2007	Breakfast meeting with European Parliament Regional Development Committee

Minister	MEP	Date	Purpose / context
Peter Robinson, Martin McGuinness	Jim Nicholson	10 November 2008	Potential for greater engagement between the Executive and the EU
Peter Robinson, Martin McGuinness	Jim Nicholson, Bairbre de Brun	10 February 2009	Update following meeting with Commissioner Fischer Boel; general briefing on Taskforce

OFMDFM OFFICIALS' MEETINGS WITH MEPS

MEP	Date	Purpose / context
Jim Allister	8 May 2007	Meeting with InvestNI team in Brussels
Jim Nicholson	13 June 2007	Visit of Sir Reg Empey, MLA
Jim Nicholson	29 June 2007	Meeting with NSMC Secretariat
Jim Nicholson Bairbre de Brún	10 September 2007	Briefing by NSMC Secretariat to European Parliament Regional Development Committee
Jim Allister	22 November 2007	Barroso Taskforce – NICS visit to Brussels
Jim Nicholson	22 November 2007	Barroso Taskforce – NICS visit to Brussels
Bairbre de Brún	22 November 2007	Barroso Taskforce – NICS visit to Brussels
Jim Nicholson	19 March 2008	To discuss ONIEB premises in Brussels
Jim Allister	11 June 2008	Introduce new team member
Jim Nicholson	11 June 2008	Introduce new team member
Jim Nicholson	20 January 2009	Views on EU matters
Jim Allister	20 January 2009	Views on EU issues

In addition to these meetings, OFMDFM officials working in the Executive's Office in Brussels are in regular, less formal contact with the MEPs, for example when they address groups of visitors or support functions that are hosted in the Executive's office in Brussels.

Barracks in Omagh

Mr J Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action it is taking to ensure that the history of the site associated with the barracks in Omagh is retained. (AQW 4939/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The former military sites at Lisanelly and St Lucia in Omagh are owned by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

We are pressing the Prime Minister to have these, and other sites, gifted and, if they become the property of the Executive, issues relating to the preservation of the history of the sites should be considered by the relevant redevelopment department.

The Member will wish to note that some of the buildings at St Lucia do already have listed status.

Child Care Strategy

Mr T Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Child Care Strategy will be published for consultation; and which Department has the responsibility for taking it forward.

(AQW 5130/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: A Sub-Group of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People is currently considering the issue of childcare provision here.

It is hoped that this Sub-Group will provide a preliminary report to the Ministerial Sub-Committee later this month; the report will map existing provision and explore the wider economic case for childcare. Decisions will be taken at that stage as to departmental responsibility and any outworking of the proposals therein.

Pork Dioxin

Mr G Savage asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the outcome of the meeting with EU Commissioner Fischer Boel on Tuesday 10th February 2009, about the pork dioxin incident.

(AQW 5141/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We, and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Arlene Foster, and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Michelle Gildernew, met with Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel to brief her on the handling of the dioxin situation and the serious consequences that the discovery of contaminated feed has had on the beef and pork sectors at both production and processing levels.

The Commissioner was supportive of actions that would restore confidence in our beef and pigmeat markets both in Europe and the rest of the world. It was agreed that an urgent formal request for a co-financed (i.e. national and EU funding) Exceptional Support Measure would be submitted and also a request for state aid approval to enable the payment of any national funds. These would be broadly in line with the Exceptional Support Measure and State Aid approval agreed for the ROI and would be taken forward by DETI and DARD working with DEFRA.

Both the First Minister and the DETI Minister raised the issue of the low level of dairy export refunds, the opening of intervention to different types of cheese and the possibility of increasing the tonnage into intervention. The Commissioner urged us to encourage the NI Dairy Industry to diversify as the industry's dependence on whole milk powder made it very vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices. She indicated that the Commission was monitoring the world market closely and export refund levels would be set accordingly. We noted that the Commissioner was open to increasing the tonnage into intervention but that this would be subject to a tendering process.

Minister Gildernew underlined the need for flexibility in the Rural Development Programme in the current economic climate and that official-level engagement would follow. Minister Gildernew also discussed the closure of the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Match Funding

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will treat in-kind contributions by community and voluntary groups as eligible for match funding through the Rural Development Programme and rural anti-poverty programmes.

(AQW 4098/09)

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

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the use of interferon gamma testing to combat Bovine Tuberculosis.

(AQW 4746/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The skin test is the standard EU test for the screening cattle herds for TB. European legislation stipulates that Member States must use the skin test for routine herd testing.

At present, we are already using the Gamma interferon test in specific circumstances. However it is only approved under the current relevant EU Directive for use as a supplementary test for TB, and so it has to be used in conjunction with the skin test. It is recognised by the EU as a useful additional test to, but not a replacement for, the skin test.

Our assessment is that the gamma interferon test has a place in the TB programme in the north for detecting disease. It identifies additional infected animals that are negative to the skin test. We will continue to develop the use of this tool.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures have been taken to introduce pre-movement tests in relation to the eradication of Bovine Tuberculosis. (AQW 4747/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The EU rules require pre-movement testing for animals exported to other Member States. In the north of Ireland, we comply fully with this requirement and in addition, pre-movement testing is required for animals exported to Britain.

In the north of Ireland, TB testing is carried out annually in accordance with EU Directive 64/432 which requires that for a herd to retain officially tuberculosis free status all animals on the holding must be tested on an annual basis.

We identified a gap in the testing in relation to single animals that miss an annual herd test and in order to plug this gap, we have introduced a requirement for a pre-movement test for the specific category of single animals that have missed their annual herd test. From summer 2008, the movement of single animals that have missed their annual test is restricted after 15 months, until they are tested.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact that the movement of badger populations from outside any future cull areas would have on the prevalence of tuberculosis in cattle population. (AQW 4748/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The evidence from Britain and the South is contradictory in relation to the potential impact of the movement of badger populations from outside any cull areas on the prevalence of tuberculosis in the cattle population. In Britain, it was thought that this was an important factor, while in the South it was thought that there was no apparent effect.

We recognise that the movement of badger populations from outside any cull areas may have an impact on the prevalence of tuberculosis in the cattle population, but this is currently an unknown situation in the North.

Our priority in the first phase of the new TB strategy will be to build the evidence we need to make informed policy decisions about wildlife intervention. The proposed badger prevalence study is one of the actions that I believe are necessary to inform decisions, as is the development of plans for a badger removal trial. These studies will provide baseline information on disease and the costs of badger intervention. They may also give us information about whether the movement of badger populations from the study areas has an impact on the prevalence of TB in the cattle population.

Subject to the agreement of the DOE Minister where necessary, and subject to bids for the significant additional funding that will be needed, DARD will undertake the studies and trials that are necessary to guide what we do to reduce the transmission of TB between wildlife and cattle.

Interferon Gamma Tests

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what scientific evidence exists to suggest that the interferon gamma test is an effective way to eliminate bovine tuberculosis. (AQW 4749/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department has no scientific evidence to suggest that the interferon gamma test alone is an effective way to eliminate bovine tuberculosis.

The interferon gamma test is approved under the current relevant EU Directive for use only as a supplementary test for TB. It can only be used in conjunction with the skin test.

Our assessment is that the gamma interferon test has a place in the TB programme in the north for dealing with the disease. It identifies additional infected animals that are negative to the skin test. We will continue to develop the use of this tool.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what guarantees can be given that all badgers carrying tuberculosis would be eliminated by a cull. (AQW 4750/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There are still key gaps in our scientific knowledge that need to be filled to inform what we do to deal effectively with the reservoir of infection in badgers, and to enable us to deal with TB comprehensively and conclusively.

We have identified studies that will provide baseline information on disease and the costs of badger intervention, and inform where any cull or other intervention may be most effectively targeted.

This is work in progress. There are currently no plans for my Department to undertake a cull of badgers.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what scientific evidence exists to suggest that badger cull is the most effective way to eliminate Bovine Tuberculosis. (AQW 4830/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: TB is a multi-factorial disease. The new strategic approach that I outlined in December 2008 to move towards the eradication of TB will require a holistic approach that addresses 3 key strands together - real partnership between government and industry, controlling the spread of TB between cattle, and addressing the wildlife factor. All three are priority areas for action.

On the wildlife aspect, whilst it is established that there is a link between TB in badgers and TB in cattle, we do not know with any degree of certainty the extent to which badgers contribute to the incidence of TB in cattle here. Neither do we know what impact badger removal would have on the overall incidence of disease in cattle across the north.

The scientific evidence from Britain and the South around the impact of the removal of badgers on TB in cattle is complex, and at times conflicting. Having assessed all the available information from work in Britain and in the South, the conclusion of our veterinary assessment is that it is not possible to extrapolate the information we need from the work that has been done in Britain and in the South. There is insufficient evidence available to conclude that intervention in badger populations would definitely achieve an effective reduction in TB incidence in cattle in the north.

The position is that there are still key gaps in our scientific knowledge that need to be filled to inform what we do to deal effectively with the reservoir of infection in badgers. One of the priority areas for action in the first phase of the TB Strategy will be to pursue the necessary information gathering actions and research to fill the knowledge gaps and build the evidence we need to make informed policy decisions about wildlife intervention in the north.

Subject to the agreement of the DOE Minister where necessary, and subject to bids for the significant additional funding that will be needed, DARD will undertake the studies and trials that are necessary to guide what we do to reduce the transmission of TB between wildlife and cattle.

Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development the amount of compensation paid out for tuberculosis, in each of the last ten years. (AQW 4832/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The amount of compensation paid out for Tuberculosis in each of the last ten years is detailed in the following table:

Year	Compensation
1998/99	4,895,826
1999/00	5,776,774
2000/01	7,921,489
2001/02	8,587,921
2002/03	16,255,611
2003/04	15,408,521
2004/05	12,586,405
2005/06	9,225,891
2006/07	7,887,123
2007/08	8,547,534

Research Projects

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how much money ; and (ii) what percentage of the Department's total budget was committed to research projects, in each of the last ten years.
(AQW 4835/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The table below shows the total amount of money committed to research projects for the above period and relates to the core Department, its Agencies and NDPBs.

Financial Year	Total amount of money committed to research projects	% of the Department's total Budget committed to research projects
1999 – 2000	£6,001,000	Not available ¹
2000 – 2001	£6,111,135	Not available ¹
2001 – 2002	£6,193,728	3.34%
2002 – 2003	£6,289,565	3.39%
2003 – 2004	£6,464,783	2.98%
2004 – 2005	£6,603,525	2.67%
2005 – 2006	£6,876,590	3.19%
2006 – 2007	£7,187,998	3.57%
2007 – 2008	Not yet available ²	
2008 – 2009	Not yet available ³	

1 The Department is not required to retain financial records beyond a 7-year limit and budget details for 1999-2001 are therefore not available.

2 Figures are not available at this time.

3 The Departments accounts for 2008/09 have yet to be finalised.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge.
(AQW 4843/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department is fully committed to paying businesses for goods and services within the 10 day target and monitors and reports upon performance against that target

to management on a monthly basis. For the month of December, which is the first month for which statistics are available, 80% of the invoices for my Department and its agencies were paid within the 10 day target.

DARD will be monitoring the 10 day prompt payment target and inform business areas of their performance.

Meeting with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many meetings she has held with each of the three MEPs since devolution. (AQW 4858/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Since devolution, I have had 5 meetings with Mr Jim Nicholson MEP and 2 meetings with Ms Bairbre De Brun MEP

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail all the research sponsored by her Department on Bovine Tuberculosis that has not been published and to state the reasons for not publishing the research. (AQW 4879/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In the last 10 years, 7 research projects dealing with Bovine Tuberculosis, funded in full by this Department, and 14 externally-funded research projects, supported in part by this Department, have been completed. Research findings have been published from all of these projects. At least 3 further research papers are in preparation for publication.

Community Based Lifelong Learning Schemes

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding is available to community based lifelong learning schemes to retrain rural dwellers seeking employment. (AQW 5262/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department is not responsible for lifelong learning schemes therefore it does not provide specific funding for the purpose which you describe.

Farm Modernisation Grants

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why her Department adopted a 'first come, first served' approach to applications for farm modernisation grants; and for her assessment as to whether this approach is a fair and equitable means of distributing funds. (AQW 5358/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Application packs have been available from the 28th January for the Farm Modernisation Programme. Approximately 18,000 packs have been issued.

The Programme opened for applications on Tuesday 17th February morning at 9am. Applications have been received in to eight offices, Omagh, Enniskillen, Coleraine, Ballymena, Newry, Downpatrick, Armagh and Dungannon. The offices were set up to an exact specification to ensure that applications were processed in a unified and efficient manner.

The method for allocating funds has been debated over the last two years. My officials consulted widely with all stakeholders, the farming unions and other representatives, who unilaterally favoured this approach. If I may outline the difference in this method and traditional grant applications:

Traditionally, a farmer would have been asked to complete a fairly lengthy form and been asked to describe, using this example, "tell me in a hundred words why this item would modernise your farm". His application would then have been sent to an assessment panel who in turn would look at his form and score it. The uptake of this scheme as I have said has been 18,000, therefore a panel would look at potentially 18,000 forms, score them and then rank the applications. This would probably take, using these numbers, upwards of a year before an award could be made, never mind how the forms could actually be evaluated and scored.

I agreed to adopt this innovative approach, following a further review towards the end of 2008, because it was efficient and minimised the red tape for the farmer. Instead of a farmer having to get quotations for items, my

officials compiled a list of equipment, which was consulted on and which were already deemed to modernise farming and horticulture businesses. This meant the farmer didn't have to complete this part of the form. Having removed this exercise, again after consultation, the method for actually awarding grant was discussed widely with all stakeholders. One option was to go for random stratified sampling. This was discounted because it lacked a satisfactory audit trail. Whereas the first come first served option was to be receipted giving a date and exact time of processing across any office in the north of Ireland.

The Programme targets specifically the introduction of new technologies and innovation, improved animal health and welfare, increased hygiene control and product storage, enhanced occupational safety and environmental status, increased business and energy. It is designed to increase both economic growth and labour productivity.

The rationale for this specific targeting was, given the budgetary constraint, an evident potential to realise modernisation over a larger number of farms through small scale grants with an immediate effect. In addition, low farm incomes and the affordability of the match funding requirement plus the potential to complement the very significant investment in built infrastructure under the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme.

To summarise then, I do believe that this methodology is indeed fair and equitable.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Introduction of Safety Certification

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to her answer to AQW 4102/09, to outline the timeframe for the introduction of safety certification. (AQW 4502/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): I currently hope to introduce the safety certification scheme, provided for under the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, in the 2009 calendar year. This timetable remains subject to the normal statutory processes including the approval, by the Northern Ireland Assembly, of relevant subordinate legislation.

Building Ulster-Scots Links

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Scotland or the Scottish First Minister about building Ulster-Scots links. (AQW 4555/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I met with Minister Fabiani, the Scottish Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture when she visited Belfast on 8 September 2008. At that meeting we discussed several Ulster-Scots / Scots issues which included roads infrastructure and ferry links between Northern Ireland and Scotland, broadcasting and improving Ulster-Scots cultural and heritage links.

Anniversary of the Gaelic Athletic Association

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action his Department is taking to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Gaelic Athletic Association. (AQW 4677/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster Council of the GAA launched their proposed 125th Anniversary Celebrations on Tuesday 3rd February.

I understand a range of events have been organised to mark the anniversary.

My Department has not been approached regarding the commemorations.

Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Events

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many (i) Irish language; and (ii) Ulster-Scots events, he has attended since taking up office. (AQW 4679/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since becoming Minister I have received three invitations to Irish language events but have been unable to attend due to diary commitments. I have received 19 invitations to Ulster-Scots events of which I have attended eight.

Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic Languages

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what work his Department has undertaken in conjunction with the Scottish Executive in relation to of Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic languages. (AQW 4745/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has worked with the Scottish Executive and counterparts in the Republic of Ireland in the establishment and funding of the 'Colmcille' organisation. The aim of 'Colmcille' is to foster support for the Gaelic language and develop links between Gaelic Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. As part of a tripartite funding agreement my department contributes £180k to this activity annually.

Officials have also engaged with the Scottish Executive on Irish language and Scots Gàidhlig issues at British-Irish Council Language Sector sub-group meetings.

Language Arts Officers

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if the two new posts for language arts officers replaces the Arts Council post of Traditional Arts Officer. (AQW 4789/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Arts Council has advised that the Traditional Arts Officer post was last filled in September 2007, and has historically been a part-time one.

In February 2008 the Arts Council sought to fill two part-time Language Arts Officers (one Irish language and one Ulster-Scots). The posts were advertised in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Newsletter and Lá (an Irish language newspaper).

The Arts Council received very few applications for the posts, and the candidates invited for interview withdrew their applications before the interviews were held. The Arts Council was therefore unsuccessful in filling these posts, and has advised that it will not be appointing two language arts officers.

The Arts Council is currently restructuring its Arts Development Department and intends to advertise for a part time Traditional Arts Officer in the next six months. There has been no shortfall in support for the traditional arts sector. Support is currently provided by Arts Council staff with relevant knowledge of the sector.

Re-Imaging Communities Programme

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline any new funding arrangements for the ICCP for the next financial year in relation to the re-imagining communities programme funded by the Arts Council. (AQW 4813/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Intra-Community Cohesion Project (ICCP) was awarded £48,354 under the Re-Imaging Communities Programme in November 2008 towards its project - Re-imagining Kilcooley. To date £24,177 has been paid out to the group with the remainder to be paid as the project progresses.

As applicants can have only one live application at a time, the group will be eligible to re-apply when its current project is completed.

The Arts Council intends to run a reduced Re-Imaging Communities Programme in 2009/10 using the remaining £750k of Lottery funding.

Programme for Government Targets

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what risk assessment he has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4828/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department's Programme for Government (PfG) targets are managed in line with DCAL's Risk Management Framework.

In addition, a Public Service Agreement (PSA) Board has been established within my Department to monitor progress against DCAL's commitments under the PfG, including reviewing all relevant risks where appropriate.

Finally, as with all other Departments, DCAL's progress against its PfG commitments is monitored on a six monthly basis.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many meetings he has held with each of the three MEPs since devolution. (AQW 4859/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since becoming Minister I have met once with Jim Allister MEP and my predecessor, Edwin Poots MLA, met once with Bairbre de Brun MEP as part of a Sinn Fein delegation.

Multi Sports Stadium

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the MLAs who indicated to him and his Department their support for the proposed stadium at Long Kesh. (AQW 4954/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Neither I nor my department has a list of MLAs who have indicated their support for the proposal to have a multi-sports stadium at the Maze.

Maze Site

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to the answer to AQW 4594, to detail (i) his Department's involvement with Bovale Developments or the Millwood Company; and (ii) any monies paid to the companies. (AQW 5077/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My department has had no funding relationship with either of these two companies.

Newtownards Library

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a time-scale for commencement of work on Newtownards Library. (AQW 5138/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department is committed to the principle of a replacement library for Newtownards, and funding is profiled within the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland for this purpose.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board is currently revising an Economic Appraisal for improved library facilities in Newtownards. Several matters remain outstanding before this can be finalised. After the completion of the Economic Appraisal it will take a minimum of 12 to 15 months for detailed designs to be developed and planning permission to be secured before construction can commence on site.

The likely timescale and cost of the project will not be known until the Economic Appraisal is finalised.

Indigenous Language Strategy

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the development of the Indigenous Language Strategy. (AQO 2087/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Interdepartmental Charter Implementation Group has begun consideration of a strategy for Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages. This strategy aims to protect, enhance and develop the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture and Irish language.

I am pleased to report that a framework on which such a strategy will be built is emerging.

I intend to present an initial paper to the Executive Committee on this matter in the very near future.

Promotion of British Identity and Culture

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the investment and initiatives being supported by his Department to promote British identity and culture. (AQO 2094/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department is tasked with expressing the cultural richness and diversity of Northern Ireland, and affects this through the provision of strategic leadership and resources for the promotion and sustainable development of the culture, arts and leisure sectors. I can assure the Member that, where it is possible, steps are also taken, by my Department and its arms length bodies, to promote British identity and culture. For example:

- DCAL has delegated responsibility to coordinate and facilitate Northern Ireland's response to the London 2012 Olympics. A 2012 Strategy has been developed to ensure that Northern Ireland maximises the benefits arising out of the Olympic and Paralympic Games;
- Furthermore, I recently wrote to the Minister for Sport at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, requesting that he ask the British Olympic Association to give consideration to a suitable re-titling of the British Olympic team name in order to ensure that Northern Ireland's role within the team is fully recognised;
- The service provided by National Museums Northern Ireland has particular regard to the heritage of Northern Ireland but, through its collections, it also includes significant national and international dimensions;
- The Arts Council and the British Council work together to raise awareness of the arts from Northern Ireland on the international stage.

Regional Art Gallery

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans his Department has to invest in a regional art gallery. (AQO 2095/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department is supportive, in principle, of a regional arts gallery. I am aware that the absence of a National Gallery is viewed by many as a significant gap in Northern Ireland's cultural infrastructure.

However, the necessary funding for such a facility has not been secured under ISNI 2.

Before any decision can be made in this regard, considerable preliminary work is required. This will include the development of a feasibility study to identify, consider and cost possible options and will also require the preparation of business cases and the progression of these through the approval process.

In the development of any future plans, the Department will work in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and National Museums Northern Ireland.

Orange Lodge

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions have taken place between the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland about making the unique records held by the Orange Lodge more available to the general public. (AQO 2096/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland have held a number of discussions over recent years on how to preserve and make available the unique archival heritage of the Orange Order in Ireland. PRONI has provided advice and guidance on preservation and storage issues and undertook a pilot digitisation project for the Grand Orange Lodge.

I met with representatives of the Grand Orange Lodge and officials from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in December to explore a way to take this forward. At this meeting it was agreed that the Public Record Office will provide assistance and guidance to the Grand Orange Lodge to undertake a survey of the records held locally by Orange lodges and districts across Northern Ireland.

This will represent the first significant step in a project to identify and catalogue the historical records held by the Orange Order across the province.

North South Ministerial Council

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he approved the 2009/10 business cases for both the Language and Waterways North/South Bodies at the recent North South Ministerial Council meeting in Enniskillen. (AQO 2098/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The council noted the draft 2009 Business Plan for Waterways and Language, which is under consideration by both Sponsor Departments and Finance Departments in line with budgetary processes in the two jurisdictions. Both Sponsor Departments will work together to finalise the Business Plans and bring them forward for approval at a future NSMC meeting.

Devolution of Broadcasting

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has any plans to raise the issue of the devolution of broadcasting with his counterpart in the UK Government. (AQO 2099/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Broadcasting responsibilities and powers remain a reserved matter. However, I am committed where possible, to ensuring that the specific characteristics and needs of Northern Ireland are fully considered in the development of broadcasting policy.

I do not have any plans at present to raise the issue of the devolution of broadcasting with my counterpart in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

However, I have agreed to a joint meeting with my counterparts in the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly, to discuss the future of broadcasting and how the needs of our nations are fully taken into account by the UK Government. A suitable date for this meeting is being arranged.

My Department has also responded to the consultation process on the Ofcom Review of Public Service Broadcasting. I am pleased to advise that Ofcom has listened to our representations and subsequently amended the original proposals for Northern Ireland in its final recommendations to the UK Government. The recommendations were published on 21 January 2009.

Music Performing Arts Society

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consideration he has given to the development of a Music Performing Arts 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 collect and distribute royalties. (AQO 2100/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: 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 may be taken forward.

When the feasibility study is received by my Department it will be given careful consideration and it will assist in making an informed assessment of the current arrangements and the potential impact of the establishment of a local royalty collection agency.

Multi-Sports Stadium

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what long-term strategy for sport his Department will implement following his decision not to proceed with the planned multi-sports stadium at the Maze site. (AQO 2101/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), has developed a new 10 year strategy for sport and physical recreation for Northern Ireland. This Strategy provides a high level framework for the development of sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland and includes the need to the provision of modern and commercially viable sports stadia. The new Strategy has been forwarded to the Northern Ireland Executive for consideration at a future meeting.

Ulster-Scots Agency

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of whether the development of the Ulster-Scots community infrastructure, based on sound community development principles, will be a priority in the strategy and associated funding programme of the Ulster-Scots Agency. (AQO 2102/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency is committed to progressing the development of the Ulster-Scots community infrastructure and its aims towards achieving this are reflected in its corporate and Business Plans.

The Agency recognises the development of the Ulster-Scots community infrastructure based on sound community development principles is essential to the advancement of Ulster-Scots activity, and work in this area is on-going.

My understanding is that at the first Board meeting this year the Board tasked the Chief Executive with bringing forward an integrated community development strategy to be finalised by April 2009.

Community empowerment and the development of the community infrastructure were identified as priorities at the Ulster-Scots Futuresearch conference in 2002 and again at the Ulster-Scots Community Vision Conference in 2008.

Irish Language

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the reasons for the delay in developing a strategy to promote and enhance the Irish language. (AQO 2103/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since the return to devolution my Department has considered responses to consultations on Irish and Ulster-Scots issues.

I intend to present an initial paper to the Executive Committee on this matter in the very near future.

Traditional Arts

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action his Department is taking to promote access to the traditional arts among young people. (AQO 2104/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: DCAL funding for arts is disbursed by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

The Arts Council seeks to promote access to all artforms among young people, including the traditional arts. Whilst there is no specific funding programme designed for the purpose, the Cultural Traditions Programme provides grants for projects enabling young people under the age of 25 to explore and understand more about their common cultural heritage and to gain a respect for cultural diversity through the arts. Projects funded through this programme include activities which promote access to the traditional arts.

The Arts Council has provided £1.19m of funding through the Cultural Traditions programme from 2005/06 to date. Funding has increased by 19% between 2005/06 and the current year.

Thirty-one thousand individuals participated in projects funded through this programme in 2007/08, 80% of whom were aged 11 or below.

A number of organisations have also been supported through the Arts Council's other funding programmes to provide opportunities for young people to engage in traditional arts activities.

The Arts Council will continue its important work in promoting access to the traditional arts among our young people.

Shared Future

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how his Department carries out its responsibility to create a shared future. (AQO 2105/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Improving relations between, and within, communities in Northern Ireland is a long term goal of government.

My department is working to promote good relations and an inclusive society through its contributions to the Shared Future Triennial Action Plan and the Implementation Action Plan for the Racial Equality Strategy.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Academic Selection

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on what will replace academic selection. (AQW 4625/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): De réir an ráitis a thug mé don Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009, tá treoir foilsithe agam ar phróiseas an aistrithe ó bhunscolaíocht go hiarbhunscolaíocht i mí Mheán Fómhair 2010. Déanann an Treoir seo moltaí maidir le critéir ba chóir a úsáid nuair atá iontráil chuig iarbhunscoileanna sa bhliain 2010 i gceist agus tá na moltaí seo faoi chomhairliúchán.

In accordance with my statement to the Assembly on 2 February 2009 I have published guidance on the process of transfer from primary to post-primary education in September 2010. This guidance makes recommendations in relation to criteria to be used for the purpose of admission to post-primary schools in 2010 and these recommendations are the subject of consultation.

In particular, the guidance recommends that all schools use as their first criterion a measure that will ensure that applicants entitled to free school meals gain admission at the same rate as all other applicants. Thereafter the guidance recommends the following menu of criteria, in no particular order:

- Sibling;
- Eldest Child;
- Feeder/named primary school;
- Parish (with nearest suitable school);
- Catchment Area (with nearest suitable school);
- Nearest Suitable School; and
- Random Selection (tie-breaker).

The closing date for receipt of comments is 27 April 2009.

Primary School Enrolment Figures

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education to detail the enrolment figures for each primary school in East Antrim, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4629/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

ENROLMENT FIGURES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE EAST ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – 2004/05 – 2008/09

School Name	Year				
	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09
Carnalbanagh Ps	48	48	59	52	46
Larne And Inver Ps	218	212	211	200	183
Carrickfergus Model Ps	408	408	407	414	410
Olderfleet Ps	191	193	189	174	176
Woodburn Ps	185	192	191	194	194
Mullaghdubh Ps	63	59	49	45	44
Eden Ps	204	207	204	200	205
Glynn Ps	57	54	50	56	60
Ballycarry Ps	117	124	119	107	102
Greenisland Ps	399	394	373	381	379
Carrickfergus Central Ps	217	195	190	160	150
Whiteabbey Ps	411	408	411	412	409
Upper Ballyboley Ps	63	61	54	54	46
Sunnylands Ps	197	187	166	152	141
Moyle Ps	317	321	297	308	310
Whitehead Ps	397	408	388	395	400
King's Park Ps	363	357	344	356	327
Linn Ps	336	346	419	426	401
Glenarm Ps	22	20	0	0	0
Victoria Ps	606	582	555	549	512
Toreagh Ps	77	84	80	82	79
Silverstream Ps	136	143	144	128	117
Antiville Ps	58	0	0	0	0
Hollybank Ps	198	199	183	174	181
Woodlawn Ps	298	284	287	281	281
Oakfield Ps	373	365	360	357	359
Cairncastle Ps	119	130	136	116	109
Seaview Ps	94	90	88	80	68
St Anthony's Ps, Larne	126	124	109	105	93
St John's Ps, Ballymena	203	204	196	186	186
Lourdes Ps	31	38	39	42	45
St James' Ps, Newtownabbey	250	272	264	277	278
St Nicholas' Ps, Carrickfergus	114	107	106	107	111
St Macnissi's Ps, Larne	215	216	219	215	211
Kilcoan Ps	81	76	81	66	63
Carnlough Controlled Integrated Ps	35	41	41	47	45
Corran Integrated Ps	187	186	201	213	208

School Name	Year				
	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09
Acorn Integrated Ps	229	229	230	229	229

Source: Annual school census

Note: Figures include nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

Children with Hearing Difficulties

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many children in primary schools are registered as having hearing difficulties. (AQW 4631/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHO ARE REGISTERED AS HAVING A HEARING RELATED SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED – 2007/08

Special Educational Need	No. of pupils
Severe/profound hearing loss	103
Mild/moderate hearing loss	259
Total	362

Source: Annual school census.

Note:

- Figures include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- Figures relate to pupils at Stage 1 – 5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. However, some of the pupils at SEN stages 1 and 2 with these conditions may have been recorded at a more general level and therefore not included here.

Children with Vision Difficulties

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many children in primary schools are registered as having vision difficulties. (AQW 4632/09)

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

The answer is contained in the table below.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHO ARE REGISTERED AS HAVING A VISION RELATED SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED – 2007/08

Special Educational Need	No. of pupils
Blind	*
Partially sighted	#
Total	165

Source: Annual school census.

Note:

- Figures include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- Figures relate to pupils at Stage 1 – 5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. However, some of the pupils at SEN stages 1 and 2 with these conditions may have been recorded at a more general level and therefore not included here.
- * relates to fewer than 5 cases.
- # means a figure ≥ 5 has been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many newly qualified teachers have yet to take up a teaching position. (AQW 4667/09)

Minister of Education: Bhí 725 céimí múinteoireachta sa bhliain 2008, agus ní dhearnadh próiseáil ar 155 acu trí phárolla na múinteoirí buana nó trí phárolla na múinteoirí sealadacha.

There were 725 teaching graduates in 2008 of whom 155 have not been processed through either the permanent or the temporary teachers' payroll.

Review of the Catholic Teaching Certificate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education when the review of the Catholic teaching certificate will be complete. (AQW 4668/09)

Minister of Education: Cuirfear i gcrích an t-athbhreithniú ar dheiseanna earcaíochta in earnáil na Múinteoireachta atá ann anois agus a bheidh ann as seo amach i mí Eanáir 2010.

The review of current and future recruitment opportunities in the Teaching sector will be completed by January 2010.

Its terms of reference are:-

- To forecast the number of teaching vacancies likely to arise over the next 3 years, analysed by school type and sector.
- To estimate the proportion of those vacancies for which a certificate in religious studies is likely to be an eligibility criterion.
- To identify the routes by which teachers may obtain a certificate, either as part of their initial teacher education, or subsequently.
- To identify any barriers to obtaining a certificate that could give rise to inequality.
- To recommend as appropriate, measures to promote equality of opportunity for teachers.

Attacks Against Teachers

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many attacks against teachers have been reported in (i) primary; and (ii) secondary schools in each of the last two years. (AQW 4670/09)

Minister of Education: Ní bhailíonn an Roinn Oideachais an t-eolas a iarradh.

The Department of Education does not collect the information requested.

However, statistics on the reasons for suspension and expulsion are gathered each school year from Education and Library Boards. The tables below provide the number of occasions where pupils were suspended for verbal abuse or physical attack on staff, in primary and post-primary schools, for the last two years:-

NUMBER OF OCCASIONS PUPILS WERE SUSPENDED, IN THE 2006/07 SCHOOL YEAR, FOR VERBAL ABUSE OF STAFF AND PHYSICAL ATTACK ON STAFF

	Primary	Post-Primary
Verbal abuse of staff	45	1,784
Physical attack on staff	66	182

NUMBER OF OCCASIONS PUPILS WERE SUSPENDED, IN THE 2007/08 SCHOOL YEAR, FOR VERBAL ABUSE OF STAFF AND PHYSICAL ATTACK ON STAFF

	Primary	Post-Primary
Verbal abuse of staff	31	1,768
Physical attack on staff	54	132

Notes

1. These figures relate to all pupils undertaking Key Stage 1-4 in primary and post-primary schools.
2. The information reflects the number of individual suspensions, as opposed to the number of pupils suspended.

‘Transfer 2010’ Scheme

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Education for an estimate of how much the proposed ‘Transfer 2010’ scheme will cost; and from where in her budget these resources will be allocated. (AQW 4698/09)

Minister of Education: Beidh na costais a bhaineann le socrúithe d’Aistriú 2010, bunaithe ar threoir a foilsíodh ar 2 Feabhra 2009, ar scála atá comhchosúil leis na costais sin a tabhaíodh sna blianta roimhe seo, agus is í an phríomhdhifríocht a bheidh ann ná easpa caiteachais ar riarachán theist lárcomheagraithe a éascaíonn roghnú acadúil.

Arrangements for Transfer 2010, informed by guidance published on 2 February 2009, will involve costs of a scale similar to those incurred in previous years, with the main difference being the absence of expenditure on administering a centrally co-ordinated test to facilitate academic selection.

Excluding the administration of the selection test, the annual transfer process, which is largely an Education and Library Board funded service, costs in the region of £1m to administer. This is provided for within the overall annual budget set for the Boards. I do not anticipate the need for any additional resources to administer Transfer 2010 as the process (from the point of view of the Boards, and ESA in due course) will be very similar to previous years.

P6 Children

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to ensure that P6 children receive an education that will point them in the direction of future employment. (AQW 4740/09)

Minister of Education: The revised curriculum which I am introducing will better prepare our young people for life and work in the 21st century, providing them with the education and skills they need to take their place in society, including in employment. Developing the core skills of literacy and numeracy as well as the wider knowledge and skills that our young people need for life and work are key objectives of the revised curriculum from Year 1 onwards.

At Key Stage 2, which includes Year 6, employment is specifically covered through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning of the revised curriculum, where pupils can learn about the range of jobs and work carried out by different people and develop skills in areas including decision-making, in teamworking and innovation.

Careers Education is also an important part of the curriculum and last month I, together with the Minister for Employment and Learning, launched the Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy. This is designed to support teachers and pupils at every stage. It is accompanied by a practical framework that helps teachers to make effective links within the primary curriculum to career choices and careers information at a level appropriate to primary-aged children.

Chomh maith leis sin, tá sé tábhachtach go bhfaigheann scoileanna an tacaíocht agus an spreagadh atá de dhíth orthu lena chinntiú go mbaineann gach páiste a c(h)umas iomlán amach agus go bhfeabhsaítear caighdeáin, sa litearthacht agus san uimhearthacht go háirithe, do na daoine óga sin go háirithe a mbíonn baic orthu agus atá i mbaol tearcghnóthachta.

Additionally, it is important that schools receive the support and encouragement they need to ensure that every child reaches her or his full potential and that standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are improved,

especially for those young people who face barriers and are at risk of underachievement. My Department is currently finalising a new school improvement strategy and will be following this with a complementary strategy for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. I want to ensure that every child leaves school with the standards of literacy and numeracy and the wider knowledge and skills they need to make their full contribution to the economy and to society.

Special Needs Pupils

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education to outline her plans to accommodate the special needs pupils following the closure of Donaghadee High School. (AQW 4771/09)

Minister of Education: Ba chóir don Chomhalta féachaint ar an fhreagra a thug mé ar an cheist a chuir sé roimhe seo AQW 1169/09 a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 17 Deireadh Fómhair 2008.

I would refer the Member to my answer to his previous question AQW 1163/09 published in the Official Report on 17 October 2008.

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education how much public money has been provided to each of the Voluntary Grammar schools (i) through each Education and Library board; or (ii) by the Department of Education, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4788/09)

Minister of Education: Leagtar amach sna táblaí thíos sonraí faoi chistiú caipitil agus cistiú athfhillteach a eisíodh chuig gach Scoil Ghramadaí Dheonach i ngach bliain le cúig bliana anuas.

The tables below set out details of the capital and recurrent funding issued to each of the Voluntary Grammar schools in each of the last five years.

The recurrent funding per school in each year includes amounts made available under Local Management of Schools Formulae and funds held by the Department which are distributed to Voluntary Grammar schools in the course of the year to meet costs such as teacher substitution and special education needs. It also includes funding which Voluntary Grammar schools receive from the Department to reflect their additional responsibilities as employers of all staff and in respect of landlord maintenance, insurance, audit and accountancy, and administration (the Education and Library boards meet these spending responsibilities centrally for their controlled and maintained schools). The figures provided exclude funding for home-to-school transport which is a centrally held resource and not attributable to individual schools. Full analysis of the figures provided is available from the schools' Outturn Statements which are published on the DE website from 2004/05 onwards.

		VGS FORMULA			
		2003/04		2004/05	
Sch Ref No.	School	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
142-0018	Belfast Bloomfield Collegiate	2,462,635	0	2,590,177	37,464
142-0020	Belfast Campbell College	3,330,035	410,640	3,376,699	935,472
142-0021	Belfast St Mary's CBS	4,225,433	0	4,273,715	65,035
142-0022	Belfast Methodist College	6,790,369	0	6,982,407	10,505
142-0027	Belfast Royal Academical Inst.	3,786,810	718,251	4,024,676	602,114
142-0028	Belfast Royal Academy	5,072,364	0	5,318,523	0
142-0029	Belfast St Dominic's High	3,604,191	87,987	3,620,552	130,995
142-0030	Belfast St Malachy's College	3,583,700	269,050	3,785,752	91,311
142-0082	Belfast Dominican College	3,634,764	3,100,562	3,723,493	1,963,331
142-0089	Belfast Strathearn	2,705,084	43,929	2,867,493	6,015
142-0095	Dunmurry Rathmore Grammar	4,469,544	5,366,084	4,619,185	4,271,254

		VGS FORMULA			
		2003/04		2004/05	
Sch Ref No.	School	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
142-0264	Belfast Victoria College	3,150,483	67,962	3,322,298	76,709
142-0265	Belfast Hunterhouse College	2,453,975	315,320	2,600,680	43,782
142-0277	Belfast Aquinas	2,772,024	785,321	2,844,192	558,693
242-0041	Mount Lourdes Convent Grammar	3,291,717	2,279,469	3,517,130	699,303
242-0042	Enniskillen Portora Royal	1,800,678	10,740	1,896,369	27,516
242-0043	Enniskillen St Michael's College	2,728,704	735,972	2,899,237	77,757
242-0052	Derry Thornhill College	5,240,862	5,104,299	5,462,206	291,853
242-0054	Derry St Columb's College	5,597,625	128,816	5,710,543	207,233
242-0064	Omagh CBS Grammar	3,651,624	0	3,672,928	0
242-0065	Omagh Loreto College	3,428,570	41,400	3,674,137	53,368
242-0072	Strabane Convent Grammar	1,583,325	3,428	1,745,289	6,560
242-0229	Foyle & Londonderry College	3,238,140	22,111	3,415,155	6,971
242-0287	Derry Lumen Christi College	2,808,309	297,982	3,106,972	15,431
342-0010	Ballymena St Louis Grammar	3,290,068	40,283	3,497,859	42,924
342-0011	Ballymena Academy	4,201,624	117,397	4,382,824	949,924
342-0012	Ballymoney Dalriada	3,108,284	49,882	3,223,631	136,102
342-0032	Coleraine Academical Inst	2,669,776	92,873	2,671,894	200,000
342-0034	Coleraine Loreto College	2,803,774	56,464	2,989,697	125,051
342-0046	Larne Grammar	2,636,230	62,756	2,816,183	61,965
342-0058	Magherafelt Rainey Endowed	2,643,138	0	2,713,052	14,030
342-0068	Portstewart Dominican College	1,696,724	23,500	1,806,834	66,556
342-0077	Belfast High	3,217,851	497,198	3,400,215	1,644,638
342-0080	Magherafelt St Mary's Grammar	3,960,927	151,638	4,098,447	0
342-0094	Garron Tower St Mac Nissi's College	2,212,954	0	2,413,013	21,855
442-0015	Bangor Grammar	3,256,195	118,590	3,358,712	30,106
442-0044	Holywood Sullivan Upper	3,939,459	574,974	4,115,173	1,135,415
442-0050	Lisburn Friend's	3,528,777	542,843	3,740,359	268,527
442-0051	Lisburn The Wallace	4,132,201	577,353	4,350,351	99,805
442-0086	Ballynahinch Assumption College	3,264,010	1,282,162	3,399,513	1,443,594
442-0088	Downpatrick St Patrick's Grammar	2,587,180	156,270	2,719,694	13,582
442-0259	Belfast Our Lady & St Patrick's	4,300,475	138,066	4,463,097	97,405
542-0038	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (B)	3,141,660	174,162	0	153,201
542-0039	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (G)	2,951,793	3,658	0	12,298
542-0045	Kilkeel St Louis' Grammar	2,010,580	35,384	2,165,930	57,661
542-0056	Lurgan St Michael's Senior High	2,229,368	417	2,383,276	7,746
542-0059	Newry Abbey Grammar	3,058,150	25,051	3,307,427	106,875
542-0060	Newry Our Lady's Grammar	3,086,544	7,218	3,284,254	162,706

		VGS FORMULA			
		2003/04		2004/05	
Sch Ref No.	School	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
542-0062	Newry St Colman's College	3,012,881	517,801	3,203,436	921,618
542-0073	Donaghmore St Joseph's Grammar	1,890,026	150,403	1,932,448	181,040
542-0076	Newry Sacred Heart Grammar	3,150,296	0	3,281,560	0
542-0260	Dungannon Royal	2,256,916	1,551,221	2,338,298	432,591
542-0263	Armagh Royal	2,456,385	0	2,576,821	0
542-0268	Armagh St Patrick's Grammar	2,761,839	1,376,486	2,952,704	65,162
542-0304	St. Patrick's Acad.Dungannon	348,449	0	6,295,930	0
	Total	175,215,499	28,113,373	182,932,437	18,631,052

		2005/06		2006/07	
		Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
Sch Ref No.	School	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
142-0018	Belfast Bloomfield Collegiate	2,703,675	74,026	2,839,447	12,126
142-0020	Belfast Campbell College	3,709,393	570,492	3,954,916	223,618
142-0021	Belfast St Mary's CBS	4,563,266	51,148	4,850,030	238,160
142-0022	Belfast Methodist College	7,577,248	0	7,805,797	32,152
142-0027	Belfast Royal Academical Inst.	4,341,280	387,837	4,404,625	250,170
142-0028	Belfast Royal Academy	5,598,571	30,075	5,852,749	0
142-0029	Belfast St Dominic's High	3,957,009	22,151	4,206,004	2,325,371
142-0030	Belfast St Malachy's College	4,205,174	170,515	4,283,270	267,438
142-0082	Belfast Dominican College	3,996,874	1,107,222	4,112,369	512,199
142-0089	Belfast Strathearn	3,114,778	150,062	3,202,158	44,190
142-0095	Dunmurry Rathmore Grammar	4,945,213	3,102,763	5,100,134	72,009
142-0264	Belfast Victoria College	3,624,818	209,319	3,769,672	2,615
142-0265	Belfast Hunterhouse College	2,829,025	227,994	2,948,183	70,904
142-0277	Belfast Aquinas	3,141,482	241,134	3,388,999	162,625
242-0041	Mount Lourdes Convent Grammar	3,594,678	2,944,868	3,677,893	1,339,896
242-0042	Enniskillen Portora Royal	2,135,071	62,660	2,129,057	9,554
242-0043	Enniskillen St Michael's College	2,955,090	279,696	3,094,725	56,394
242-0052	Derry Thornhill College	5,909,194	432,976	6,114,089	142,587
242-0054	Derry St Columb's College	6,154,334	171,488	6,449,530	278,784
242-0064	Omagh CBS Grammar	3,920,141	28,266	4,002,341	0
242-0065	Omagh Loreto College	3,886,065	94,819	3,829,169	112,470
242-0072	Strabane Convent Grammar	880,155	1,529	0	170,963
242-0229	Foyle & Londonderry College	3,621,751	56,311	3,538,109	22,157
242-0287	Derry Lumen Christi College	3,336,714	60,668	3,621,543	67,786
342-0010	Ballymena St Louis Grammar	3,781,390	114,428	3,963,126	1,165,069
342-0011	Ballymena Academy	4,698,220	757,959	4,884,912	150,083
342-0012	Ballymoney Dalriada	3,511,247	337,026	3,620,826	135,305

Sch Ref No.	School	2005/06		2006/07	
		Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
342-0032	Coleraine Academical Inst	2,797,988	41,694	2,791,229	80,704
342-0034	Coleraine Loreto College	3,170,197	406,880	3,225,650	44,782
342-0046	Larne Grammar	2,951,058	19,913	3,096,617	43,896
342-0058	Magherafelt Rainey Endowed	2,888,577	15,863	3,024,305	13,512
342-0068	Portstewart Dominican College	1,905,187	11,878	2,013,769	0
342-0077	Belfast High	3,746,141	235,892	3,746,702	86,295
342-0080	Magherafelt St Mary's Grammar	4,564,487	167,792	4,750,192	303,522
342-0094	Garron Tower St Mac Nissi's College	2,565,509	1,088	2,619,956	0
442-0015	Bangor Grammar	3,626,164	60,573	3,739,217	101,853
442-0044	Hollywood Sullivan Upper	4,416,037	393,138	4,575,212	614,098
442-0050	Lisburn Friend's	3,987,337	341,461	4,136,748	254,391
442-0051	Lisburn The Wallace	4,669,278	208,342	4,768,838	143,232
442-0086	Ballynahinch Assumption College	3,576,541	188,409	3,714,009	2,063,526
442-0088	Downpatrick St Patrick's Grammar	2,949,473	43,412	2,995,619	20,022
442-0259	Belfast Our Lady & St Patrick's	4,800,504	9,295	4,943,335	5,102
542-0038	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (B)	0	71,513	0	113,872
542-0039	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (G)	0	3,567	0	113,438
542-0045	Kilkeel St Louis' Grammar	2,287,467	103,281	2,373,719	59,484
542-0056	Lurgan St Michael's Senior High	2,527,374	20,693	2,661,034	71,401
542-0059	Newry Abbey Grammar	3,569,262	66,984	3,664,394	310,178
542-0060	Newry Our Lady's Grammar	3,366,902	546,989	3,617,255	0
542-0062	Newry St Colman's College	3,475,621	952,175	3,681,646	1,903,130
542-0073	Donaghmore St Joseph's Grammar	2,097,079	116,052	2,145,512	39,344
542-0076	Newry Sacred Heart Grammar	3,462,489	4,866	3,600,719	354,681
542-0260	Dungannon Royal	2,548,667	5,000	2,613,429	0
542-0263	Armagh Royal	2,654,085	36,323	2,803,420	0
542-0268	Armagh St Patrick's Grammar	3,222,197	109,926	3,365,320	243,514
542-0304	St. Patrick's Acad. Dungannon	6,605,373	0	6,610,956	0
	TOTAL	195,122,849	15,870,432	200,922,472	14,848,602

Sch Ref No.	School	2007/08	
		Recurrent	Capital
142-0018	Belfast Bloomfield Collegiate	3,007,801	59,766
142-0020	Belfast Campbell College	4,056,845	326,359
142-0021	Belfast St Mary's CBS	4,870,166	18,891
142-0022	Belfast Methodist College	7,965,762	148,787
142-0027	Belfast Royal Academical Inst.	4,752,510	253,059
142-0028	Belfast Royal Academy	6,081,266	71,237
142-0029	Belfast St Dominic's High	4,279,027	6,044,051

Sch Ref No.	School	2007/08	
		Recurrent	Capital
142-0030	Belfast St Malachy's College	4,498,210	3,091
142-0082	Belfast Dominican College	4,352,893	460,788
142-0089	Belfast Strathearn	3,389,489	256,178
142-0095	Dunmurry Rathmore Grammar	5,325,150	277,027
142-0264	Belfast Victoria College	3,821,816	44,431
142-0265	Belfast Hunterhouse College	2,909,038	457,400
142-0277	Belfast Aquinas	3,642,507	71,534
242-0041	Mount Lourdes Convent Grammar	3,974,444	3,464,322
242-0042	Enniskillen Portora Royal	2,461,882	127,969
242-0043	Enniskillen St Michael's College	3,296,071	153,289
242-0052	Derry Thornhill College	6,577,723	227,066
242-0054	Derry St Columb's College	6,610,524	187,195
242-0064	Omagh CBS Grammar	4,254,911	121,547
242-0065	Omagh Loreto College	4,123,846	4,130
242-0072	Strabane Convent Grammar	0	0
242-0229	Foyle & Londonderry College	3,688,768	179,021
242-0287	Derry Lumen Christi College	3,777,848	345,786
342-0010	Ballymena St Louis Grammar	4,127,382	91,996
342-0011	Ballymena Academy	4,970,824	122,874
342-0012	Ballymoney Dalriada	3,771,074	40,960
342-0032	Coleraine Academical Inst	2,824,958	191,382
342-0034	Coleraine Loreto College	3,394,801	270,840
342-0046	Larne Grammar	3,177,145	11,280
342-0058	Magherafelt Rainey Endowed	3,118,443	103,516
342-0068	Portstewart Dominican College	2,151,835	15,457
342-0077	Belfast High	3,929,381	111,382
342-0080	Magherafelt St Mary's Grammar	5,017,706	462,936
342-0094	Garron Tower St Mac Nissi's College	2,636,815	73,132
442-0015	Bangor Grammar	4,138,117	61,532
442-0044	Hollywood Sullivan Upper	4,760,062	875,941
442-0050	Lisburn Friend's	4,311,044	415,212
442-0051	Lisburn The Wallace	5,022,138	43,491
442-0086	Ballynahinch Assumption College	3,760,307	5,418,714
442-0088	Downpatrick St Patrick's Grammar	3,215,339	76,297
442-0259	Belfast Our Lady & St Patrick's	5,174,234	2,013,071
542-0038	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (B)	0	21,212
542-0039	Dungannon St Patrick's Academy (G)	0	0
542-0045	Kilkeel St Louis' Grammar	2,533,801	33,930

Sch Ref No.	School	2007/08	
		Recurrent	Capital
542-0056	Lurgan St Michael's Senior High	2,676,512	9,180
542-0059	Newry Abbey Grammar	3,564,232	1,158,887
542-0060	Newry Our Lady's Grammar	3,732,446	44,062
542-0062	Newry St Colman's College	3,867,968	5,064,460
542-0073	Donaghmore St Joseph's Grammar	2,282,954	93,355
542-0076	Newry Sacred Heart Grammar	3,657,237	257,881
542-0260	Dungannon Royal	2,683,957	0
542-0263	Armagh Royal	2,861,286	0
542-0268	Armagh St Patrick's Grammar	3,601,439	358,665
542-0304	St. Patrick's Acad.Dungannon	6,748,804	0
	Total	209,430,734	30,744,570

Note: Funding includes Formula Allocation, Excepted Items (Resources Held Centrally), Capital Expenditure and School Milk and Meals (excluding equipment).

Educational Psychologists

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how many children are awaiting an assessment by an educational psychologist in each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 4798/09)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas na figiúirí is déanaí atá ar fáil ó na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne maidir le líon na bpáistí a bhí ag fanacht ar mheasúnú riachtanas speisialta i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2008:-

The latest figures available from the Education and Library Boards regarding the number of children who are currently awaiting special needs assessment are as at October 2008 and are as follows:-

BELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	WELB
267	593	421	516	242

These figures are in regard to children with a variety of need, including Stage 3 (non-statutory assessments) and Stage 4 (statutory assessments) of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, reviews at Stage 3 and Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, special testing at transfer stage between primary and post-primary, pre-school and examination arrangements.

Reading Centre in Derry/Londonderry

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how many children are awaiting support from the Reading Centre in Derry/Londonderry; and what is the anticipated timescale for the Reading Centre to be able to provide support for the children currently on the waiting list. (AQW 4806/09)

Minister of Education: The chief executive of the Western Education and Library Board has informed me that 156 children in the Derry city area are currently awaiting support from the Reading Centre, with an additional 107 in the wider Co Derry area.

However, these children should be taught in their own school in a way that addresses their literacy difficulties. Additionally teachers can get specific advice from the service to assist with the teaching of children on the waiting list.

Nuair a chuirtear san aireamh raon na n-idirghabhálacha atá ar fáil do scoileanna, níl aon amscála ar leith ann maidir le tacaíocht a thabhairt do pháistí ar atreoraíodh chuig an Ionad iad.

Given the variety of interventions available to schools there is no specific timescale for supporting children referred to the Centre.

School Transport

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to provide free places on school transport going past the children's home for those children that attend a local parish school of their parent's choice that is not necessarily their closest primary school. (AQW 4810/09)

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.

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.

Ní sholáthróidh boird suíocháin lamhátais do dhaltáí neamh-incháilithe atá ag iarraidh taistil níos faide ná an scoil is cóngaraí is oiriúnaí dóibh, mar gheall ar an iarmhairt dhiúltach a d'fhéadfaí bheith ann ar inmharthanacht na scoile atá níos cóngaraí dóibh. Níl aon phleananna agam athrú a dhéanamh ar na socruithe reatha.

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.

CCEA Test Paper

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what representations she received in relation to the CCEA test paper; and to list all the organisation that have requested that this test be used. (AQW 4824/09)

Minister of Education: The issue of using the CCEA test which I commissioned as a contingency measure, and later withdrew on 2 February 2009 along with my proposals for Transfer 2010, has been the subject of correspondence from three organisations – the Governing Bodies Association, the Catholic Heads Association and the Commission for Catholic Education.

Ní féidir leis an Roinn Oideachais (DE) teist a sholáthar a úsáidfeair i gcomhthéacs iontrála, gan chreat dleathach bheith ann a thugann sainmhíniú ar an úsáid sin. De cheal chomhaontú an Choiste Fheidhmiúcháin ar shocruithe d'Aistriú 2010, ní bheidh aon teist á soláthar ag DE.

The Department of Education (DE) cannot provide a test for use in an admissions context without a legal framework defining that use. In the absence of Executive agreement on arrangements for Transfer 2010 there will therefore be no DE-provided test.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education if her Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4841/09)

Minister of Education: Tacaíonn an Roinn Oideachais go mór leis an sprioc maidir le híocaíochtaí a dhéanamh laistigh de dheich lá oibre. Bhí treoir eisithe mí na Nollag 2008 ag an Roinn, laistigh den Roinn agus chuig NDPBanna a bhí maoinithe ag DE, ag cur béime ar thábhacht na sprice nua seo agus gur gá do na Brainsí a chinntiú go ndéanfar proiseáil ar íocaíochtaí gan mhoill mhíchuí.

The Department of Education strongly supports the target of making payments within ten working days. Guidance was issued by the Department both internally within the Department and to DE funded NDPBs in December 2008 stressing the importance of this new target and the need for Branches to ensure payments are processed without undue delay.

Monthly monitoring and reporting against this new target has been introduced by the Department, however it is not possible to present statistics against the target at this point.

Mainstream Primary Schools

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education how much money is allocated per pupil in (i) mainstream primary schools; (ii) Irish medium schools; and (iii) Irish units attached to mainstream primary schools.

(AQW 4846/09)

Minister of Education: Faoin Fhoirmle Cómhainithe, bíonn leibhéal cistithe dá samhail le fáil, a dhíríonn isteach ar riachtanais atá aitheanta, ag gach scoil a bhfuil tosca dá samhail acu. Bíonn costais sa bhreis ag bunscoileanna Gaelscolaíochta, costais a bhaineann leis an soláthar ar leith atá acu agus cuidíonn an Fhoirmle Cómhainithe le tacaíocht sa bhreis a chur ar fáil dóibh a léiríonn na costais atá bainte le forbairt ar abháir curaclaim agus leis na costais sa bhreis a thabhaítear nuair a mhúintear Béarla ag Eochairchéim 2.

Under the Common Funding Formula, all schools with similar circumstances receive similar levels of funding, to address identified need. Irish-medium primary schools have additional costs associated with their particular type of provision and the Common Funding Formula provides for extra support for these schools to reflect the costs associated with the development of curriculum materials and to recognise the additional costs incurred in teaching English at Key Stage 2.

Figures shown in the table below refer to the average funding per pupil, within the delegated school budgets made available for mainstream primary schools and Irish-medium primary schools in the 2008/09 financial year under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula arrangements.

Information in relation to Irish-medium Units, attached to English-medium host schools has not been provided as it is not possible to disaggregate all funds for pupils within Units from the overall budget delegated to the host school.

	Average Funding per pupil
Mainstream Primary Schools	£2,641
Irish-medium Primary Schools	£3,029

The figures exclude resources held centrally by Funding Authorities and distributed to school budgets other than via the LMS formula, and other funds and support services provided to all schools - such as home to school transport and school meals - which are not allocated at individual school level.

Post Primary Education

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposals for post primary education in the North Antrim and East Antrim constituencies.

(AQW 4848/09)

Minister of Education: Agus iad ag gníomhú thar ceann na nÍontaobhaithe, d'fhoilsigh Comhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil moladh forbartha le St Aloysius' High School, St Comgall's High School agus St MacNissi's College a chónascadh.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools acting on the behalf of the Trustees published a development proposal to amalgamate St Aloysius' High School, St Comgall's High School and St MacNissi's College. My department is currently assessing the proposal in light of all the information available, including work on an economic appraisal, so that I may make a decision on the proposal shortly.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education how many meetings she has held with each of the three MEPs since devolution.

(AQW 4860/09)

Minister of Education: Bhuail mé le Bairbre de Brún ar chúpla ócáid.

I have met with Bairbre de Brún on a few occasions.

School Maintenance

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how much money has been spent on school maintenance in each Education and Library Board, each month for the last three years. (AQW 4891/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sonraí tugtha ag na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne óna dtaifid chuntasaíochta de chaiteachas míosúil ar chothabháil scoile, an caiteachas a tugadh do bhuiséad na scoile san áireamh, i scoileanna rialaithe agus i scoileanna faoi chothabháil don tréimhse 2005/06 go dtí 2007/08. Tá achoimre orthu sa tábla thíos.

The Education and Library Boards have provided details from their accounting records of monthly school maintenance expenditure, including schools' delegated budget spend, in controlled and maintained schools for the period 2005/06 to 2007/08. These are summarised in the table below.

MONTHLY SCHOOL MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURE (£000S)

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB
2005/06	April	98	394	500	60	276
	May	285	287	-73	175	278
	June	511	898	413	342	401
	July	296	236	335	69	202
	August	244	132	236	150	136
	September	362	305	370	268	457
	October	437	245	455	318	306
	November	317	170	402	549	370
	December	313	176	358	164	552
	January	275	196	489	216	242
	February	248	137	377	71	600
	March	824	575	1,746	754	2,199
2006/07	April	57	170	-28	281	192
	May	260	165	356	304	268
	June	353	849	611	259	395
	July	276	138	214	37	186
	August	219	220	440	37	206
	September	352	395	515	218	484
	October	470	422	504	282	413
	November	345	345	501	228	379
	December	259	333	552	248	409
	January	262	164	342	202	367
	February	402	416	558	183	404
	March	491	767	1,603	1,031	2,542

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB
2007/08	April	51	175	141	79	436
	May	205	276	360	430	414
	June	395	827	579	222	567
	July	413	284	534	172	711
	August	200	294	592	225	690
	September	167	431	526	269	958
	October	368	574	893	639	959
	November	331	746	1,012	262	908
	December	283	322	652	419	625
	January	315	274	882	481	522
	February	458	422	887	648	872
	March	1,774	1,377	2,202	1,546	2,271

1. The total for each year reflects accrued (not cash) expenditure i.e. the cost of the service provided in the year. However, the recording of monthly expenditure varies from Board to Board. Several show monthly accrued expenditure while the others only undertake accrual adjustments at the beginning and end of the year.
2. The two minus amounts in the table are because the estimated accruals in each case were actually greater than the cash payments.

CCEA Transfer Test

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education how much has the development of the CCEA transfer test cost. (AQW 4892/09)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé roimhe seo ar AQW 4248/09 a foilsíodh sa tuairisc oifigiúil ar 13 Feabhra 2009.

I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 4248/09 published in the official report on 13 February 2009.

Pupils Suspended or Expelled

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many pupils from (i) primary; and (ii) secondary schools have been (a) suspended; and (b) expelled for bullying, in each of the last five years, broken down by month, and Education and Library Board area. (AQW 4948/09)

Minister of Education: Bailíonn an Roinn staitisticí ar fhionraíocht agus ar dhíbirt ar bhonn bliantúil ó gach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne. Ní féidir an t-eolas seo a sholáthar ar bhonn míosúil. Léiríonn an tábla thíos líon na ndaltaí a cuireadh ar fionraí mar gheall ar an tromaíocht i ngach bliain le cúig bliana anuas.

The Department collects statistics on suspensions and expulsions on an annual basis from each of the Education and Library Boards. It is not possible to provide this information by month. The table below shows the number of pupils suspended for bullying in each of the last five years:

	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	Primary	Post Primary								
BELB	7	53	*	47	8	57	8	33	6	49
WELB	*	47	*	63	*	48	*	41	*	57
NEELB	12	56	*	61	#	54	*	84	*	75
SEELB	0	36	*	47	5	40	*	36	*	40

	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	Primary	Post Primary								
SELB	*	53	*	53	*	88	*	75	*	65
Total	25	245	14	271	22	287	17	269	14	286

Notes:

1. The figures relate to pupils in Key Stages 1-4 in primary and post-primary schools.
2. The figures show the number of pupils who were suspended at least once for bullying of a pupil. The number of individual suspensions for bullying of a pupil is likely to be higher since a pupil can be suspended more than once for the same reason.
3. * denotes figures less than 5.
4. # denotes figures <5 which have been treated to prevent disclosure of other small numbers.

The number of expulsions for bullying of a pupil, over the last five years, cannot be provided by Education and Library Board area as the numbers involved are small. The table below shows the number of pupil expulsions from secondary schools, for bullying of a pupil, over the last five years. There were no bullying related expulsions of pupils in primary schools.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Number of expulsions for bullying	0	2	3	1	2
Total number of expulsions	71	63	54	45	25

Bangor Grammar School

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail plans for any new build for Bangor Grammar school.
(AQW 4963/09)

Minister of Education: D'fhaomh an Roinn soláthar fhoirgneamh nua scoile do Bangor Grammar School agus tá sé beartaithe go mbeidh an scoil lonnaithe ag suíomh nua i gClann Mhuiris.

The department has approved the provision of a new school building for Bangor Grammar School which is planned to be located at a new site at Clanmorris.

Phasing of the project is at an advanced stage. Subject to the completion of the planning stages and resolution of site issues for the school it is estimated that construction could start in Autumn this year.

Priory Integrated College

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 2514/09, to detail the impact of her decision to limit to 400 the enrolment numbers at the proposed Priory Integrated College, on cooperation between that college and Sullivan Upper.
(AQW 4972/09)

Minister of Education: Socraíodh líon iontrála Priory College le Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlaine an Oirdheiscirt ag féachaint do na treochtaí déimeagrafacha. Laistigh de na líonta rollaithe atá leagtha síos, is ceist í a bhaineann leis na scoileanna féin, ag obair i dteannta le Coláistí Breisoideachais agus le soláthraithe eile, le socrú a dhéanamh ar an dóigh is fearr le cur lena réimse curaclaim de réir riachtanas an Chreata Teidlíochta agus ar mhaithe le riachtanais agus mianaidhmeanna na ndaltaí.

The enrolment number for Priory College has been determined to take account of demographic trends and was agreed with the South Eastern Education and Library Board. Within the enrolment numbers set, it is a matter for schools themselves, working together and with Further Education Colleges and other providers to decide how best to expand their curricular offer in line with the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and in the interests of their pupils' needs and aspirations.

Priory Integrated College

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 2514/09, to detail the impact on the sixth form provision, of her decision to limit to 400 the enrolment numbers in the proposed Priory Integrated College. (AQW 4973/09)

Minister of Education: Iarraim ar an Chomhalta amharc ar an fhreagra a thug mé ar a cheist roimhe seo AQW 4145/09, a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 30 Eanáir 2009.

I would refer the member to my answer to his previous question AQW 4145/09 published in the Official Report on 30 January 2009.

School Meals

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education what percentage of pupils in each post-primary school avail of free school meals, broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 4987/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS IN POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS BY CONSTITUENCY – 2008/09

BELFAST EAST

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Ashfield Girls' High School	18
Ashfield Boys' High School	20
Orangefield High School	46
Grosvenor Gs	3
Bloomfield Collegiate	3
Campbell College	1
Strathearn School	2
Knockbreda High School	30
Our Lady And St Patrick's College	1

BELFAST NORTH

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Belfast Model School For Girls	36
Belfast Boys' Model School	38
Castle High School	45
St Patrick's College, Bearnagheeha	39
Little Flower Girls' School	27
Our Lady Of Mercy Girls' School	40
St Gemma's High School	61
Hazelwood College	34
Belfast Royal Academy	5
St Malachy's College, Belfast	9
Dominican College	8

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Newtownabbey Community High School	42

BELFAST SOUTH

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
St Joseph's College, Belfast	31
Malone Integrated College	33
Wellington College	6
Methodist College	1
The Royal Belfast Academical Inst.	2
Rathmore Gs	3
Victoria College	4
Hunterhouse College	5
Aquinas Diocesan Gs	2
Newtownbreda High School	22

BELFAST WEST

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
St Louise's College	36
St Rose's High School	54
Christian Brothers Secondary School	45
St Genevieve's High School	33
La Salle Boys' School	31
Corpus Christi College	42
Colaiste Feirste	35
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Gs	19
St Dominic's High School	15
St Colm's High School, Dunmurry	57

EAST ANTRIM

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Larne High School	20
Carrickfergus College	15
Monkstown Community School	22
Downshire School	15
St Comgall's High School	22
Ulidia Intergrated College	11
Carrickfergus Gs	3
Larne Gs	5
Belfast High School	2
St Macnissi's College, Carnlough	7

EAST DERRY

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Limavady High School	20
St Mary's Limavady	27
St Patrick's High School, Dungiven	29
Limavady Gs	6
Garvagh High School	23
Coleraine Secondary School	35
St Joseph's High School, Coleraine	25
St Paul's College, Kilrea	19
North Coast Integrated College	24
Coleraine High School	4
Coleraine Academical Institution	3
Loreto College	4
Dominican College	8

FERMANAGH AND SOUTH TYRONE

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Lisnaskea High School	16
Devenish College	13
St Mary's High School, Belleek	24
St Fanchea's College	21
St Joseph's College, Enniskillen	23
St Mary's College, Irvinestown	35
St Aidan's High School	5
St Eugene's College	18
St Comhghall's High	30
Erne Integrated College	19
Enniskillen Collegiate	3
Mount Lourdes Gs	8
Portora Royal School	4
St Michael's College, Enniskillen	8
Fivemiletown High School	11
Aughnacloy College	15
Drumglass High School	13
St Ciaran's High School	15
St Patrick's College, Dungannon	23
Integrated College Dungannon	25
The Royal School Dungannon	4
St Patrick's Academy	12

FOYLE

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Lisneal College	25
St Mary's College, Derry	51
St Patricks & St Brigids High School	24
St Joseph's Secondary, Derry	46
St Peter's High School	63
St Cecilia's College	41
St Brigid's College, Derry	61
Immaculate Conception College	46
Oakgrove Integrated College	30
Thornhill College	17
St Columb's College	18
Foyle & Londonderry College	6
Lumen Christi College	6

LAGAN VALLEY

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Lisnagarvey High School	40
Dunmurry High School	39
Laurelhill Community College	13
St Patrick's High School, Lisburn	21
Fort Hill College	13
Friends' School	1
Wallace High School	2
Dromore High School	8

MID ULSTER

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Magherafelt High School	14
Maghera High School	37
St Colm's High School, Draperstown	14
St Mary's College, Clady	18
St Pius X College	20
St Patrick's Co-Ed Comp College	12
Sperrin Integrated College	16
Rainey Endowed School	3
St Mary's Gs, Magherafelt	5
Cookstown High School	11
St Joseph's High School, Coalisland	44

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Holy Trinity College	28
St Joseph's Convent Gs	12

NEWRY AND ARMAGH

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Newtownhamilton High School	8
Markethill High School	6
City Armagh High School	18
Tandragee Junior High School	14
Newry High School	19
St Joseph's Boys' High School, Newry	40
St Mary's High School, Newry	34
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	26
St Brigid's High School, Armagh	34
St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen	39
St Patrick's High School, Keady	15
St Catherine's College	17
Armagh Integrated College	31
Abbey Christian Brothers Gs	9
Our Lady's Gs	8
St COLman's College, Newry	5
The Royal School Armagh	2
St Patrick's Gs, Armagh	10

NORTH ANTRIM

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Ballycastle High School	20
Ballymoney High School	25
Cullybackey High School	14
Dunclug College	17
Dunluce School	19
Ballee Community High School	34
St Aloysius High School	38
Our Lady Of Lourdes High School	28
St Patrick's College	21
Cross And Passion College	16
Slemish College	12
Cambridge House Grammar School	4
St Louis Gs	4

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Ballymena Academy	2
Dalriada School	3

SOUTH ANTRIM

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Ballyclare Secondary School	8
Glengormley High School	20
Parkhall High School	17
Edmund Rice College	34
St Benedict's College	23
Crumlin Integrated College	9
Ballyclare High School	3
Antrim Gs	2

SOUTH DOWN

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Blackwater Integrated College	20
The High School Ballynahinch	10
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	22
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	14
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch	28
St Malachy's High School	24
De La Salle Secondary School	28
Shimna Integrated College	13
Down High School	2
Assumption Gs	5
St Patrick's Gs, Downpatrick	6
Kilkeel High School	7
Rathfriland High School	13
St Columban's College	27
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	23
St LouiS Gs	12
Sacred Heart Gs	7

STRANGFORD

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Movilla High School	25
Comber High School	23
Glastry College	11
Saintfield High School	6

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Dundonald High School	32
St Columba's High School	19
Lagan College	12
Strangford Integrated College	9
Regent House School	2

UPPER BANN

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Clounagh Junior High School	14
Banbridge High School	18
Killicomaine Junior High School	10
Lurgan Junior High School	13
Craigavon Senior High School	17
St Mary's High School, Lurgan	19
St Patrick's College, Banbridge	24
St Paul's Junior High School	23
Lismore Comprehensive School	26
Drumcree College	44
Brownlow Int College	34
New-Bridge Integrated College	10
Banbridge Academy	2
Lurgan College	3
Portadown College	3
St Michael's Grammar, Lurgan	9

WEST TYRONE

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Castleberg High School	20
Omagh High School	15
Strabane High School	31
St Eugene's High School, Castleberg	47
Dean Brian Maguire College	23
St John's High School	36
Sacred Heart College	30
Holy Cross College	34
Drumragh College	26
Omagh Academy	4
Strabane Gs	10
Christian Brothers' Gs	10

School Name	% Of Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals
Loreto Gs	10

Source: Annual school census.

Teachers in Full Time Permanent Posts

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education how many teachers have been in full time permanent posts in primary and post-primary schools, broken down by (i) Education and Library Boards; (ii) Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; (iii) Integrated Sector; and (iv) Irish Medium Sector. (AQW 4993/09)

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

The information requested is detailed in the table below:

	Primary	Post Primary	Total
Belfast Education & Library Board	428	351	779
Western Education & Library Board	376	388	764
North Eastern Education & Library Board	948	944	1892
South Eastern Education & Library Board	819	655	1474
Southern Education & Library Board	623	706	1329
Catholic Council for Maintained Schools	3432	2729	6161
Grant-Maintained Integrated	231	638	869
Irish Medium	128	40	168
Total	6985	6451	13436

Bangor Grammar School

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education when the capital works project for Bangor Grammar School will begin. (AQW 5007/09)

Minister of Education: D'fhaomh an Roinn soláthar fhoirgneamh nua scoile do Bangor Grammar School agus tá sé beartaithe go mbeidh an scoil lonnaithe ag suíomh nua i gClann Mhuiris.

The department has approved the provision of a new school building for Bangor Grammar School which is planned to be located at a new site at Clanmorris. Planning of the project is at an advanced stage. Subject to the completion of the planning stages and resolution of site issues for the school it is estimated that construction could start in the Autumn this year and be completed approximately two years later.

Bangor Grammar School

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education when the capital works project for Bangor Grammar School is due to be completed. (AQW 5009/09)

Minister of Education: D'fhaomh an Roinn soláthar fhoirgneamh nua scoile do Bangor Grammar School agus tá sé beartaithe go mbeidh an scoil lonnaithe ag suíomh nua i gClann Mhuiris.

The department has approved the provision of a new school building for Bangor Grammar School which is planned to be located at a new site at Clanmorris. Planning of the project is at an advanced stage. Subject to the completion of the planning stages and resolution of site issues for the school it is estimated that construction could start in the Autumn this year and be completed approximately two years later.

Glenravel Primary School

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education when additional temporary accommodation for (i) office; (ii) staffroom; and (iii) resource facilities at Glenravel Primary School will be provided. (AQW 5029/09)

Minister of Education: Aontaíonn an Roinn go bhfuil gá le cóiríocht shealadach breise ann ag an scoil le heasnamh oifige, sheomra foirne agus áiseanna acmhainní a réiteach.

The Department has agreed that there is a need for additional temporary accommodation at the school to address a shortfall in office, staffroom and resource facilities. The scheme is currently at tender stage and it will be progressed early in the 2009/10 financial year and should be completed later that year.

Educational Psychologists

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Education what is the average waiting time for children in the Belfast Education and Library Board area, to be assessed by Educational Psychologists. (AQW 5067/09)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas an t-eolas is déanaí atá le fáil ó Phríomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste:-

The latest information available from the Chief Executive of the Belfast Education and Library Board is as follows:-

- Non-statutory assessments – 43 days
- Statutory assessments – 39 days

Both figures are in respect of the 2007/2008 academic year.

Departmental Staff with Disabilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of employees in her Department that have disabilities. (AQW 5070/09)

Minister of Education: Information on the number of staff who have disabilities is collected for equality monitoring purposes by Department of Finance and Personnel, on behalf of all NICS Departments.

Mar sin de, beidh an tAire Airgeadais agus Pearsanra ag tabhairt freagra ar son na Ranna ar fad.

The Minister of Finance and Personnel will therefore be responding on behalf of all Departments.

Primary School Teacher Graduates

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to address the imbalance of primary school teacher graduates with the number of permanent posts available. (AQW 5090/09)

Minister of Education: Aithníonn mo Roinn an éifeacht atá agus a bheidh ag déimeagrafaíocht ar líon na múinteoirí atá de dhíth orainn.

My Department recognises the impact which demography is having, and will have, on the number of teachers that we need here. The approved intake numbers to the initial teacher education institutions have been reduced over the past five years and we will, as part of the annual initial teacher education approval process, be carefully considering the number of teachers needed in future years.

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.

Review of Public Administration

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Education what the cost was of redundancies which resulted from re-organisation under the Review of Public Administration, in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 5091/09)

Minister of Education: No redundancies have been made in connection with the RPA in education.

The Outline Business Case for the RPA has identified savings of £20m per annum by year 3 of ESA. This will be achieved through a reduction of 463 posts with associated severance costs of around £43 million.

New structures are currently being developed for ESA, including new models of service delivery at regional and local level, taking into account the business needs of the organisation. This process will identify the numbers and skills of staff required in each function and area. Until this process has been completed, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the potential impact of change by Education and Library Board area.

De réir beartais an Choiste Fheidhmiúcháin, déanfar gach iarracht is féidir le hiomarcaíochtaí a sheachaint agus ní bhreithneofar iomarcaíocht éigeantach ach amháin nuair a breithníodh gach rogha phraiticiúil eile.

In line with Executive policy, every possible effort will be made to avoid redundancies and compulsory redundancy will only receive consideration when all other practical options have been exhausted.

Rural Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education (i) how many rural primary schools there are; and (ii) how many rural primary schools have an enrolment of less than 105 pupils, broken down by sector. (AQW 5108/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY SIZE AND MANAGEMENT TYPE – 2008/09

Management type	Enrolment less than 105	Enrolment 105 or more	Total
Controlled	130	210	340
Voluntary	1	5	6
C Maintained	153	188	341
Other Maintained	11	4	15
Controlled Integrated	5	8	13
GMI	4	16	20
Total	304	431	735

Source: school census in the north of Ireland.

Note:

1. Figures based on total enrolment.
2. For the purpose of this exercise, 'Urban' schools are defined as those located in Belfast and Derry District Council areas only. Schools in all other district councils are therefore defined as 'Rural'.
3. Counts include Preparatory Departments of grammar schools.

Urban Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education (i) how many urban primary schools there are; and (ii) how many urban primary schools have an enrolment of less than 140 pupils, broken down by sector. (AQW 5109/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY SIZE AND MANAGEMENT TYPE – 2008/09

Management type	Enrolment less than 140	Enrolment 140 or more	Total
Controlled	19	36	55
Voluntary	3	5	8
C Maintained	5	56	61
Other Maintained	6	3	9
Controlled Integrated	1	1	2
GMI	0	3	3
Total	34	104	138

Source: school census in the north of Ireland.

Note:

1. Figures based on total enrolment.
2. For the purpose of this exercise, 'Urban' schools are defined as those located in Belfast and Derry District Council areas only. Schools in all other district councils are therefore defined as 'Rural'.
3. Counts include Preparatory Departments of grammar schools.

Post-Primary Schools

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education (i) how many post-primary schools there are; and (ii) how many post-primary schools have an enrolment of less than 500 pupils, broken down by (i) sector; and (ii) grammar and secondary. (AQW 5110/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH ENROLMENTS OF LESS THAN/EQUAL TO OR MORE THAN 500 PUPILS BY SCHOOL TYPE AND MANAGEMENT TYPE – 2008/09

Management type	Secondary		Grammar		Total
	Enrolment less than 500	Enrolment 500 or more	Enrolment less than 500	Enrolment 500 or more	
Controlled	29	32	3	14	78
Voluntary - Other managed	0	0	1	21	22
Voluntary -Catholic managed	0	0	1	29	30
Catholic Maintained	37	35	0	0	72
Other Maintained	0	1	0	0	1
Controlled Integrated	3	1	0	0	4
Grant Maintained Integrated	6	10	0	0	16
Total	75	79	5	64	223

Source: school census in the north of Ireland.

Note:

1. Figures relate to total enrolment of schools.

Educational Psychologists

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education (i) how many children in schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area are on a waiting list to see an educational psychologist; and (ii) what is the average waiting time. (AQW 5183/09)

Minister of Education: I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) that the Board's Educational Psychology Service uses a time allocation model of service delivery under which schools prioritise their needs for the year, during September, together with their named educational psychologist (EP). As such, schools hold their own waiting lists and submit completed referral forms as appropriate throughout the year. Agreed referrals may be sent to the EPs a few days or weeks prior to assessment. As a consequence this data is not held centrally by the Board.

Ní féidir a shonrú, mar sin de, líon na bpáistí atá ag fanacht ar choinne le Síceolaí Oideachais i ngach scoil i limistéar an SELB agus ní féidir a shonrú an mheánthréimhse feithimh dá réir sin.

It is not, therefore, possible to state how many children are waiting to see an EP in each school in the SELB area or consequently an average waiting time.

Composite Classes

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education (i) how many children in the Southern Education and Library Board area are in composite classes in primary schools; and (ii) what variation has there been in this figure, over the last five years. (AQW 5184/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

Primary pupils in composite classes in primary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board – 2003/04 – 2007/08

Year	Year 1 – 7 pupils in composite classes	% of total year 1 – 7 enrolment
2003/04	11,353	31
2004/05	11,115	30
2005/06	11,087	30
2006/07	10,726	29
2007/08	10,539	29

Source: Annual school census.

Note: Figures relate to pupils in year 1 – 7 in primary schools and grammar school preparatory departments.

Entrance Examinations

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education which grammar schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area have indicated their intention to set their own entrance examinations in 2010. (AQW 5185/09)

Minister of Education: While I am aware through media reports that a number of schools have announced their intention to operate outside the mainstream post-primary transfer system, no grammar school in the Southern Education and Library Board area has formally confirmed to me that they intend setting entrance examinations.

Tá treoir eisithe agam ar Aistriú 2010 a mholann úsáid critéar iontrála neamh-acadúil agus tá súil agam go gcloíonn gach scoil leis na moltaí mar mhaithe le córas a chruthú atá bunaithe ar cheartas sóisialta, ar chomhionannas agus ar shármhaitheas.

I have issued guidance on Transfer 2010 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.

Languages in Primary Schools

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education why Spanish, Irish and Polish, as opposed to French, German or Chinese (Mandarin) is offered in primary schools. (AQW 5187/09)

Minister of Education: I believe in the importance of language learning for our young people and am focusing on Spanish and Irish for very good reasons. Spanish is the second most widely spoken global language after English, and an increasingly important one economically. Irish is the native language of Ireland; it is flourishing across Ireland and is a key part of our cultural heritage.

Similarly, in an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural society, our young people are already learning and playing with newcomer children from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Polish has the largest number of school pupils across the newcomer languages, and is therefore being included in the programme.

I should also clarify that it is a matter for primary schools to decide whether they wish to participate in the programme, and it is for each primary school to decide on the language provision they offer to their pupils.

Tá mé sásta leis an aiseolas dhearfach a fuarthas go dtí seo ó na scoileanna sin atá páirteach sa chlár teangacha bunscoile agus tá mé ag súil leis go mbainfidh níos mó daoine óga tairbhe as dara teanga a fhoghlaim ó aois óg.

I am pleased with the positive feedback received to date from those schools choosing to participate in the primary languages programme and look forward to more of our young people benefitting from learning a second language from an early age.

Creative Youth Partnerships

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the work of Creative Youth Partnerships; and whether her Department will consider ring-fencing their budget. (AQW 5198/09)

Minister of Education: Leagann mo Roinn béim mhór ar chumas daoine óga a fhorbairt ó thaobh cruthaitheachta agus inniúlachta de.

My Department places great importance on developing young people's capacity for creativity and innovation. Creative Youth Partnerships has been operating as a pilot since 2004/05 and, at my Department's request, has recently produced proposals for a mainstreaming strategy for the years beyond 2008/09.

My Department, together with the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, is currently considering those proposals, including information from Creative Youth Partnerships on the extent and impact of the activities undertaken during the pilot phase. Decisions on the proposals will be taken when this consideration is completed but a key challenge in any future arrangements will be to ensure that creativity and innovation is mainstreamed as a natural part of the planning and delivery of the revised curriculum.

Educational Psychologists

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education (i) how many school children in the North Eastern Education and Library Board area are on a waiting list to see an educational psychologist; and (ii) what is the average waiting time. (AQW 5202/09)

Minister of Education: Is é an figiúr is déanaí atá ar fáil ó Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt (NEELB) maidir le líon na bpáistí ar atreoraíodh chuig an Bhord iad agus atá ag fanacht ar mheasúnú riachtanas speisialta ná 593 i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2008.

The latest figure available from the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) regarding the number of children who have been referred to the Board and who are currently awaiting special needs assessment is as at October 2008 and is 593.

This figure is in regard to children with a variety of need, including Stage 3 (non-statutory assessments) and Stage 4 (statutory assessments) of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, reviews at Stage 3 and Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, special testing at transfer stage between primary and post-primary, pre-school and examination arrangements.

The latest figure available from the NEELB regarding the average waiting time for pupils to be assessed by an educational psychologist, again as at October 2008, is as follows:-

Non-statutory assessments – 108 days

Statutory assessments – less than 6 weeks.

Entrance Examinations

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education which grammar schools in the North Eastern Education and Library Board area have indicated their intention to set their own entrance examinations in 2010. (AQW 5204/09)

Minister of Education: While I am aware through media reports that a number of schools have announced their intention to operate outside the mainstream post-primary transfer system, no grammar school in the North Eastern Education and Library Board area has formally confirmed to me that they intend setting entrance examinations.

Tá treoir eisithe agam ar Aistriú 2010 a mholann úsáid critéar iontrála neamh-acadúil agus tá súil agam go gcloionn gach scoil leis na moltaí mar mhaithe le córas a chruthú atá bunaithe ar cheartas sóisialta, ar chomhionannas agus ar shármhaitheas.

I have issued guidance on Transfer 2010 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.

Transfer 2010

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education if she will make public the full legal advice she received from the Departmental Solicitor's Office about the guidelines she announced in the Assembly on 2 February 2009.

(AQW 5227/09)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé roimhe seo ar AQW 4694/09 a foilsíodh sa tuairisc oifigiúil ar 13 Feabhra 2009.

I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 4694/09 published in the official report on 13 February 2009.

Academic Selection

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education whether her new guidance for schools obliges those schools operating the Dickson Plan to refrain from using academic criteria for transfer. (AQW 5234/09)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar na freagraí a thug mé roimhe seo ar AQW 2259/09 agus ar AQW 2260/09 a foilsíodh sa tuairisc oifigiúil ar 24 Samhain 2008.

I refer the member to my previous answers to AQW 2259/09 and AQW 2260/09 published in the official report on 24 November 2008.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education whether her new guidance for schools relating to post-primary transfer takes account of the provisions of the St Andrews Agreement Act and its explanatory notes which negate a ban on academic selection. (AQW 5239/09)

Minister of Education: Tugann an treoir a foilsíodh de bhun an ráitis a thug mé don Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009 cur síos fíorasach ar an chomhthéacs dleathach ina mbeidh iontrálacha iarbhunscoile á bhfeidhmiú d'Aistriú 2010.

The guidance published on foot of my 2 February 2009 statement to the Assembly provides a factual description of the legal context within which post-primary admissions will operate for Transfer 2010. I have asked all post-primary schools to consider the guidance carefully and adhere to its recommendations. If that

request is listened to and acted upon Transfer 2010 will become one of the key building blocks of reform resulting in a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence that treats all of our children equally.

Academic Selection

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 4398/09, to outline the impact on her programme of reform resulting from the failure to ban academic selection. (AQW 5242/09)

Minister of Education: Sa ráiteas faoi Aistriú 2010 a thug mé don Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009, d'iarr mé ar gach iarbhunscoil machnamh cúramach a dhéanamh ar an treo a d'eisigh mo Roinn ar Aistriú 2010 agus d'iarr mé orthu cloí leis na moltaí atá inti.

In my 2 February 2009 statement to the Assembly on Transfer 2010 I asked that all post-primary schools consider my Department's Transfer 2010 guidance carefully and adhere to its recommendations. If that request is listened to and acted upon Transfer 2010 will become one of the key building blocks of reform resulting in a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence that treats all of our children equally.

Male Teachers

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the answers to AQW4130/09 and AQW 4432/09, what is the reason for the discrepancy in the figures for the numbers of male teachers in the 2007-2008 academic year. (AQW 5290/09)

Minister of Education: The apparent discrepancy is because the question asked in AQW 4432/09 requested information only on full-time permanent teachers, and the breakdown requested did not include the voluntary sector.

The answer to AQW 4130/09 gave 1,337 as the total number of male teachers in primary schools in 2007-2008. This figure included part-time teachers, temporary teachers filling vacancies and teachers employed on a daily (1/365th) basis, as well as full-time permanent teachers. It also included teachers working in the preparatory departments of voluntary grammar schools.

Sa fhreagra ar AQ 4432/09 tugadh 1,221 mar líon na múinteoirí lánaimseartha fear i mbunscoileanna (gan múinteoirí atá ag obair i ranna ullmhúcháin scoileanna gramadaí deonacha san áireamh) sa scoilbhliain 2007-2008. Níor cuireadh san áireamh múinteoirí páirtaimseartha, múinteoirí sealadacha a bhí ag líonadh folúntas ná múinteoirí a bhí fostaithe ar bhonn laethúil (1 as 365).

The answer to AQW 4432/09 gave 1,221 as the number of full-time permanent male teachers in primary schools (excluding teachers working in preparatory departments of voluntary grammar schools) in 2007-2008. It also excluded part-time teachers, temporary teachers filling vacancies and teachers employed on a daily (1/365th) basis.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education the date on which the last children will sit academic tests as part of the post primary transfer process. (AQO 2051/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mé iontach sásta go bhfuil deireadh leis na teisteanna aistrithe. Rinneadh an 11+ deiridh ar 21 Samhain 2008. Tá treo eiseithe agam ar Aistriú 2010 a chuimsíonn moltaí do chritéir iontrála neamhroghnacha agus iarraim tuairimí mar chuid de chomhairliúchán a bheidh á réachtáil go dtí 27 Aibreán 2009.

The final transfer tests have thankfully ended. The last 11+ test was sat on 21 November 2008. I have issued guidance for Transfer 2010 which includes recommendations for non-selective admissions criteria upon which views are invited as part of a consultation exercise running until 27 April 2009.

There will be no Department of Education test in place to facilitate the use of academic admissions criteria in future post-primary transfer processes. The guidance recommends that schools do not use academic admissions criteria. If a school chooses to do so, it will have to provide for itself the robust assessment mechanism and procedures that such criteria require.

Transfer 2010 represents an opportunity to spare all children the ordeal of sitting academic tests to gain admission to post-primary school, and provides grammar schools with the opportunity to make their excellent provision available in a fairer manner.

Sustainable Schools Strategy

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Education what are the policy objectives of her Sustainable Schools strategy. (AQO 2055/09)

Minister of Education: Is cuspóir í den Bheartas um Scoileanna Inbhuanaithe ná go mbeidh scoileanna láidir inmharthana ann a sholáthraíonn oideachas den chéad scoth do na páistí ar mhaithe a leasa féin agus ar mhaithe leasa an tsochaí.

The objective of the Sustainable Schools Policy is to have strong viable schools providing our children with a high quality education for their own and society's benefit. School sustainability must first and foremost be about the quality of the educational experience for our children. The Policy sets out six criteria to be considered in assessing a school's viability:-

- Quality Educational Experience
- Stable Enrolment Trends
- Sound Financial Position
- Strong Leadership and Management
- Accessibility
- Strong Links with the Community.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the advice she received from the Departmental Solicitor on the introduction of guidance relating to post primary transfer. (AQO 2057/09)

Minister of Education: Fuair mo Roinn comhairle chuimsitheach dlí ar an treoir a eisíodh ar 2 Feabhra 2009. Faigheann gach Roinn comhairle dlí (agus cineálacha eile comhairle atá riachtanach) ar roinnt mórbheart eile.

My Department took comprehensive legal advice on the guidance it issued on 2 February 2009. 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. 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. This Article states: "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".

Post Primary Transfer

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education what advice has been given to primary schools in relation to preparing pupils for transfer to post primary schools in 2010. (AQO 2058/09)

Minister of Education: Tugann an Treoir a foilsíodh ar 2 Feabhra 2009 tacaíocht do bhunscoileanna agus í ag iarraidh a chinntiú nach ndéanfaidh roinnt scoileanna ghramádaí iarracht soláthar an churaclaim bunscóile a shaobhadh.

The guidance published on 2 February 2009 supports primary schools in seeking to ensure that some grammar schools do not attempt to distort the delivery of the primary curriculum.

The guidance contains the following advice - "In relation to the issue of preparation for a post-primary school's entrance test, primary schools should note that this cannot be required of them and that the Department strongly recommends against it. Indeed, all primary schools are covered by statutory obligations to deliver the primary curriculum as defined in Articles 4-9 of the Education Order 2006. The Education and Training Inspectorate will also continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the context of the revised curriculum in primary schools."

Teaching Civics

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Education what provisions exist for teaching civics and citizenship in the classroom. (AQO 2059/09)

Minister of Education: Is mar chuid den churacalm athbhreithnithe reachtúil ó Bhliain 1 go Bliain 12 í an tSaoránacht.

Citizenship is part of the statutory revised curriculum from Year 1 to Year 12. At primary level this is covered through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, and at post-primary level through Learning for Life and Work. Before this was introduced, my Department invested in a substantial programme of piloting and teacher training for post-primary schools, recognising the important role citizenship education can play in developing our young people as contributors to society, and the need for teacher support to deliver citizenship in the classroom.

My Department continues to provide resources to the Education and Library Boards for citizenship officers, and further training and support materials have been provided for both primary and post-primary teachers as the revised curriculum is implemented. In addition, my Department provides all Year 11 pupils with a Young Citizens Passport booklet, providing information on a range of relevant areas as a reference point for them.

A recent evaluation by the University of Ulster, covering the period 2003- 2007, found that citizenship education has had significant and positive impacts on pupils' knowledge and understanding in this area, and on their confidence, attitudes and behaviours. Teachers also found the training programme positive, and that citizenship had a positive impact on curriculum planning, classroom practice and the outcomes of active learning for all pupils.

Irish Language

Mr F Brolly asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to encourage post-primary schools to include the Irish language in the curriculum. (AQO 2060/09)

Minister of Education: Sa domhan an lae inniu, is rud tábhachtach í foghlaim teanga do dhaoine óga ó thaobh cúrsaí eacnamaíochta de, go sóisialta agus ar bhonn cultúrtha.

In today's world language learning is important for our young people economically, socially and culturally. At post-primary level languages are part of the statutory revised curriculum at Key Stage 3 for all pupils, and schools must offer pupils access to language courses at Key Stage 4. Under the revised curriculum schools also have greater flexibility in the languages they offer. This can be any official language of the EU member states, which includes Irish, and any other additional languages.

My Department supports and encourages the delivery of all languages in schools and, to address a gap, has provided support for Irish resources in post-primary schools to ensure schools are able to deliver the subject of Irish language. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is providing more resources for teachers in the Irish Medium sector.

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

I will shortly be receiving recommendations on a language Strategy from the Universities' Joint Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

Post Primary Transfer

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the equality implications of her statement on 2010 post primary transfer. (AQO 2061/09)

Minister of Education: My whole approach to transfer has been shaped by the inequities of the current system and by my desire to create a system that can deliver equality and social justice.

The guidance I announced on 2 February 2009, if followed by all post-primary schools, will create a more equal system of post-primary transfer, levelling out the inequalities of the old system.

The old system has failed children from working class communities who are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of admission to grammar schools. Whilst 1 in 4 children admitted to a non-selective school is entitled to free school meals, only 1 in 17 children admitted to grammar school falls into this category.

In recommending that geographical criteria such as parish and catchment area are used in conjunction with nearest suitable school, the guidance seeks to ensure that rural applicants are not disadvantaged. All children will be considered equally local when applying for a place at schools nearest to them in each of the categories of 'suitable school'.

Cinntoidh an treoir, má chloíonn gach iarbhunscóil léi, go mbeidh páistí ag aistriú chuig an iarbhunscóil, ar bhonn comhionannais, ar bhonn ceartais shóisialta agus ar bhonn sármhaitheasa.

The guidance, if followed by all post-primary schools, will ensure that children transfer on the basis of equality, social justice and excellence.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Education to detail the reasons for recommending that a free school meal quota be used as the first criterion as part of her guidelines for post primary transfer. (AQO 2062/09)

Minister of Education: Tá neamhionannas ann maidir le hiontrálacha mar gheall ar na socruithe a bhí ann d'Aistriú 2009 agus do bhlianta roimhe seo, a raibh Teist Aistrithe mar chuid de.

The arrangements which have operated for Transfer 2009 and preceding years, involving a Transfer Test, have produced an inequality in admissions. In the past it has been extremely hard for a child from a low income family to be admitted to a grammar school. If we use entitlement to free school meals (FSME) as an indicator of low income, 1 in 4 children in non-grammar post-primary schools are entitled to free school meals whereas the ratio in grammar schools is 1 in 17. This is unfair for both the child and for the non-selective schools.

In order to ensure that the admissions process no longer disadvantages children from low income families, the guidance for Transfer 2010 published on 2 February 2009 recommends that all schools use as their first criterion a measure that will ensure that FSME applicants gain admission to a post-primary school at the same rate as all other applicants. For example, if 20% of applications are from FSME applicants, then at least 20% of the school's places should be allocated to FSME applicants.

Chief Inspector of Schools

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the report produced by the Chief Inspector of Schools for the period 2006-08. (AQO 2064/09)

Minister of Education: Cuirim fáilte mhór roimh an tuarascáil chuimsitheach ón Phríomhchigire agus gabhaim buíochas leisean agus lena chomhghleacaithe as an ról tábhachtach atá acu maidir le caighdeán a ardú inár scoileanna.

I welcome this comprehensive report from the Chief Inspector and thank him and his colleagues for the important contribution they make to raising standards in our schools.

The report has shown improvements in all areas which come under the responsibility of the Department of Education and I recognise the work that those in daily contact with our children and young people have put in to achieve these improvements.

I am however concerned that there are major areas which require urgent attention to ensure our children and young people are given the best possible educational experiences at every level.

The report shows that almost one fifth of pupils do not attain standards in literacy and numeracy expected for their age by the time they leave primary school. This is worrying, and an obvious contributor to the fact that one thousand pupils leave school without any GCSE qualifications. The report also shows that in one quarter of primary and post-primary schools the leadership and management needs to improve. The strength of leadership has a direct impact on the level of standards in a school and we need to encourage and support teachers to develop as leaders.

For too long the unacceptable level of underachievement in our schools has been ignored, but I am determined that changes are needed and will be implemented.

I have a programme of progressive reforms underway, including proposals on post-primary arrangements. This report shows the need for these reforms, which will help raise standards in our schools. Every school has the potential to be a good school and our School Improvement Policy and Literacy and Numeracy Strategy will be key elements in our efforts to help children and young people raise their levels of achievement.

In addition, the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority in January 2010 will see the wholesale reform of the administration of education. ESA will deliver genuine benefits for schools and the pupils they serve while addressing equality issues in many areas. ESA will also be instrumental in supporting schools in their work to raise standards, and will challenge schools where necessary.

The number of children educated through the medium of Irish continues to grow and the Chief Inspector has noted the strengths and improvements in Irish-medium education, which makes a distinctive contribution to the educational landscape. The report also notes the sometimes poor accommodation due to lack of investment, which is far short of what should be expected. This is an area where support will need to be provided in the future.

The Chief Inspector also notes that special needs schools, where invaluable services are provided for our most vulnerable children, have demonstrated their capacity and confidence in sustaining good standards.

I will be meeting the Chief Inspector to discuss this important report and recommendations and have asked that copies are made available to all schools and those who serve on Boards of Governors. There is much to celebrate in education, but hard decisions need to be taken if improvements are to be made.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4763/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Department issued the DFP guidance: DAO 12/08 in December both internally and to its Non Departmental Public Bodies and stressed the importance of processing payments as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Department's payments are processed by Account NI. Statistics provided by Account NI show that, of the 2,510 payments issued during the month of December, 86.6% were made within 10 workings days of receipt of a valid invoice. All of the Department's NDPBs are striving to comply with the prompt payment pledge as fully as possible, within the constraints of their individual commercial environments.

Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many young people are not currently engaged in employment, education or training broken down by parliamentary constituency, in each of the last three years. (AQW 4822/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) of the number and proportion of 16-24 year olds in Northern Ireland that are not in employment, full-time education or Government supported training schemes are shown in the table below. However, estimates are not available at parliamentary constituency level, as the LFS sample size and design does not support the production of sufficiently reliable estimates of this type at constituency level.

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY ESTIMATES OF 16-24 YEAR OLDS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, WHO ARE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, FULL-TIME EDUCATION, OR GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED TRAINING SCHEMES¹, 2006 – 2008

Period	Number	% of all aged 16-24
July-September 2006	40,000	17%
July-September 2007	38,000	16%
July-September 2008	45,000	19%

¹ Figures exclude those in part-time education or training.

Review of Further Education

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning in relation to the Review of Further Education, whether super colleges offered redundancy to long serving lecturers as an inducement to take early retirement. (AQW 4823/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Following the Further Education College mergers in August 2007, colleges had to restructure their provision and curriculum to meet revised business requirements, necessitating a number of redundancies in their staffing complements. The redundancies took place because the posts were no longer required in the revised structure.

In making redundancies, college employers have had to comply with the Contracts of Employment and Redundancy Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. Colleges have confirmed that all lecturing posts declared redundant under the Teachers' Premature Retirement Compensation Scheme have been suppressed.

Student Fees

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide details of any public announcements he has made about student fees including dates, and what progress has been made on them. (AQW 4952/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I have made the following announcements regarding the current review of variable tuition fees; (i) on 14 November 2008 I confirmed my intention to commence the review this current academic year; (ii) on 3 December 2008 I announced Joanne Stuart as independent chairperson of the review; and (iii) on 9 December 2008 I clarified the position with regard to timescales.

In terms of progress to date, a research project is underway and a stakeholder steering group has been established. I am committed to updating the Committee on a quarterly basis and as key milestones are reached.

I anticipate receiving an interim report for consideration in May 2009 which I will bring before the Committee for Employment and Learning prior to public consultation and impact assessments scheduled for Autumn 2009.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how Northern Ireland Tourist Board plans to develop and promote the River Foyle for tourism. (AQW 4711/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The development and promotion of an asset such as the River Foyle is captured at a strategic level within the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) draft Corporate Plan (2008-2011). NITB has identified key product areas as the overarching focus for product development, management and marketing. Our natural landscape provides opportunities to develop products in areas such as golf, soft adventure, walking and cycling as well as niche areas such as cruising, canoeing and angling. Investment is required to develop the range, quality and access to facilities, suitable transport and facilities in accommodation.

The Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission is responsible for the promotion and development of Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough for commercial and recreational purposes, and for the development of marine tourism in the Foyle and Carlingford areas.

The Loughs Agency has applied for funding under the Interreg IV programme to facilitate the implementation of its Marine Tourism and Angling Development plans to 2013 and is currently awaiting a Letter of Offer from the Special EU Programmes Body. This application included a number of key projects in the Foyle system.

The Loughs Agency has also established a Sustainable Development Fund to fund marine tourism and angling development projects throughout the Foyle and Carlingford Areas. This fund has already committed approximately £92,000 to 24 projects in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas, and expressions of interest have been received for further projects in 2009.

NITB is currently working with Derry City Council and ILEX, the Urban Regeneration Company for the Derry City Council area, on the draft Tourism Development Strategy for the city, within which the river has been identified as a key cluster for development. A three year costed development plan will be one of the outputs of this work.

Gaelic Football and Hurling

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of Gaelic Football and Hurling being marketed as a tourist product. (AQW 4742/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The promotional potential of the sporting traditions such as Gaelic Football and Hurling are represented in Tourism Ireland's global marketing communications through its suite of 41 websites in 19 languages, in market literature and in promotional and publicity campaigns in key markets. It is recognised that their portrayal can play a role in helping potential visitors to envisage some of the unique and compelling aspects of a holiday in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4844/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: While it is too early to provide meaningful statistics on this matter, the Department and its NDPBs are working with Account NI to ensure payments are processed as quickly as possible while ensuring appropriate processes are followed.

Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to ensure that Northern Ireland Electricity charges return to a rate similar to that before the massive increase in the price of oil, which has since dropped significantly. (AQW 4938/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department has no role in determining energy prices but strives to create market conditions that, over the long term may help drive down energy prices. The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator) is the expert body set up to engage with energy providers on regulatory matters, including the setting of tariffs, legislation requires that it does this independently of government.

The Utility Regulator has a statutory obligation to protect the interests of electricity consumers with regard to price and quality of service by promoting effective competition in the generation, transmission and supply of electricity. The Utility Regulator also ensures that NIE Energy profits do not exceed an imposed cap, which is a very low margin in business terms.

Electricity in Northern Ireland is mostly generated from natural gas and coal. The determinants of the price of electricity in Northern Ireland are not therefore simply linked to the current price of crude oil. NIE Energy took a decision to advance purchase a significant proportion of their power generation, and given significant increases

in wholesale energy costs over the summer and early autumn in 2008, this seemed a prudent action to protect consumers over the winter period.

As wholesale energy costs have fallen considerably since then, this strategy means that NIE Energy is unable to pass on the full benefit of lower wholesale energy costs to consumers. However, NIE's Power Procurement business had greater flexibility, and savings to consumers were passed on through the 10.8 % reduction in tariffs effective from 1 January 2009.

My officials continue to engage with NIE and the Utility Regulator's office to maximise the potential for price reductions and will continue to work with these bodies to identify any further possible opportunities to minimise electricity costs for Northern Ireland consumers.

Invest NI

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment the (i) number and (ii) monetary value of offers to Invest NI client companies this year in comparison with last year. (AQW 4946/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The table below shows the number of offers approved by Invest NI during the period 1st April 2008 to 31st January 2009 and a comparison for the same period last year (2007/08). The table also includes the amount of assistance contained in these offers and the variance to the same period last year.

INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED (APRIL 2008 – JANUARY 2009) WITH PREVIOUS YEAR COMPARISON

	Position at 31st Jan 2008	Position at 31st Jan 2009	% Variance
Number of Offers	1,822	1,965	8% Increase
Assistance Offered	£67m	£129m	92% Increase

Note: Figures are provisional and subject to change.

Consideration should be given to the current economic climate when analysing this information. An 'approved offer' merely reflects an intention to invest in the future and recent evidence suggests that many offers will be 'banked' by clients to be implemented in the medium-term upturn.

Greyhound Racing Circuit

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what correspondence she has had with the Department of the Environment about an application for (i) a greyhound racing circuit; (ii) a horse training track; and (iii) a four star hotel in Stranocum; and to provide an estimate of how many jobs could this project might create. (AQW 4955/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The only correspondence the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment or its agencies has been involved in regarding this project is a Planning Consultation issued to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board by Planning Service.

The application identified that 10 persons were employed in the existing facility and that the expected increase in employees as a result of the project was not known.

Greyhound Racing Circuit

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the proposal for (i) greyhound racing circuit; (ii) horse training track; and (iii) four star hotel in Stranocum, in relation to job creation and if she has considered giving any support to the project. (AQW 4957/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Other than a Planning Consultation issued to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board by Planning Service neither the Department nor its agencies have had any involvement in this proposal. Therefore no consideration has been given to possible job creation and no application has been received for financial support.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what actions her Department is taking to encourage local banks to sign up to the UK Government's Loan Guarantee Scheme. (AQW 4970/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI and Invest NI continue to work with the UK Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the local banks, relevant stakeholders and businesses to ensure that Northern Ireland takes full advantage of the national schemes on offer.

Invest NI is engaging with the banking sector to examine financing solutions for businesses during the economic downturn. Over 30 meetings have taken place with Bank representatives over the past year involving members of Invest NI's Board and Senior Management Team. These discussions have included a particular emphasis on the previous Small Firms Loan Guarantee and the new Enterprise Finance Guarantee schemes.

My Department also facilitated a visit to Northern Ireland on 6 February by the BERR Secretary of State, Peter Mandelson. At a lunch with the business and banking community, he assured those present that the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme was designed to be easier to administer by the banks than its predecessor scheme, the Small Firms Loan Guarantee and the banking representatives were encouraged to consider this finance tool when discussing options with clients.

Grants for Small Businesses

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what grants are available for small businesses. (AQW 5189/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI continues to offer a wide range of support to encourage the growth and development of the small business sector. Invest NI focuses on working with those manufacturing and tradable service businesses that demonstrate the greatest export potential and the prospect of improving productivity by becoming more internationally competitive. To qualify for Invest NI assistance or support, a business must demonstrate that currently, or over the following three years, they will:

- Have total sales of over £100,000 per annum;
- Have sales outside of NI greater than 25 per cent of turnover, or greater than £250,000 per annum; and,
- Be capable of and willing to work with Invest NI.

For locally-owned businesses in the tradable services sector additional qualifying criteria are:-

- The potential to sustain salaries above the Northern Ireland Private Sector median; and / or,
- A minimum gross profit margin of 20 per cent shown to be achievable.

A qualifying business will have access to all aspects of Invest NI's extensive Business Development Solutions portfolio consisting of professional advice, assistance (financial and non-financial) and support for businesses across the following 6 key areas:

- Strategy Development;
- People Development;
- Research and Development;
- Exporting;
- Energy Management; and
- E-Business.

A copy of the Invest NI Business Development Solutions brochure can be obtained from the Publications Section on Invest NI's website at http://www.investni.com/bds_brochure_march_06.pdf.

Invest NI has also continued to introduce new schemes focused on supporting small business growth. The Growth Accelerator Programme (GAP), for example, which was launched in June 2007, to assist SMEs to grow faster in export markets, Invest NI also continually seeks to rationalise, streamline and refresh its portfolio of service offerings, and operates a wide range of schemes to support the development of start ups and small businesses

Over the last few months, Invest NI has developed a programme of actions and initiatives designed to enable businesses to tackle the potential impact of a sustained economic downturn. In particular, it has focused on the areas of cash flow management, cost reduction and improving production efficiency.

Demolition Contractors

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what powers does her Department have to control the activities of demolition contractors. (AQW 5192/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department has no powers to control the activities of demolition contractors in deciding whether it is appropriate for a particular building to be demolished. However the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) which is sponsored by DETI can exercise powers but only in so far as they relate to ensuring that the actual demolition operation is carried out safely.

Construction Industry

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been lost in the construction industry in the last six months. (AQO 2142/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Information on the net change in employee jobs in the period June –December 2008 from the Quarterly Employment Survey is not due to be published until 18th March 2009.

However, the number of claimants of unemployed benefits whose usual occupation was in construction¹ has increased from 5,925 persons in July 2008 to 10,125 persons in January 2009.

This represents an increase of 4,200 persons or 71% over the last six months.

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

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the individual who sought clarification on the definition of Londonderry in relation to Project Kelvin was told it included the County, is the same person who owns the land where it is proposed to locate the telehouse in Coleraine. (AQW 5249/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The clarification was asked at the Open Day, held for prospective bidders on the 21st July 2008, following the release of the Invitation to Tender. My Department has a record of those who attended the meeting, the questions asked, and the responses given. There is no record of who asked the individual questions.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if any member of the DUP lobbied her to have the Project Kelvin telehouse located in Coleraine. (AQW 5250/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The decision to locate the facility in Coleraine was taken by Hibernia Atlantic and submitted in its tender for the Project. I was not subject to lobbying by any member of my party.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she is aware that MPD consultants who drew up the tender specification for the Project Kelvin telehouse contract, has at least one former employee of Hibernia Atlantic on its staff. (AQW 5251/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Officials in the Department were aware that MPD Consultants had a former employee of Hibernia Atlantic on its staff. However, the employee in question was not part of the team that drew up the Invitation to Tender, nor were they involved in any way in the evaluation of the tenders.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she or any officials from her Department held a meeting with the DUP's Adrian McQuillan about the location of the Project Kelvin telehouse, prior to it being designated in Coleraine. (AQW 5252/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Neither I nor my officials have had any meetings with Adrian McQuillan about the location of the Project Kelvin telehouse.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department's project manager for Project Kelvin, met Coleraine City Councils 'in committee', in private before the contract was awarded to Coleraine. (AQW 5253/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department's Project Manger did attend a special meeting with Coleraine Borough Council on 3 December 2008. This meeting took place after the announcement of the 'preferred bidder' and at the request of Coleraine Borough Council. The contract was subsequently signed on 22 December 2008.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment the grade of the civil servant who changed the geographical location for the telehouse from the city of Derry/Londonderry to Coleraine; and under whose authority or interest he was acting. (AQW 5318/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The preparation of the Invitation to Tender was undertaken by a project team (and overseen by the Project Board) comprising representatives from DETI, DCENR, Central Procurement Directorate and MPD (technical consultants for the project). DETI was represented by the Kelvin project manager; this post is graded at Deputy Principal level. Following the release of the Invitation to Tender, an Open Day was held for prospective tenderers. At this meeting a question was asked regarding where the telehouse was located and it was clarified that it could be located anywhere in County Londonderry. The project team did not consider it necessary to consult with senior management or the Project Board before giving the clarification as it was not considered to have any material impact on delivery of the project objectives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) were issued by each Council, in each year since their inception; and what was the total cost incurred by each Council in issuing them. (AQW 4672/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): Eight of the twenty-six district councils have been involved in the issue of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), since their inception in 2004. In most cases councils have worked as partners in an inter-agency forum, with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in the lead. Administration costs average £2,500 for each case, with the exception of one prolonged investigation which cost approximately £20,000. Down District Council and Larne Borough Council are the only councils that applied to the Court to issue ASBOs and therefore, incurred legal costs. Details provided by the councils are summarised in the table below.

Year	District Council	ASBOs	
		No.Issued	Detail
2005	Coleraine	6	PSNI in lead
	Larne	2	Legal fees £7,234
2006	Belfast	1	A two-year ASBO issued following six interim Orders.
	Castlereagh	1	PSNI in lead
	North Down	2	PSNI in lead
2007	Antrim	2	One order issued on conviction. One with PSNI in lead
	Fermanagh	1	PSNI in lead
	North Down	2	PSNI in lead.
2008	Antrim	1	Order issued on conviction
	Down	1	Legal fees £2,463
	Fermanagh	1	PSNI in lead
	Larne	2	Legal fees £2,077
	Lisburn	1	Order issued on conviction
	North Down	3	PSNI in lead
2009	Carrickfergus	1	Administration costs approximately £20,000

Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment how many Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) were issued by each Council, in each year since their inception; and what was the total cost incurred by each Council in issuing them. (AQW 4673/09)

Minister of the Environment: Five councils have been involved in the issue of Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), since their inception in 2004. Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive have taken the lead in these cases and councils therefore, incurred only administration costs (average cost £2,500 per case). Details provided by the councils are summarised in the table below.

Year	District Council	No. Contracts Issued
2005	Coleraine	2
	Fermanagh	4
2006	Coleraine	4
	Omagh	8
2007	Antrim	5
	Banbridge	1
	Coleraine	1
	Omagh	3
2008	Banbridge	1
	Coleraine	4
	Fermanagh	3
	Omagh	3

Walls of Derry/Londonderry

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Department's plans along with those of the City Council, to have the Walls of Derry/Londonderry listed with World Heritage Status. (AQW 4712/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment has responsibility to consider any proposal for World Heritage Status in Northern Ireland, and, to decide if it is appropriate to recommend its inclusion on the UK Tentative List to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in London. As a result, the Department cannot plan to have the Walls nominated but is however advising on the process.

No formal proposal has yet been received for consideration from Derry City Council. However staff in the Department - and in particular the Northern Ireland Environment Agency - have had significant and continuing contact with the City Council. If a proposal is received, it will be given close and careful attention by the Department which has already indicated, in 2006, a willingness, in principle, to support such a bid if an appropriate initial case is made.

Wind Farms

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment the number of planning applications for wind farms which have been approved and his assessment of the potential energy from these wind farms. (AQW 4726/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning Service has granted planning permission for 34 planning applications for wind farms for some 283 turbines and which have a combined generating capacity of 439.4MW.

Wind Farms

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to give details of the planning applications for wind farms currently being considered; the date they were submitted, and the potential energy generated by each of these wind farms. (AQW 4728/09)

Minister of the Environment: There are currently 51 valid planning applications for wind farms / turbines (to specifically provide energy for the National Grid) with the potential to produce a total of 1,163.55MW.

Proposed Wind Farms

Application	Reference	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)	Date Submitted
Tullinoid	L/2004/0472	Fermanagh	9	15.75	08/03/04
Slieve Kirk	A/2004/1130	Derry	21	63	29/10/04
Tievenameenta	J/2005/0104	Strabane	22	66	21/01/05
Carrickatane	J/2005/0211	Strabane	9	27	11/02/05
Gortmonly	J/2005/0213	Strabane	6	18	11/02/05
Eglish	A/2005/0223	Derry	9	27	11/02/05
Drumadarragh	U/2005/0281	Newtonabbey	4	11.5	16/05/05
Ora More	L/2005/3070	Fermanagh	9	20.9	15/12/05
Crockdun	K/2006/0074	Omagh	9	27	20/01/06
Cregganconroe	K/2006/0242	Omagh	7	14	31/01/06
Carn Hill	U/2006/0054	Newtonabbey	11	22	31/01/06
Gortfinbar	K/2006/1089	Omagh	5	11.5	03/04/06
Pollnalaght	K/2006/1368	Omagh	12	30	08/06/06
Gortgall	L/2006/1197	Fermanagh	8	18.4	28/03/06
Altgolan	J/2006/0840	Strabane	7	17.5	21/08/06
Seegronan	J/2006/0883	Strabane	9	20.7	21/08/06
Elginny Hill	G/2006/0754	Ballymena	22	44	02/08/06
Eshmore	M/2006/1802	Dungannon	7	21	04/09/06
Inishative	K/2006/1793	Omagh	8	24	17/10/06

Application	Reference	Location	No. Turbines	Capacity (MW)	Date Submitted
Corby Knowe	T/2006/0832	Antrim	3	9	17/10/06
Slatbeg	M/2006/1754	Dungannon	9	20.7	29/08/06
Rathsherry	G/2006/0842	Ballymena	16	36.8	06/09/06
Glenconway	B/2006/0607	Limavady	11	30	19/12/06
Castlecraig	K/2006/1934	Omagh	25	75	22/11/06
Ballyreagh Tempo	L/2006/2371	Fermanagh	1	2.5	22/11/06
Altahullion III	B/2007/0006	Limavady	15	34.5	05/01/07
Glenbuck II	D/2006/0599	Ballymoney	5	15	01/12/06
Clunahill	K/2007/0547	Omagh	7	21	22/05/07
Gronan	J/2007/0667	Strabane	15	34.5	02/10/07
Callagheen Ext	L/2007/1772	Fermanagh	6	13.8	06/12/07
Dunbeg	B/2007/0560	Limavady	14	42	11/12/07
Dunmore	B/2007/0563	Limavady	8	24	13/12/07
Brockaghboy	C/2007/1186	Coleraine	20	60	14/12/07
Koram Hill	J/2007/0309	Strabane	6	13.8	10/05/07
Tullywisker	J/2007/0700	Strabane	3	6	29/10/07
Shantavny Scotch	M/2007/1407	Dungannon	7	14	29/10/07
Farkland	B/2007/0562	Limavady	17	51	12/12/07
Slieveglass	J/2008/0088	Strabane	3	6.9	28/01/08
Crockbrack	I/2008/0157	Cookstown	2	6	11/02/08
Curraghmulkin	K/2008/0334	Omagh	17	39.1	12/03/08
Lisnamuck	C/2008/0163	Coleraine	3	6	21/02/08
Teiges	L/2008/0459	Fermanagh	5	12.5	31/03/08
Cappagh	M/2008/0476	Dungannon	3	9	14/04/08
Aghamore	J/2008/0278	Strabane	5	15	01/05/08
Meenakeeran	J/2008/0240	Strabane	8	24	14/04/08
Slieve Croob	Q/2007/0914	Banbridge	2	4.6	27/12/07
Molly Mountain	L/2008/1113	Fermanagh	7	21	15/08/08
Corkey Ext	D/2008/0404	Ballymoney	1	2.5	04/09/08
Beltonanean	I/2008/0684	Cookstown	2	2.6	13/10/08
Crockbaravally	K/2008/1153	Omagh	3	6.9	05/12/08
Mullynaveagh	M/2008/1327	Dungannon	2	4.6	05/12/08
Total: 51			445	1163.55	

Planning Applications

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications are in the system awaiting the issue of 'Green Papers'. (AQW 4743/09)

Minister of the Environment: While it is not yet known how many applications will be approved the total number of planning applications currently in the system pending a decision at 30 September 2008 is 15,835.

These figures are extracted from my Department's published Development Management Statistics for 2007/2008 and the 2008/09 First and Second Quarterly Statistical Bulletin which provides data up to 30 September 2008. This figure includes 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 D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what is the longest waiting time for applicants to receive their 'Green Papers' confirming planning approval. (AQW 4744/09)

Minister of the Environment: As this question does not specify a time period, to provide an accurate figure can only be done by a manual search of all my Department's historic files. This information would not be readily available and would incur disproportionate costs.

However, my Department is fully committed to meeting Ministerial targets which set out the time taken to process planning applications to decisions or withdrawal by 31 March 2011. These 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.

Often the processing times of major applications can be longer due to the complexity of the proposal, the need for additional information and applicant delay.

Divisional Planning Office

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what additional resources have been allocated to the Divisional Planning Office in Downpatrick. (AQW 4766/09)

Minister of the Environment: Over the last 12 months 11 additional staff members have been allocated to the Divisional Planning Office in Downpatrick. This includes the Divisional Support Team which is currently in place to reduce the current level of live planning applications.

Divisional Planning Office

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many additional staff have been allocated to the Divisional Planning Office in Downpatrick, in the last year. (AQW 4767/09)

Minister of the Environment: Over the last 12 months 11 additional staff members have been allocated to the Divisional Planning Office in Downpatrick. This includes the Divisional Support Team which is currently in place to reduce the current level of live planning applications.

Planning Service

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment if he has any plans to instruct Planning Service to have enforcement officers on call outside normal office hours to deal with the demolition of protected buildings and trees. (AQW 4794/09)

Minister of the Environment: At present I have no plans to instruct Planning Service to have enforcement officers on call outside normal office hours to deal with the demolition of protected buildings or felling of trees mainly for resource reasons as such events happen on few occasions. However, in practice, local staff have investigated and monitored sites that may be at risk from an unauthorised breach in planning control.

On the spot enforcement action is not possible due to the need for enforcement officers to fully assess the situation prior to the drawing up and serving of Enforcement notices.

Demolition of Dwellings

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the circumstances in which a stop notice can be served on a developer seeking to demolish a dwelling in an area of townscape character. (AQW 4795/09)

Minister of the Environment: Article 73 of the 1991 Order enables my Department to serve a Stop Notice, which can prohibit, almost immediately, any activity to which an accompanying Enforcement Notice relates.

My Department can only serve a Stop Notice at the same time or after the service of an Enforcement Notice, once a breach of planning control has been carried out.

Article 67E of the 1991 Order enables my Department to issue a Temporary Stop Notice once a breach of planning control has been identified. This differs from the normal stop notice powers because the temporary stop notice does not have to wait for an Enforcement Notice to be issued. The temporary stop notice expires 28 days after the display of the notice on the site. During this time, my Department must decide whether it is appropriate to take enforcement action.

Alternatively, under Article 76b of the 1991 Order, my Department now has express power where it considers it necessary or expedient to apply to the High Court or County Court for an injunction to restrain or prevent a breach of planning control.

The decision to apply for an injunction is a matter of judgement for my Department and is based on sound evidence that a potential breach of planning control will occur.

Demolition of Dwellings

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what action may be taken on the demolition of 141 Central Promenade, Newcastle. (AQW 4797/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department is continuing to investigate this breach of planning control and is currently considering its options on the issue. While it is too early to speculate on what remedy may be sought, one possibility is the service of an enforcement notice requiring the construction of a building similar to the original. Should the matter progress, through enforcement, to the courts, the outcome and penalties would be decided by the judiciary. (The maximum possible fine for a breach of planning consent is currently £30,000).

Planning Service

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications were received by Planning Service for housing developments, in each quarter from 1 April 2007 to date. (AQW 4799/09)

Minister of the Environment: The breakdown of planning applications for housing developments received in each quarter from 1 April 2007 to 30 September 2008 is as follows:

Year & Quarter	Number of Housing Applications Received by Planning Service
2007 / 2008 Quarter 1(April 2007 – June 2007)	870
2007 / 2008 Quarter 2 (July 2007 – September 2007)	947
2007 / 2008 Quarter 3 (October 2007 – December 2007)	833
2007 / 2008 Quarter 4 (January 2008 – March 2008)	830
2008/2009 Quarter 1 (April 2008 – June 2008)	647
2008/2009 Quarter 2 (July 2008 – September 2008)	409

This information has been extracted from my Department's official Development Management Statistics for 2007/2008 and the 2008/09 First and Second Quarterly Statistical Bulletin which provides data up to 30 September 2008.

The next Development Management quarterly statistics are due for publication in March 2009.

Demolition of Dwellings

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what was the level of protection given to 141 Central Promenade, Newcastle, which was demolished on 25th January 2009. (AQW 4801/09)

Minister of the Environment: The level of protection is provided by the building being located within a proposed Area of Townscape Character (ATC) as designated in the Draft Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

Within an ATC, consent is required for the demolition of a building. While an offence has not been committed, the Department is currently seeking legal advice on the next steps to be taken with regard to the breach of planning control and the possible remedies.

Tree Protection Orders

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to place tree protection orders on woodland at Clandeboye Estate, Bangor. (AQW 4815/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department's Landscape Architects Branch (LAB) is not currently considering Tree Preservation Order (TPO) protection for the trees within the Clandeboye Estate, Bangor nor has the Branch been asked to do so by the Downpatrick Planning Division or Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan team.

LAB is currently unaware of any threat to the trees within the Clandeboye Estate which would be a requirement for such protection to be considered.

On the contrary, and to the best of LAB's knowledge, the trees within the Estate are the subject of good management practice, particularly as the Conservation Volunteers (CVNI) would be likely to assist with its management, located as they are within the Estate itself.

Planning Applications

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to list all planning applications about which he has made representations to Planning Service since coming into office. (AQW 4847/09)

Minister of the Environment: Since coming to office, I have made a number of representations to the Planning Service and details of these are set out in the attached table.

Site/Address	Detail	Support/Oppose
Oakland Park, Carrickfergus	Hot food bars	Request for Info
15 Main Street, Larne and 28 Point Street, Larne	2 Retail Units, 9 apartments, 5 offices	Update
75 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	5 applications	Update
21 Tureagh Road, Larne	Slurry Tank and Retrospective application for livestock shed	Support
Opposite Ballygally Castle Hotel	Self contained units	Info re when decision to be taken
Circular Road, Larne	2 retail units	Support
Junction Road, Ballyboley	Farm store and new access	Update
267 Bay Road, Carnlough	Unauthorised development	Support
28 Regents Park, Larne	Two storey extension	Update
66 Woodburn Road, Carrickfergus	Unauthorised development	Update
1 and 3 Oakland Park, Carrickfergus	Hot food bars	Support
40 Craiganee Road, Larne	Change of access Replacement dwelling and garage	Updates
Belfast Road, Larne	Travellers Site	Oppose

Site/Address	Detail	Support/Oppose
13 Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus	Demolition of existing property and erection of 6 apartments	Support
100 Glenarm Road, Larne	Freestanding rectangular sign	Oppose
209 Middle Road, Islandmagee	Unauthorised clay pigeon shooting activities	Oppose
13 Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus	Apartment development	Support
Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Lidl food store	Update
11 Glenburn Avenue, Larne	Two storey extension	Update
41 and 43 Ballystrudder Road, Islandmagee	Alts and extension to dwelling	Update
Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Lidl food store	Update
80 Cable Road and 22 Belfast Road, Whitehead	10 Apartments	Update
267 Bay Road, Carnlough	Unauthorised development	Update
28 Regents Park, Larne	Two storey extension	Support
54 Dickeystown Road, Glenarm	Replacement Dwelling House	Update
Land at Circular Road, Larne	2 retail warehouse units	Update
Site (20 Hillhead Road) between 18 and 22 Hillhead Road, Ballycarry	Dwelling and garage	Support
1 & 3 Oakland Park, Carrickfergus	Hot food bar	Update
2 Donegall Gardens, Whitehead	2 Detached Dwellings	Oppose
North of No. 4 Junction Road, Ballyclare	Farm Store and relocation of entrance	Update
9 Millvale, Ballygally, Larne	Replacement double garage with non-commercial workshop above	Support
41 Drumcrow Road, Drumcrow, Glenarm	Application for change of use of barn (formerly shop) to Saddlery	Update
100 Glenarm Road, Larne	Free-Standing Rectangular Sign	Update
East of 115 Ballymena Road, Carnlough	Erection of greenhouses, plant packing facilities, nursery areas and proprietors dwelling	Support
8 Marine Road, Carnlough, Ballymena	demolition of existing dwelling and garage and construction of a single retail unit and 2 No. 3 bedroom apartments	Support
Adj. to 40 Craiganee Road, Larne	Replacement dwelling & garage	Update
40 Craiganee Road, Larne	Change of access	Update
109a Drumahoe Road, Millbrook	Development 16 two-bed apartments and 2 three bed apartments with parking	Update
15 Quarry Cottages, Whitehead		No valid application
19 Largy Road, Carnlough	Four bed wing to rear of existing residential home	Update
Tower Road, Larne	Housing development	Update
75 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Lidl food store	Update
8 Branch Road, Larne	Demolish existing dwelling and erect 9 apartments and associated parking	Update
13 Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus	6 apartments	Update
Drumgreagh Hotel Site		Update
75 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Lidl food store	Update

Site/Address	Detail	Support/Oppose
13 Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus	6 apartments	Update
54 Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus	Change of use from residential to commercial	Update
Carrickfergus Masterplan		SW to arrange meeting
11 Glenburn Avenue, Larne	Two storey extension	Update
68 Millbay Road, Islandmagee	Retirement dwelling	Update
41-43 Ballystrudder Road, Islandmagee	Alts and extension to dwelling	Update
Larne Area Plan		Update
1 Whinfield Larne	Demolition of existing dwelling and replacement with 1 apartment and 2 duplex units	Update
24 Whinfield Larne	Gabion wall	Update
Old Courtauld's site Carrickfergus		Update
42 Circular Road	13 Residential Units	Oppose
Sanda Road	Totem Sign	Support
Carrick Application	Unknown	General enquiry
Edenmore Court	Sewerage problems	Request for copy of drainage plans
755a Shore Road	Infill development	Query regarding planning condition
38-39 Old Manse Road	Residential Development	Oppose
133-135 Jordanstown Road	Apartment Development	Non – committal
16-18 Old Manse Road	14 units for Sheltered Accommodation	General enquiry
Lands to the North of 8-10 Berry Drive and to the South of 16-20 Berry Crescent, Jordanstown	4 Detached dwellings	Update
6 Glenkeen Avenue, Jordanstown, Newtownabbey BT37 0PH	Erection of 3 dwellings	Unhappy with the Department's decision
Site running from Railway viaducts, to Monkstown ABC including paths to Ards Drive, Devinish Drive and Glenville Road.	Construction of cycle paths/footways and one footbridge	Request to delay presentation to Council to allow the Minister to speak to the applicant
42 Circular Road, Jordanstown	Erection of 13 residential units	Request for details of how the decision was reached
Rear of 67-85 Circular Road, Jordanstown, BT37 0RD	Erection of 2 semi-detached dwellings	Request to delay the issue of decision notice until a further query is answered
Jordanstown Schools, 85 Jordanstown Road, Jordanstown, Newtownabbey BT37 0QE	Replacement special school	Request to meet
Knock Golf Club	Development of golf course incorporating a residential development	Request to meet
Adjacent to 209 Middle Road, Islandmagee, Larne	Alleged U/A Shooting Range/Gun Club	Update
26 Glenfall Road, Glenoe	Redevelopment	Update
31a Deerpark Road, Glenarm	Proposed replacement dwelling	Support
117 Raceview Road, Ballymena	Single storey extension to front side and rear of existing hatchery together with new detached egg store, laboratory, field office and combined heat and power plant (Amended layout – access detail	Update

Site/Address	Detail	Support/Oppose
Woodburn Road	Use of yard area for storage of commercial vehicles for bus travel business	Update on application and time frame for action on current use
Tesco, Minorca Place and 41 – 47 Ellis Street, Carrickfergus	Extension to existing foodstore, reconfiguration and provision of additional car parking and service yard access, landscaping and associated works	Update and information on application
Adjacent to Redland Road, Larne	Proposed Vodaphone Broadband Service Mast	Update
152 -158 The Roddens, Larne	Redevelopment of 152 – 158 The Roddens for 20 Apartments, 12 no semi-detached and 1 no detached dwelling with associated parking	Information
22 Hillhead Road, Ballycarry	Proposed residential development at 22 Hillhead Road, Ballycarry	Update
10 Chaine Memorial Road, Larne	Additional Windows	Update
95 Knockagh Road, Carrickfergus	Retrospective change of use from domestic double garage to mechanical workshop	Update
8 Ballycoose Road, Cairncastle, Larne	Two storey rear extension to dwelling with minor alterations to existing	Update
58 Ballyboley Road, Larne	Proposed 200m sq single storey dwelling in lieu of previously approved domestic building for the storage of vintage farm machinery	Update
134 B The Roddens, Larne	8 apartments	Meeting
21 Tureagh Road Larne	Slurry store	Meeting
122 Coast Road, Larne	Replacement garage	Meeting
Ballygally Castle Hotel, Coast Road Ballygally	Change of use and extension	Meeting
75 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Foodstore	Meeting
Land North of 7 Old Belfast Road, Larne	District Centre	Meeting
36 Waterfall Road, Larne	Dwelling	Meeting
Land 150m east of 115 Ballymena Road, Carnlough	Greenhouses	Meeting
13 Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus	Demolition & erection of apartments	Meeting
109A Drumahoe Road, Larne	Apartments	Meeting
37 Knockfergus Park, Greenisland	Extension	Meeting
24 Whinfield, Larne	Gabion wall	Meeting
26 Victoria Avenue, Whitehead	Apartments	Meeting
65m west of 4 Junction Road Ballyclare	Store & entrance	Meeting
21 Tureagh Road, Larne	Shed/slurry tank	Meeting
54 Dickeystown Road, Glenarm	Replacement dwelling	Meeting
7,11,13 Old Shore Road, Carrickfergus	Apartments	Meeting
130-136 Curran road, Larne	Apartments	Meeting
Drumhoy Drive	General discussion	Meeting
4 Marine Road, Carnlough	Demolition & erection of apartments	Meeting
20 Hillhead Road, Ballycarry	New dwelling & garage	Meeting
Lands at 40 Brustin Brae Road, Larne	19 Dwellings	Meeting
Curran Point	Marina	Meeting

Site/Address	Detail	Support/Oppose
31 Larne Road, Carrickfergus	Apartments	Meeting
36 Waterfall Road, Larne	Replacement dwelling	Meeting
408 Coast Road, Glenarm	Refurbishment of hotel & residential units	Meeting
95A Knockagh Road, carrickfergus	Change of use to mechanical workshop	Meeting
21 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus	Apartments	Meeting
31 A Deerpark Road, Glenarm	Replacement dwelling	Meeting
Lands to rear of 63 & 65 Bankhall Road, Larne	Managers dwelling	Meeting
70m SE of 30 Ballyrickard Road, Larne	New dwelling & garage	Meeting
11 Ballycarney Road, Larne	Apartments	Meeting
Antiville Road, rear of 2-4 Tureagh Road, Larne	10 dwellings, 2 apartments	Meeting
Adjacent to 66 Woodburn Road, Carrickfergus	Storage of vehicles	Meeting
43 McCareys Loanen, Larne	Extension	Meeting
Lands adjacent to Bashfordsland, Marshallstown Road, Carrickfergus	Apartments	Meeting
25m SW of junction Deerpark Road/Larne Road, Ballynure	Paintball leisure complex	Meeting
Village Centre, car park, Coast Road, Larne	2 Storey building	Meeting
Lands at junction of Redlands Crescent and Redlands Road, Larne	Proposed mixed – use development comprising food superstore, multi screen cinema/ restaurant, stand alone restaurant, car parking and other associated site works	Telephone updates
111 Listoder Road, Saintfield	Moving a scrap business	Update

Planning Applications

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what the average waiting time is for green papers to be issued confirming planning approval. (AQW 4849/09)

Minister of the Environment: As I explained in my answer to AQW 4666/09, publically 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. Annual processing times for 2008/09 will be available in October 2009.

The average number of weeks to process a planning application in my Department to approval in 2007/08 is as follows:

Categories of Planning Application	Average Number of Weeks to Issue an Approval Decision
Major Planning Application	27 weeks
Intermediate Planning Application	28 weeks
Minor Planning Application	16 weeks

Ulster Farm By-Products

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the latest court proceedings against Ulster Farm By-Products, (i) how many offences in total were considered by the court; (ii) to outline the sanctions imposed for each pollution incident; (iii) to detail which offences were considered by the court but were not

directly punished; and (iv) to state whether the cumulative punishment of a £24,000 fine, plus costs, was arrived at by way of a plea bargain. (AQW 4853/09)

Minister of the Environment: The offences and sanctions are set out in the following table.

Offence Date	Sanction
28 March 2007	£3,000
26 April 2007	£3,000
5 June 2007	£5,000
10 August 2007	£5,000
24 August 2007	£8,000

Permit breaches on the following dates were “taken into consideration” in setting the fine for the last offence listed in the table and so no offences were unpunished.

1 & 16 October 2007; 14 November 2007; 6 December 2007, 17 January 2008; 13 February 2008; 11 March 2008; 10 April 2008; 15 May 2008; 23 & 29 June 2008; 22 July 2008; 21 August 2008 and 4 September 2008.

The level of the fine was solely determined by the Court.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many meetings he has held with the three MEPs since devolution. (AQW 4861/09)

Minister of the Environment: Since taking up office I have had no meetings with any of the MEPs but my predecessor had 2 meetings, one with Jim Allister and one with Jim Nicholson.

GAA Stadium in Antrim

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment if there have been any proposals submitted to his Department for a GAA stadium in Antrim. (AQW 4862/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am not aware of any planning application for a GAA stadium in Antrim.

However, a planning application was received on 10 November 2008 for a GAA Centre of Excellence in Antrim. The site is located on either side of the railway embankment between 105 Ballymena Road, 1 & 1a Dunsilly Road and 14 Niblock Road, Dunsilly, Antrim.

The application was designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order on 23 December 2008.

The proposal includes 4 x full size pitches, 1 training pitch, a warm-up area, 10 temporary changing rooms, 1 temporary meeting room/kitchen facilities, a hurling wall, floodlights, pitch maintenance & storage building including a generator for floodlights, pitch catch-nets, low level fencing, hardstanding for 85 car parking spaces, 13 disabled spaces & 2 coach spaces, 15m high net adjacent to railway line, improved entrance including off-site road works, circulation areas, landscaping, boundary treatment and fencing and associated works.

I am not aware of any name to be given to the centre.

GAA Stadium in Antrim

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment of any planning proposal received by his Department for a GAA stadium in Antrim. (AQW 4864/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am not aware of any planning application for a GAA stadium in Antrim.

However, a planning application was received on 10 November 2008 for a GAA Centre of Excellence in Antrim. The site is located on either side of the railway embankment between 105 Ballymena Road, 1 & 1a Dunsilly Road and 14 Niblock Road, Dunsilly, Antrim.

The application was designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order on 23 December 2008.

The proposal includes 4 x full size pitches, 1 training pitch, a warm-up area, 10 temporary changing rooms, 1 temporary meeting room/kitchen facilities, a hurling wall, floodlights, pitch maintenance & storage building including a generator for floodlights, pitch catch-nets, low level fencing, hardstanding for 85 car parking spaces, 13 disabled spaces & 2 coach spaces, 15m high net adjacent to railway line, improved entrance including off-site road works, circulation areas, landscaping, boundary treatment and fencing and associated works.

I am not aware of any name to be given to the centre.

GAA Stadium in Antrim

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment to provide details of any planning application received by his Department for a proposed GAA stadium in Antrim. (AQW 4865/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am not aware of any planning application for a GAA stadium in Antrim.

However, a planning application was received on 10 November 2008 for a GAA Centre of Excellence in Antrim. The site is located on either side of the railway embankment between 105 Ballymena Road, 1 & 1a Dunsilly Road and 14 Niblock Road, Dunsilly, Antrim.

The application was designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order on 23 December 2008.

The proposal includes 4 x full size pitches, 1 training pitch, a warm-up area, 10 temporary changing rooms, 1 temporary meeting room/kitchen facilities, a hurling wall, floodlights, pitch maintenance & storage building including a generator for floodlights, pitch catch-nets, low level fencing, hardstanding for 85 car parking spaces, 13 disabled spaces & 2 coach spaces, 15m high net adjacent to railway line, improved entrance including off-site road works, circulation areas, landscaping, boundary treatment and fencing and associated works.

I am not aware of any name to be given to the centre.

GAA Stadium in Antrim

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to any proposal he has received for a GAA stadium in Antrim, if he is aware of the name to be given to the stadium. (AQW 4866/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am not aware of any planning application for a GAA stadium in Antrim.

However, a planning application was received on 10 November 2008 for a GAA Centre of Excellence in Antrim. The site is located on either side of the railway embankment between 105 Ballymena Road, 1 & 1a Dunsilly Road and 14 Niblock Road, Dunsilly, Antrim.

The application was designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order on 23 December 2008.

The proposal includes 4 x full size pitches, 1 training pitch, a warm-up area, 10 temporary changing rooms, 1 temporary meeting room/kitchen facilities, a hurling wall, floodlights, pitch maintenance & storage building including a generator for floodlights, pitch catch-nets, low level fencing, hardstanding for 85 car parking spaces, 13 disabled spaces & 2 coach spaces, 15m high net adjacent to railway line, improved entrance including off-site road works, circulation areas, landscaping, boundary treatment and fencing and associated works.

I am not aware of any name to be given to the centre.

Departmental Staff Numbers

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of the Environment 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 4904/09)

Minister of the Environment:

Grade	Permanent	Casual Staff	Total
Analogous Grades	May-07		
Grade 5+	17		17
Grade 6	21		21
Grade 7	124		124
DP	287		287
SO	454		454
EOI	495	17	512
EOII	200		200
AO	865		865
AA	230	97	327
Industrial	88		88
Total	2781	114	2895

- (i) The full range of figures is not available as we cannot disaggregate the casual staff in to NICS casuals as they are distinct from agency workers.
- (ii) The breakdown at January 2009 is detailed in the table below. The figures for casual staff include NICS casual staff and agency workers. Of the 308 casual staff listed there are 173 agency workers employed as in the Administration (58) and Industrial (45) groups.

Grade &	Permanent	Casual Staff	Total staff
Analogous Grades	Jan-09		
Grade 5 +	16		16
Grade 6	21		21
Grade 7	110		110
DP	311		311
SO	512	1	513
EOI	490	70	560
EOII	188	15	203
AO	952	66	1018
AA	195	111	306
Industrial	82	45	127
	2877	308	3185

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment in relation to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency investigation of the case regarding Warren Road, Donaghadee, if he can confirm that investigations will be carried out quickly and thoroughly and not stalled unreasonably because of any inability to question the alleged perpetrators. (AQW 4940/09)

Minister of the Environment: I can assure you that officials within NIEA's Environmental Crime Unit will carry out this investigation as quickly and as comprehensively as possible. They must, however, work within the parameters of the Police and Criminal Evidence Order (PACE) and with regard to proper investigatory practices, including the Evidentiary Test and Public Interest, as well Article 6 (Right to a Fair Trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The objective of an investigation is to collect the facts and this process must be thorough, systematic and comprehensive. Incomplete or hastily conducted investigations will be counter-productive.

Planning Service

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment when the epic system will be launched by Planning Service. (AQW 4951/09)

Minister of the Environment: Partial implementation of e-PIC has already commenced within the Planning Service and a number of e-planning facilities will be made available to the public through our new internet website over the next 6-8 weeks.

It is projected the complete e-PIC system will be fully implemented across Planning Service by March 2010.

Illegal Dumping at Lough Cowey Reservoir

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment to provide details of the methodology used to establish the amount of illegal dumping that occurred at the Lough Cowey reservoir in 2008. (AQW 4974/09)

Minister of the Environment: As with all cases of alleged illegal dumping reported to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), the Lough Cowey incident was first recorded and logged. It was then passed to an investigating officer responsible for that area, who arranged and undertook a site visit, where an investigation of alleged offences was carried out.

In this case the report had named a specific individual. That person was contacted and an informal meeting arranged to establish the facts. An examination of the evidence gathered concluded that there was not enough evidence to forward the case to the PPS for prosecution; the main information was either circumstantial or unsubstantiated allegations, while photographs given to NIEA were not able to be used as evidence in a court of law.

MOT Tests

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment how many MOT tests have been carried out within the 18 minute target figure, in each of the last three years. (AQW 4996/09)

Minister of the Environment: This is not a target for the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA). The DVA target for vehicle testing is, 85% of all applications appointed within 21 days or at a later date requested by the customer. At 7 February 2009 the year to date performance against the target was 92.64%.

The 18 minute test time is a performance indicator within the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract that provided for the contractor to design, finance and build computerised and calibrated test lanes at DVA's 15 test centres between 2001 and 2003, and to refresh and maintain them for a period of 15 years thereafter. DVA vehicle examiners would continue to be responsible for operating the equipment. The Agency's view is that the 18 minute test time is an inappropriate indicator, derived from testing in a non live environment. This issue is being addressed as part of a performance review of the PFI Contract.

At 31 January 2009 the year to date actual average test time for MOT tests was 20 minutes.

Capital Projects

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment 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 5002/09)

Minister of the Environment: (i) To date, no major capital projects have been delayed by lack of finance due to the recession. The waste infrastructure programme has three major projects that are still in the preparation stage. Although my Department will provide up to £200M towards the capital investment, private sector funding is anticipated to provide the remaining finances. The source of the private finance will be confirmed during the Competitive Dialogue element to the procurement process.

(ii) Key waste infrastructure programme projects are not being delayed by the planning system. Applications from the Waste Management Groups have not been submitted yet and will enter the system over the next year to 18 months. Three waste cases currently in the Pre-application Discussion system are making satisfactory progress. Experience gained in these cases will help key consultees and Planning Service expedite important waste infrastructure cases through the system.

Disposal of Fish Process Effluence

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration has been given to the impact of the discharge of 180,000 metric tonnes of fish process effluence on blue flag beaches and areas of conservation in the (i) Limavady; and (ii) Coleraine Borough Council areas. (AQW 5011/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is required to control the deposition of materials below the High Water Mean Spring Tide mark to a distance of twelve nautical miles from the Northern Ireland coast. This is carried out by means of a licensing process under Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA).

In determining a licence application, the Department shall have regard to:

- protecting the marine environment of Northern Ireland;
- the living resources which it supports;
- human health;
- preventing interference with legitimate uses of the sea; and
- such matters as it considers relevant.

A FEPA licence application for the disposal of the fish process effluent was received by the NIEA on 8 December 2008. A full statutory and public consultation on the application was initiated on 17 December 2008.

On 2 February 2009, NIEA was officially contacted by the applicant's Consulting Engineers withdrawing the application for the FEPA licence for the disposal of the fish effluent. The Agency formally closed the FEPA application process for the disposal of the fish effluent on 4 February 2009 and issued notification of this to all the consultees in the application process.

Disposal of Fish Process Effluence

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment if he will give assurance, prior to the issue of a FEPA licence, that none of the Limavady and Coleraine Borough Council areas will be effected by the disposal of fish process effluence. (AQW 5012/09)

Minister of the Environment: A FEPA licence application for the disposal of the fish process effluent was received by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on 8 December 2008. A full statutory and public consultation on the application was initiated on 17 December 2008.

On 2 February 2009, NIEA was officially contacted by the applicant's Consulting Engineers withdrawing the application for the FEPA licence for the disposal of the fish effluent. The Agency formally closed the FEPA application process for the disposal of the fish effluent on 4 February 2009 and issued notification of this to all the consultees in the application process.

New Local Government Authorities

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment how many full time jobs were there in local government in (i) 1980; (ii) 1990; (iii) 2000; and (iv) 2008; and to provide an estimate of the number of jobs that could be lost when the new local government authorities come into existence. (AQW 5018/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department does not hold the requested information centrally. The Department will request the information from the 26 local councils and will provide the member with a written response that will be placed in the Assembly Library.

It is too early to say how many jobs could be lost when the new local government authorities come into existence. However, the Executive has agreed that every possible effort will be made to avoid redundancies and that compulsory redundancy will only receive consideration when all other practical options have been exhausted. Staff will transfer to the new local government authorities with the protections of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). This is the main piece of legislation governing the transfer of an undertaking, or part of one, to another. The Regulations are designed to protect the rights of employees in a transfer situation enabling them to enjoy the same contractual terms and conditions, with continuity of employment, as formerly. TUPE protection is not subject to any specific time limit. In addition, TUPE places significant constraints on the variation of these terms and conditions at a later stage.

Single Use Carrier Bags

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if he plans to make use of the Schedule 6 of the Climate Change Act 2008 to introduce charges for single use carrier bags. (AQW 5030/09)

Minister of the Environment: I prefer to await the outcome of the current voluntary agreement with leading UK retailers, which aims to reduce the number of carrier bags provided to customers by 50%, before taking any decision on whether or not to introduce charges. The agreement should result in around 5 billion fewer bags being handed out. I fully support the voluntary agreement because, as I said at the time it was announced, it aims to significantly reduce the number of carrier bags without hitting people in the pocket.

Apartment Development at Chainé Memorial Road in Larne

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all representations made to his Department by politicians about the unauthorised apartment development at Chainé Memorial Road in Larne, in the last year. (AQW 5031/09)

Minister of the Environment: There has only been one representation concerning this development from a politician in the last year. In my capacity as MP for the area I wrote to the Divisional Office on 11 November 2008 requesting an update on the current planning application.

Visitors Centre at the Giant's Causeway

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to list all the bodies and individuals he met in connection with the National Trust planning application for a visitors centre at the Giant's Causeway. (AQW 5032/09)

Minister of the Environment: In response to the first question I would refer the Member to my response to AQW 3727/09 published on 23 January 2009.

In response to the second question my Department has received representations from Seaport (NI) Ltd objecting to the proposal, and from Carson McDowell, solicitors acting on behalf of Seaport (NI) Ltd.

Visitors Centre at the Giant's Causeway

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to (i) list; and (ii) outline the nature of, all bodies and individuals who made written representations to his Department in connection with the National Trust planning application for a visitors centre at the Giant's Causeway. (AQW 5033/09)

Minister of the Environment: In response to the first question I would refer the Member to my response to AQW 3727/09 published on 23 January 2009.

In response to the second question my Department has received representations from Seaport (NI) Ltd objecting to the proposal, and from Carson McDowell, solicitors acting on behalf of Seaport (NI) Ltd.

Protection of Legitimate Charities

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of the Environment will he legislate to protect legitimate charities who use 'clothing banks' for fund-raising, by clamping down on unscrupulous operators who are installing bogus 'clothing banks' for self profit. (AQW 5042/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) already regulates Bring Bank containers, including 'clothing banks'. They must be registered in accordance with Paragraph 18 of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

The owners of Bring Bank containers not registered with NIEA in this way are guilty of carrying out an illegal waste activity in breach of Articles 4 and 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 and The Controlled Waste (Duty of Care) Regulations (NI) 2002. Landowners allowing unregistered Bring Bank containers to be sited on their land are permitting an illegal waste activity to take place on their land and are likewise in breach of Articles 4 and 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and the Controlled Waste (Duty of Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

The NIEA Environmental Crime Team has powers to investigate such offences.

Stretch Limousines

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment when legislation to cover (i) testing; and (ii) licensing of American style stretch limousines, hired as private taxis, will be introduced. (AQW 5101/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department proposes to introduce new testing and licensing regulations for American style stretched limousines by January 2010.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of the Environment to clarify the position of his Department in relation to a full public inquiry into the proposed runway extension at George Best Belfast City Airport. (AQW 5136/09)

Minister of the Environment: A planning application accompanied by an Environmental Statement for an extension to the runway at the George Best Belfast City Airport was submitted to the Department on Friday 14 November 2008. The application was designated as one of major importance under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 on 23 December 2008.

Under the Article 31 procedure one option open to the Department is to cause a public local inquiry to be held by the Planning Appeals Commission. However, until such time as consideration of the proposal has taken place, I am not in a position to confirm the procedural route to be adopted.

My officials are progressing the application, as quickly as it is possible to do so, and I expect to be in a position to make a recommendation on the way forward in the near future.

Planning Applications

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if he would consider making the process for individual planning applications more transparent so that the reasons for delays are clear. (AQW 5216/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department is committed to giving a transparent service to all interested parties involved in the development management planning application process and is required by law to make registers available for public inspection which comprises a copy of every application for planning permission together with copies of any plans, drawings, environmental information and decision notices. As well as the Register being available for inspection, the public have the right to inspect the application file through my Department's open file procedures. Applicants, agents and objectors use this facility on a daily basis to track progress on applications.

The time taken to process a planning application to determination will be influenced by whether or not full and adequate information is available to enable such a determination to be made, the complexity of the proposal, consultee input and will be subject to compliance with all relevant statutory processes including the

consideration of objections / representations and Council input. The onus is clearly on the applicant to ensure that a comprehensive package of supporting information accompanies the planning application.

By the end of March this year, Planning Service will introduce an on-line system which will allow applicants, agents and the public to track progress of applications through the system from receipt to decision, using the Planning Service web site.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment what actions he has taken since becoming Minister to contribute to meeting the target set out in the Programme for Government, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25% below 1990 levels by 2025. (AQW 5286/09)

Minister of the Environment: Achievement of the Programme for Government target on greenhouse gas emissions is the collective responsibility of all Northern Ireland Ministers.

My Department continues to progress various pieces of legislation and planning policy including the Climate Change Act, the Carbon Reduction Commitment and Planning Policy Statement 18 on renewables.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment what consultation he had with OFMDFM or the Executive prior to banning the 'Action on CO2' adverts that are being shown in the rest of the UK which could assist in achieving the Programme for Government's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (AQW 5288/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have not banned the "Act on CO2" campaign and I have no wish to do so. I consider that, for transferred matters, Northern Ireland Ministers should have the right to decide how to promote Government policy. My decision not to use the campaign was based on this fundamental constitutional principle.

Planning Service

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the implications of the economic downturn on the Planning Service. (AQO 2071/09)

Minister of the Environment: The economic downturn has impacted on the Planning Service in a number of ways. The number of planning applications received by the Agency between April and December 2008 has fallen by more than 27% compared with the corresponding period in 2007. While this reduction in overall numbers does help contribute towards the efforts of the Planning Service to reduce the live caseload of applications, it also has a negative impact on resources as a significant proportion of Planning Service funding comes from fee income derived from planning applications. For the year ending 31 March 2009, it is projected that the fee income will be approximately £16.7m; this is down £4.6m (or 22%) on fee income generated in the year ended 31 March 2008 (£21.3m). This reduction in income is creating resources pressures for the Planning Service and my officials are currently considering the most appropriate options for responding to this.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Executive in relation to amending the Programme for Government's current commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (AQO 2072/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have had no discussions with the Executive in relation to amending the Programme for Government's current commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Areas of Conservation

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment to detail what penalties and sentences his Department can impose when buildings are demolished within areas of conservation. (AQO 2073/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department does not impose penalties and sentences in any circumstances; that is the responsibility of the courts.

Planning Policies

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of whether the current planning policies take sufficient account of economic development in reaching decisions. (AQO 2074/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am awaiting Executive clearance for the publication of Revised Planning Policy Statement 4 Economic Development which sets out updated planning policies for economic development.

Area Development Plans

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current position on area development plans and if these will be in place prior to the transfer of planning functions to the new councils or granted following the transfer. (AQO 2075/09)

Minister of the Environment: The table attached below outlines the current position for area development plans prepared by my Department. In the period up to the transfer of functions Planning Service will work to ensure that as far as possible current draft plans will be adopted before the transfer of planning powers. Should any plans remain at draft stage it is intended that the Department will complete the adoption of the plan. Consideration is currently ongoing regarding the transfer of these plans to the new Councils in 2011, including engagement with key stakeholders such as NILGA.

CURRENT POSITION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Development Plan	Development Plan Stage			Current Position
	Issues Paper	Draft Plan	Adopted Plan	
Ards & Down Area Plan 2015	Published December 2000	Published December 2002	-	Public Inquiry closed on the 1st February 2007. The Department received the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) Report on 14th March 2008 and is currently considering it and preparing the Plan for adoption, which is anticipated to take place during this business year.
Magherafelt Area Plan 2015	Published December 2000	Published April 2004 (Revision May 2005)	-	An Independent Examination (IE) of DMAP by PAC is currently underway. The first pre-examination meeting was held on 27th August 2008 and the second was held on 11 December 2008. Stage 1 of the IE commenced on 2nd February 2009.
Banbridge / Newry & Mourne Area Plan 2015	Published March 2001	Published August 2006(Revision March 2007)	-	DBNMAP is now proceeding to Independent Examination (IE) by the PAC. The first pre-examination meeting will take place on 11th March 2009. Stage 1 of the IE is programmed to commence on 17th August 2009.
Northern Area Plan 2016 (Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady & Moyle)	Published August 2002	Published May 2005	-	The SEA of the Plan is the subject of 2 legal challenges. Following a number of hearings and judgements and the lodgement of an appeal by the Department, the Court determined that matters should be considered by the European Court of Justice and the case has yet to be heard. Following legal advice, the Department has determined that progress towards an IE for DNAP should be put on hold until the outcome of this challenge is known.

Development Plan	Development Plan Stage			Current Position
	Issues Paper	Draft Plan	Adopted Plan	
Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (Belfast City, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Lisburn, Newtownabbey & North Down)	Published January 2002	Published November 2004 (Amendment No.1 Addenda & Revisions February 2006)	-	Public Inquiry closed on the 2nd May 2008. The timetable for the Plan Adoption will be dependent on the receipt of PAC Report. The PAC have given a preliminary indication that the report will be delivered to the Department by early summer 2010, but hope to provide a firmer date in the future.
Antrim, Ballymena & Larne Area Plan 2016	Published May 2002	-	-	The Department has temporarily ceased to carry out any further substantive work on the preparation of this Plan pending the outcome of ongoing legal proceedings.
Armagh Area Plan 2018	Published April 2004	-	-	The Department has temporarily ceased to carry out any further substantive work on the preparation of this Plan pending the outcome of ongoing legal proceedings.
West Tyrone Area Plan 2019 (Omagh & Strabane)	Published 18 October 2005	-	-	The Department has temporarily ceased to carry out any further substantive work on the preparation of this Plan pending the outcome of ongoing legal proceedings.
Cookstown Area Plan 2010	-	Published November 1999	June 2004	Plan adopted by the Department.
Craigavon Area Plan 2010	-	Published April 2000 (Revision Nov 2000)	August 2004	Plan adopted by the Department.
Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2010	-	Published May 2000	March 2005	Plan adopted by the Department.
Craigavon Town Centre Boundaries and Retail Designations Plan 2010	Published 23 March 2005	Published 20 December 2005	31 June 2008	Plan adopted by the Department, but is currently the subject of 2 separate legal challenges - one relating to the SEA of the Plan and one relating to the substance of the adopted Plan.
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015	Published 15 August 2005	Published 27 June 2006	15 Dec 2008	Plan adopted by the Department.
Coleraine Borough Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan 2016	Published 3 April 2006	-	-	It is now unlikely that this Plan will progress in advance of the resolution of the current legal proceedings taking place in relation to other draft Plans.
Fermanagh Area Plan 2007	-	-	March 1997	No formal review will be undertaken before the transfer of planning powers
Larne Area Plan 2010	-	-	March 1998	Plan intended to be superseded by the Antrim, Ballymena & Larne Area Plan 2016.
Derry Area Plan 2011	-	-	May 2000	Plan adopted by the Department.

Review of Local Councils

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the review of local councils.

(AQO 2076/09)

Minister of the Environment: Steady effective progress is being made on the local government reform programme announced by my predecessor, Arlene Foster. The Policy Development Panels that were established last summer have already brought forward policy proposals agreed by the main parties on a number of key issues. These proposals cover such issues as the governance arrangements that will provide for inclusivity and appropriate checks and balances in the new councils, the community planning process, human resources, finance

and estates. These proposals will inform the preparation of legislative proposals that will be brought before the Assembly in early 2010, following a consultation process.

In relation to the implementation of the programme, the majority of existing councils have now agreed their representation on the voluntary transition committees for each of the new council areas and a number of these committees have met. Legislation will be brought before the Assembly later this year to provide a statutory basis for the Transition Committees as they make preparations for the creation of the new councils in 2011. One of the Policy Development Panels is currently considering the governance arrangements for the Transition Committees and these will be included in the legislation.

Area Development Plans

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the number of judicial reviews in progress in relation to area development plans. (AQO 2077/09)

Minister of the Environment: There are currently four ongoing judicial reviews affecting area development plans. Two of these judicial reviews relate to the Draft Northern Area Plan 2016 and two to the adopted Craigavon Town Centre Boundaries and Retail Designations Plan 2010.

Lurgan Park

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of the Environment if he will consider adding Lurgan Park to the list of country parks and centres listed on his Departmental website. (AQO 2078/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department's own website, through a link to that of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), lists only country parks, visitor centres and other visitor attraction properties managed by NIEA. It would be inappropriate and impracticable also to list all local authority parks as we could not list one park without all the others.

Lurgan Park is already promoted through other websites including the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's www.discovernorthernireland.com site, Craigavon Borough Council's www.craigavon.gov.uk site, and the Park has its own site www.lurganpark.com.

However NIEA is currently upgrading its website. Were a comprehensive list of local authority-managed country parks and urban parks available on another accredited website, NIEA would consider providing a reciprocal hyperlink to that site from its own website entry on its country parks.

New District Councils

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on the need for a shadow period for the new district councils after elections planned for 2011. (AQO 2079/09)

Minister of the Environment: One of the critical issues I have addressed in progressing the local government reform programme is whether the new councils should operate in shadow form for a period after the May 2011 elections before assuming full power and responsibility. I considered this issue carefully, and sought the views of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the political parties through the Strategic Leadership Board. I concluded that I would not seek to provide for a shadow period and communicated my decision to Executive and local government colleagues in October 2008. My overriding consideration in reaching this decision was that the public expect to see modern, efficient services, including those transferred from central to local government, in place as soon as possible.

Statutory Transition Committees

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment what powers statutory transition committees will have with regard to developing new area plans post May 2011. (AQO 2080/09)

Minister of the Environment: As part of my commitment to the transfer of planning powers to local government, the power to draw up development plans will transfer from the Planning Service to the newly

formed District Councils in May 2011. The Transition Committees will only operate in advance of May 2011, after which they will cease to exist and the newly formed councils will take over. My officials are currently giving consideration to how to make the transition of development plan powers to the new Councils as smooth as possible and how to move forward with the development plan programme in advance of transfer. A possible approach being considered would be for Planning Service to work on a number of 'pilot plans' with the respective RPA Transition Committees to carry out preparatory plan work for their areas, based on the new local development plan system.

Road Safety Council

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his plans for replacing the Road Safety Council. (AQO 2081/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have no plans to replace the Road Safety Council: the Council exists independently of the Department, and any decision to replace it would not be for me to make.

However, three successive reports by independent consultants have indicated that it is no longer fit for purpose in its present form, hence my decision to channel funding away from central administration and into the front line road safety activities of local committees.

Road Deaths

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the reasons for the reduction in the number of road deaths in 2008 compared to the previous year. (AQO 2082/09)

Minister of the Environment: The number of road deaths in Northern Ireland during 2008 was 106. This was seven fewer than in 2007.

However, as there are so many variables, a year on year comparison could be potentially misleading, and it may be better to look at the trend over a 5-10 year period. In 1998, a total of 160 people were killed. In 2003 this had dropped to 150 and in 2007 to 113.

Progress over the six years since the introduction of the road safety strategy has been significant, with an overall reduction in road deaths of around 29%. The 2008 figure was also the lowest since records began in 1931.

It is difficult to measure the sole or unique contribution that any specific area of road safety makes towards reducing casualties, because of the wide range of factors involved. These include vehicle, road and traffic engineering; education and awareness; weather; roadside enforcement and penalties; along with public attitudes and various social and cultural factors.

The continued improvement is due to the sustained efforts of everybody involved including the Department for Regional Development's Road Service, the Department of Education, the Police Service, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance Service, all working in partnership with road users and members of the public themselves.

Although the downward trend in road deaths is to be welcomed, it must also be recognised there are still too many people dying on our roads and that we cannot be complacent. My Department will continue to do all in its power to ensure the downward trend in road deaths continues.

Waste Communication Strategy

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made in relation to a waste communication strategy. (AQO 2084/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am keen to move forward as soon as possible with a waste communications strategy to ensure that key messages on waste are effectively communicated to people to bring about the behavioural changes necessary to reduce waste and improve environmental quality.

My Department has reconvened the Learning & Communications Forum to consider the way forward on a waste communications strategy. The Forum is a focussed stakeholder group to assist the delivery of consistent and appropriate key messages to business, communities, the public, households and the public sector. My

Department has also secured the services of a specialist team from Morrow Communications to provide expert communications and PR support and a waste communications action plan over the next three months.

One initial action over the coming months, for example, will be to revise the “Wake up to Waste” website to cover more up to date and relevant key messages to encourage behavioural change. I also recognise that much good work is already taking place within District Councils and through organisations such as Bryson House to encourage behavioural change to reduce waste going to landfill.

I am pleased to be able to report that my Department is now taking action to deliver effective waste communications, though a lot of work will be required over the coming years to build on the good work already taking place and to bring about a fundamental change in our attitude and behaviour towards waste, how we can prevent it, recycle it and dispose of it in ways that are environmentally responsible and economically sensible.

Town Planning Committee

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment what contact he has made with the Town Planning Committee of Belfast City Council. (AQO 2085/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have made no formal contact with the Town Planning Committee of Belfast City Council since my appointment as Minister, nor have I sat on the Town Planning Committee since then.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Civil Servants Dismissed from Posts

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many permanently employed civil servants were dismissed from their posts, in each of the last five years, broken down by grade. (AQW 3741/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): The information requested is provided in the table attached. The data sourced is for each financial year and are the most recent figures available. The overall figures presented include both industrial and non-industrial staff and those analogous to general service grades in NI Government Departments and their Executive Agencies for the period.

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
G5+	0	1	0	1	0
G6	0	0	0	0	0
G7	1	1	1	0	0
DP	2	1	1	0	1
SO	2	2	0	3	1
EOI	3	9	5	3	6
EOII	13	12	8	8	5
AO	37	29	40	35	23
AA	10	32	18	21	24
Industrial	3	7	15	0	8
Total	71	94	88	71	68

Rates Collection

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the costs of rates collection passed onto each individual council, in each of the last five years; and the proposed cost for the next financial year; and to account for increases in the total cost. (AQW 4402/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The attached table shows the cost of rate collection charged to each council for the period 2004-05 to 2007-08. It also shows the estimated costs for 2008-09 and 2009-10. The actual cost of collection for 2008-09 will not be available until Land & Property Services' accounts are finalised in May 2009.

Although the estimated cost of rate collection that will be charged to councils for 2008-09 is £6.7 million, it should be noted that this figure will be reduced by a one-off reduction of £600,000 in the cost of collection which I announced on 19 January 2009 as part of a package of measures to help councils. This reduction is reflected in the table.

During the five year period from 2004 to 2008 (using the 2008-2009 forecast) the cost of collection rose by 59%. The increase in costs can be attributed to –

- An unprecedented period of reform (including the first domestic revaluation in Northern Ireland for over 30 years) and new relief measures such as Rate Relief, Education, Training and Leaving Care, and Lone Pensioner Allowance, which required additional staff to implement the changes;
- The replacement of an obsolescent computer system to facilitate rating reform;
- Additional staff and resources to clear backlogs of rating casework e.g. vacancy inspections, certificates of revision, refunds and correspondence; and
- From 2007-2008 significantly higher court fees for legal proceedings to recover rating debt.

It is important to note that the rating system fundamentally changed in 2006-2007 and it is therefore difficult to draw direct comparison between the pre and post 2006-2007 systems.

The bulk of the increase occurred from 2006 onwards as the implementation of rating reform gathered pace generating significant extra work. The rating system now includes a much wider range of reliefs to provide assistance to eligible ratepayers.

COST OF COLLECTION CHARGED TO COUNCILS

District Portion of Cost of Collection						
	2004-05 to 2007-08 and Estimated 2008-09 & 2009-10				Estimated	Estimated
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Antrim	117,027	124,274	152,288	186,397	209,885	240,902
Ards	143,582	143,962	170,462	189,196	205,907	236,335
Armagh City & District	105,399	106,666	129,652	154,136	170,063	195,194
Ballymena	126,138	129,498	162,236	203,619	229,108	262,965
Ballymoney	46,139	46,744	56,056	68,638	74,700	85,739
Banbridge	83,540	84,774	102,262	127,755	138,955	159,489
Belfast	941,335	960,818	1,173,172	1,307,790	1,442,588	1,655,770
Carrickfergus	82,005	81,785	96,733	115,243	127,470	146,307
Castlereagh	133,587	132,630	156,833	173,607	188,532	216,393
Coleraine	140,396	141,131	170,979	204,829	226,410	259,869
Cookstown	54,203	56,476	69,737	83,826	92,170	105,791
Craigavon	181,272	190,141	234,243	297,317	321,401	368,897
Downpatrick	124,330	125,153	151,870	178,154	196,745	225,819
Dungannon & South Tyrone	80,776	84,197	103,913	124,964	138,856	159,375
Fermanagh	95,766	97,574	118,325	140,031	156,905	180,093

District Portion of Cost of Collection						
2004-05 to 2007-08 and Estimated 2008-09 & 2009-10					Estimated	Estimated
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Larne	72,888	73,493	88,645	105,149	113,820	130,640
Limavady	57,493	57,574	70,012	91,624	100,933	115,849
Lisburn	239,757	233,643	277,048	327,338	354,498	406,885
Derry	245,420	249,612	311,144	374,387	410,355	470,996
Magherafelt	57,799	59,288	71,778	89,426	97,283	111,659
Moyle	33,811	34,473	41,295	49,386	54,954	63,075
Newry	177,811	181,835	217,915	247,027	271,538	311,665
Newtownabbey	192,857	193,742	232,787	281,449	310,331	356,191
North Down	182,834	181,791	215,784	237,326	265,447	304,675
Omagh	96,115	99,378	120,492	149,903	164,379	188,670
Strabane	58,572	59,440	72,204	91,214	100,749	115,637
	3,870,854	3,930,094	4,767,865	5,599,730	6,163,983	7,074,882

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if his Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4840/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel is committed to and is actively working towards meeting the 10 day prompt payment pledge.

Staff are aware of the priority being given to meeting this target and the need to minimise any delays in processing and approving invoices for payment.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many meetings he has had with each of the three MEPs from 2007 to date. (AQW 4893/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Since my appointment as Minister for Finance and Personnel I have not met with any of the three Northern Ireland MEPs. My predecessor, Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA, met with Jim Nicholson MEP on one occasion.

Tender Processes

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assurance that Northern Ireland companies will not be discriminated against or excluded from any tender processes, including those that might result through the manipulation of the tender criteria, in the next five years. (AQW 4977/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: All procurement activities undertaken by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Centres of Procurement Expertise are required, to comply with the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy, EU Procurement Directives and the UK Public Contracts Regulations 2006. In addition all procurement, regardless of value, must comply with the EC Treaty principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment, transparency, mutual recognition and proportionality.

CPD and Centres of Procurement Expertise each has in place robust and detailed procedures to ensure compliance including a Complaints

Procedure which suppliers can avail of where they believe these procedures have not been correctly applied.

Deprived Super Output Areas

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to the top 100 most deprived Super Output Areas, how many (i) have a majority Catholic community background population; and (ii) have a Catholic community background population of over 90%. (AQW 4988/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Of the 100 most deprived Super Output Areas in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure,

- (i) 72 areas have a majority Catholic community background population (2001 Census: religion or religion brought up in); and within this
- (ii) 53 areas have a Catholic community background population of 90% or more (2001 Census: religion or religion brought up in).

Capital Projects

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel 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 5003/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There are no major capital projects in my 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.

Small Business Rates Relief Scheme

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to update progress on the introduction of a Small Business Rates Relief Scheme; and (ii) when he expects to make an announcement on this issue. (AQW 5035/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Member will be aware of my announcement in the Assembly on 15 December 2008 when I said that I would bring forward a small business rate relief scheme. An integrated impact assessment for public consultation will be published shortly. The enabling provision for the scheme will be contained in the forthcoming Rates Amendment Bill which I hope to bring to the Executive in March. Subordinate legislation will set out the detail of the scheme. Because it requires the Assembly to pass new legislative powers, the earliest it can be in place is April 2010.

Water Charges

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what impact his decision to defer water charges for two years will have on his spending plans. (AQW 5173/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: In light of the economic downturn and the significant pressures currently facing local households it would have been unjust for the Executive to add a further financial burden at this time. In this context the Executive as a whole agreed to defer the introduction of domestic water charges.

There has been no adjustment to the Executive's spending plans for 2008-09 as a result of this decision. In terms of the coming financial year, it is intended that the additional costs falling to the Department for Regional Development will be funded from the resources which become available to the Executive as part of the 2009-10 in year monitoring process.

Fiscal Stimulus

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the fiscal stimulus offered by the Executive in comparison with initiatives being taken by other governments.. (AQW 5175/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Executive has few fiscal instruments at its discretion. It is therefore crucial that all available powers are used in an optimal way to support businesses and households through the current difficult economic climate. In December 2008 we announced a range of measures to help alleviate some

of the economic pressures confronting the local economy. This included rate reliefs, financial assistance to fuel poor households and accelerated capital spending to assist the struggling local construction sector.

I met recently with my Scottish and Welsh counterparts to discuss the economic downturn. It was clear that our individual policy responses are very similar in nature. The key priority across our regions is to alleviate living cost pressures and boost capital spending.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

MRI Scans

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the locations of the three Tesla MRI scanners. (AQW 2808/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Guidance issued by the Health Protection Agency on the Protection of Patients and Volunteers Undergoing MRI Procedures (August 2008) indicates that there are 35 3-Tesla scanners in the UK. Detail of their location is set out in the table at Tab 1 attached.

I can assure you that a number of 3 Tesla MRI scanners are available for use by the health service.

A review of all referral requests since January 2004 has shown that no Northern Ireland children have been referred to another European Union country for a diagnosis using a Tesla scanner.

Steps will now be taken to further develop diagnostic services and I have asked the Chief Executive of the Belfast Trust to develop a business case for the introduction of a 3 Tesla scanner.

TAB 1

LOCATION OF 3-TESLA SCANNERS IN THE UK

- 1 University of Liverpool
- 2 National Society for Epilepsy Chalfont
- 3 Cheltenham Imaging Centre
- 4 University of Wales
- 5 Hope Hospital Salford
- 6 Aston University Day Hospital
- 7 Charing Cross Hospital
- 8 University of York
- 9 University of London
- 10 Cardiff University
- 11 Institute of Neurology & National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery London
- 12 University of Cambridge
- 13 Paul Strickland Scanner Centre
- 14 University of Birmingham
- 15 Royal Marsden NHS Trust
- 16 University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust
- 17 Universities of Dundee & St Andrews
- 18 Newcastle University
- 19 Oxford NIHR Comprehensive Biomedical Research Centre
- 20 Singleton Hospital Swansea NHS Trust
- 21 The Oxford Clinic
- 22 Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre NHS Trust
- 23 Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust
- 24 Bangor University

- 25 University of Aberdeen
- 26 Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust
- 27 University Hospital Coventry
- 28 Imperial College London
- 29 University of Manchester
- 30 Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham
- 31 Centre for Cognitive Neuroimaging Glasgow
- 32 University of Nottingham
- 33 Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust
- 34 Hull & East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust
- 35 Hope Hospital Salford Royal NHS Trust

MRI Scans

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any of the three Tesla MRI scanners are available for Health Service consultant referrals. (AQW 2809/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Guidance issued by the Health Protection Agency on the Protection of Patients and Volunteers Undergoing MRI Procedures (August 2008) indicates that there are 35 3-Tesla scanners in the UK. Detail of their location is set out in the table at Tab 1 attached.

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- 34 Hull & East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust
- 35 Hope Hospital Salford Royal NHS Trust

MRI Scans

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any Health Service consultant has referred a child for a diagnosis using a Tesla MRI scanner, in another European Union country. (AQW 2810/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Guidance issued by the Health Protection Agency on the Protection of Patients and Volunteers Undergoing MRI Procedures (August 2008) indicates that there are 35 3-Tesla scanners in the UK. Detail of their location is set out in the table at Tab 1 attached.

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- 35 Hope Hospital Salford Royal NHS Trust

MRI Scans

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any age restrictions for patients requiring access to a 3 Tesla MRI scanner. (AQW 2892/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In August 2008 the Health Protection Agency (HPA) published advice on the Protection of Patients and Volunteers Undergoing MRI Procedures. The HPA has advised that a 3 Tesla scanner utilised in normal operating mode as referred to in the afore-mentioned guidance may be used on children. However the report acknowledges that currently very little is known about the effects of static magnetic fields in excess of a few Tesla on growth and behavioural development of fetuses and infants, suggesting some caution is warranted regarding their imaging.

Clinical judgement will inform and determine any investigations a patient should undergo.

Steps will now be taken however, to further develop diagnostic services including the introduction of a 3 Tesla MRI scanner which will be valuable in helping clinicians diagnose complex problems in both children and adults. I have asked the Chief Executive of the Belfast Trust to develop a business case for the introduction of a 3 Tesla scanner.

Ambulance Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many complaints have been received from members of the public in relation to the Ambulance Service in 2006, 2007 and 2008, broken down by Health and Social Services Board. (AQW 4626/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Data is not captured at Board level for complaints received by the Trust but by NIAS divisional areas, which are broadly similar. The data relates to complaints received from members of the public for each of the last three years.

Year	Division	Total	Year	Division	Total	Year	Division	Total
2006	East	74	2007	East	66	2008	East	43
	North	22		North	14		North	15
	South	19		South	14		South	15
	West	13		West	12		West	10
Total 2006		128	Total 2007		106	Total 2008		83

Antrim Area Hospital

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why a transfer from Antrim Area Hospital to Braid Valley, Ballymena on 3 September 2008 took ten and a half hours; and why calls relating to this transfer were not recorded. (AQW 4627/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has advised that on the basis of the information provided it has not been possible to identify the hospital transfer referred to in this question. However, if the Member wishes to write to me with details of the patient's name and address, I will be happy to respond in due course.

Cost of Using Bank Staff

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost of using bank staff in each Health and Social Care Trust area, in the last financial year. (AQW 4638/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the cost of bank staff is not held centrally and has been supplied by individual Health and Social Care Trusts.

HSC Trust	Cost of bank staff 07/08 (£)
Northern	3,315,756
Belfast	4,027,235
Southern*	1,528,947
South Eastern	1,833,521
Western	3,454,579
NI Ambulance	0

*Note: Does not include home/help domiciliary workers as no analysis is available

Staff Covered by Agency Workers

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, to break down the categories of staff that were covered by agency workers in the last financial year and to provide a total cost for each category. (AQW 4639/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the use of Agency staff is published on a bi-annual basis on the departmental website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hrd/wpu/wpu-monitoring.htm

Carers' Review

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Carers' Review; and when he expects to report on the review. (AQW 4687/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The joint Review of Support Services for Carers with the Department of Social Development is progressing well and I expect that the Review will be completed in the near future.

MRI Scans

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last five years, how many patients were referred for an MRI scan in the Foyle constituency; and the location of the scan. (AQW 4714/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of patients referred for an MRI scan from the Foyle parliamentary constituency area, and the location of the scan, in each of the last five years, is not

collected centrally by the Department. Provision of this information by Health and Social Care Trusts would incur a disproportionate cost.

Arthritis Sufferers

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to confirm whether his Department promotes a good practice matrix as part of its standardised strategy to guide GPs when referring arthritis sufferers to specific medical specialists for treatment; and (ii) how his Department measures the effectiveness of treatment for arthritis sufferers and ensures that services are co-ordinated to minimise repeat treatments and to link them for increased effectiveness. (AQW 4718/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The term 'good practice matrix', in this context, is not a recognised term within primary or secondary care. However, the Department is implementing a comprehensive Elective Access Protocol to ensure the consistent and effective administration of planned patients within the secondary care (hospital) environment. As part of this work the Department has been working with GPs to develop standardised referral pro formas for a range of conditions, including arthritis.
- (ii) Monitoring of care is usually carried out by combination of hospital and (increasingly) primary care. It is focused on monitoring the efficacy and side-effects of disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs. Protocols, agreed with GPs, are put in place for all patients, involving as appropriate occupational therapists and specialist Nurses.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4761/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

Department and Agency

- (i) Guidance has been issued to all staff concerning the new commitment to paying businesses within 10 days. The statistics for the December Prompt Payment for DHSSPS are:

Organisation	% invoices paid in 10 days
DHSSPS	62

HSC Bodies

- (ii) Guidance has also been issued to all Health and Social Care bodies concerning the new commitment to paying businesses within 10 days subject to receipt of goods and or invoice. Information is not available on the performance of these bodies against the 10 day prompt payment pledge.

Cardiac Arrests

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what each Health and Social Care Trust is doing to address the poor survival rate of patients following out of hospital cardiac arrests. (AQW 4775/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is acknowledged that out of hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) is a serious and life threatening event with low rates of survival. The survival rates of OHCA patients have remained poor and of the order of 5-10% throughout Western Europe for many years. Statistics indicate that the Northern Ireland rate of survival for OHCA is broadly comparable with the rest of the UK and Europe.

Studies have suggested that there is a correlation between survival rates for out of hospital cardiac arrest and ambulance response times; therefore NIAS is the HSC Trust in the lead in addressing this issue regionally.

I have set a challenging target for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to respond to 70% of Category A (life-threatening) emergency calls within eight minutes. I believe that progress in achieving this target has the potential to improve the survival rate for OHCA in Northern Ireland.

All NIAS emergency vehicles are equipped with cardiac defibrillator monitors and ambulance paramedics are trained in advanced life support and can give a range of drugs and use a number of advanced techniques for the management of OHCA. NIAS are also engaged in a process of updating cardiac monitors so as to incorporate the most up to date technology compliant with current clinical guidelines.

In addition NIAS is also facilitating the development of community first responder schemes which it is hoped will further improve the response to this type of medical emergency.

Clinical Physiologists

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many clinical physiologists currently practice. (AQW 4776/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of Clinical Physiologists working within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts is given in the table below.

Table 1: Number of Clinical Physiologists in Northern Ireland Health and Social Care as at February 2009.

Trust	Clinical Physiologists	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	54	50.65
Northern	30	26.63
South Eastern	15	14.29
Southern	41	37.57
Western	21	20.09
Total	161	149.23

Source: NI Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
2. Figures include staff at Pay Band 5 and above.
3. Belfast Trust are currently in the process of recruiting 4 Full-time Cardiac Clinical Physiologists (2 new posts and 2 replacement posts).

Clinical Physiologists

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if an assessment has been made of the impact on patient safety caused by the lack of statutory regulation of clinical physiologists. (AQW 4777/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am not aware of a patient safety impact assessment having been carried out for this group of health professionals.

The statutory regulation of clinical physiologists, like most healthcare professionals, will be on a UK-wide basis.

I understand that the Department of Health in England has undertaken to provide a timeline to the Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists (RCCP) for the development of UK-wide legislation to bring about statutory regulation for clinical physiologists.

Regional Public Education Programme

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any plans for a regional public education programme to teach lay members emergency life support skills. (AQW 4778/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has no plans for a regional public education programme to teach lay members emergency life support skills.

There are a number of bodies in Northern Ireland that teach emergency life support skills in accordance with national guidance as advised by the UK Resuscitation Council. The Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety is working with these groups to ensure a co-ordinated approach is adopted with regards training in emergency life support skills within community, sports and school settings.

Direct Payments

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services a recipient of Direct Payments can purchase with the monies allocated to them. (AQW 4790/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Direct Payments are made in lieu of social service provisions to individuals who have been assessed as needing personal social services and for whom a Trust has decided to provide those services. Direct Payments can be used to purchase a wide range of services, including training, where those services meet the client's assessed needs. These services include, for example, personal assistant support, social care equipment and adaptations, short stays in residential accommodation for the recipient and further education/training. In addition, Direct Payments can be made to carers to provide services such as, short holiday breaks, the purchase of mobile phones and driving lessons to help them in their caring role.

Direct Payments

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if a recipient of Direct Payments can use the monies allocated to them to purchase a place on a training scheme operated by a social economy project. (AQW 4791/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Direct Payments are made in lieu of social service provisions to individuals who have been assessed as needing personal social services and for whom a Trust has decided to provide those services. Direct Payments can be used to purchase a wide range of services, including training, where those services meet the client's assessed needs. These services include, for example, personal assistant support, social care equipment and adaptations, short stays in residential accommodation for the recipient and further education/training. In addition, Direct Payments can be made to carers to provide services such as, short holiday breaks, the purchase of mobile phones and driving lessons to help them in their caring role.

Attacks Against Hospital Staff

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the latest figures on attacks against hospital staff. (AQW 4811/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Violent attacks against healthcare staff have been formally monitored by my Department since April 2004 and are recorded on a 6 monthly basis. The figures provided in the table below detail the latest recorded number of physical and verbal attacks on hospital staff in each Health and Social Care Trust.

Location: Health and Social Care Trust Area	Number of Physical Attacks reported on hospital Staff for the period 1 April 2008 – 30 September 2008	
	Verbal	Physical
Belfast HSC Trust	295	688
Northern HSC Trust	147	491
Southern HSC Trust	152	268
Western HSC Trust	185	366
South Eastern HSC Trust	31	81

Location: Health and Social Care Trust Area	Number of Physical Attacks reported on hospital Staff for the period 1 April 2008 – 30 September 2008	
	Verbal	Physical
Total	810	1,894

Hoax Emergency Calls

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the latest figures on hoax emergency calls. (AQW 4812/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There were 3819 false alarms and malicious calls recorded by the Fire and Rescue Service during 2008. This represents a decrease of 20% over the 2 year period from 2006.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service recorded 3815 calls of this nature in 2008. This represents a decrease of almost 40% over the 2 year period from 2006.

Foreign Nurses

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any of the Health and Social Care Trusts have any plans to employ foreign nurses. (AQW 4868/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Trusts have advised me that there are no plans to undertake targeted overseas recruitment. Appointments are made on the basis of merit.

Non-EU nurses may apply for externally advertised posts and if successful, appointment would be dependant on securing a work permit prior to taking up employment.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the directors and their departments in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4872/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The details requested are available on the Trust's internet site at www.southeasterntrust.hscni.net.

Craigavon Hospital

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times have midwives from other hospitals been transferred to Craigavon Hospital to cover vacancies on a (i) planned; or (ii) emergency basis. (AQW 5045/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Trust advises that midwives from other hospitals outside the Southern Trust area have never been transferred to Craigavon Area Hospital to cover vacant posts on a planned or emergency basis.

On 2 occasions in December 2008, 2 shifts were covered by a midwife from Daisy Hill Hospital.

In addition, bank and agency midwives are employed on a needs basis to deal with staffing pressures brought about by sickness absence and maternity leave.

The Southern Trust confirms that at all times their priority is the safety and well-being of mothers and babies.

Review of Public Administration

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the cost of redundancies was, which resulted from re-organisation under the Review of Public Administration. (AQW 5092/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost of RPA related voluntary redundancy in Health and Social Care to date is £13.5m; this process is continuing.

Nursing Staff

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust, will not have their contracts renewed. (AQW 5099/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

There are currently 320 nursing staff working in the Western Health and Social Care Trust on short-term contracts. Information on whether these contracts will be renewed is not held and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Nursing Staff

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust, are working on short term contracts. (AQW 5100/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

There are currently 320 nursing staff working in the Western Health and Social Care Trust on short-term contracts. Information on whether these contracts will be renewed is not held and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Social Security Benefits

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to allow those in receipt of the required Social Security Benefits to claim travel expenses while attending a medical centre. (AQW 5111/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The current arrangements already enable patients who are in receipt of certain Social Security benefits, or on low income, to apply for assistance with their travel expenses in attending a hospital, other establishment managed by a Trust or any other place in the United Kingdom for the provision of any services (except primary medical or primary dental services) under the care of a consultant.

As these provisions meet the needs of the majority of people I have no plans to extend the provisions of the Regulations.

Agency Staff

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total spend by his Department on agency staff from outside Northern Ireland, through agencies based elsewhere in the United Kingdom, broken down by (i) salary; (ii) accommodation costs; (iii) travel costs; and (iv) other associated cost, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5182/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not held centrally and records are not kept in this format at Trust level.

Information on the use of Agency staff is published on a bi-annual basis on the departmental website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hrd/wpu/wpu-monitoring.htm

Mullinure Hospital in Armagh

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times patients at Mullinure Hospital in Armagh were held up for i) 1, ii) 2, iii) 3, and iv) 4 days because of the unavailability of an

ambulance to transport them to Armagh Community Hospital for diagnostic procedures, in each of the last four calendar years. (AQW 5225/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Data regarding transfer times prior to November 2008 is not available.

For information relating to the last 3 months I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW 4422/09.

Termination of Pregnancy

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will publish guidelines on the termination of pregnancy. (AQW 5277/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am currently seeking Executive approval of the Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. I hope to publish the Guidance as soon as possible thereafter.

Ardavon Park Complex

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the washing machine in the communal area of the Ardavon Park complex in North Belfast will be repaired by the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust. (AQW 5281/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

The Belfast Trust has advised that rather than replacing the communal laundry facilities at the Ardavon Park Complex, they believe it is more appropriate to assess and find solutions to individual laundry service needs.

The Trust is in discussion with residents about this and is seeking a local resolution which will be progressed over the next two weeks. They have advised that they will continue to involve the member in further discussions regarding this issue.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Road Service Car Parks

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment on the safety and security of Road Service car parks. (AQW 4727/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): NCP Services Ltd (NSL) is contracted by my Department's Roads Service to provide safe and reliable parking and enforcement services. This includes the management of Roads Service's 127 off-street charged car parks.

Roads Service has advised that NSL car park attendants routinely conduct an inspection of the car parks at the beginning of each shift. Any issues relating to Health and Safety, or general cleanliness, are escalated to their Team Leaders for prompt action. In addition, NSL conduct full quarterly Health and Safety inspections of all car parks to ensure that any safety and security risks are highlighted and dealt with accordingly.

Roads Service endeavours to ensure that all car parks are signed appropriately and that all car parking equipment, used for the provision of the service, is electrically safe and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. Moving barrier equipment is signed to identify potential hazards to members of the public. In addition, at least one ticket machine in every car park is compliant with The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Regulations.

NSL is also responsible for providing quarterly vegetation management in off-street charged car parks, and for routinely cleaning car parks and carrying out any pest control required. NSL reports car park surface and structural defects to Roads Service on a monthly basis.

NSL implements its own welfare policies to ensure the safety and security of all its staff associated with the provision of car park management services for Roads Service.

Road Service Car Parks

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how many reported incidents of theft, vandalism and other related events have taken place in Roads Service car parks, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4732/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Since 30 October 2006, NCP Services Ltd (NSL) has been contracted by my Department's Roads Service to provide the operation of parking and enforcement services. This includes the management of Roads Service's 127 off-street charged car parks.

NSL maintains a register of all incidents relating to theft, vandalism and other events that have been reported by staff or members of the public. The numbers of incidents recorded each year, since the start of the contract, are as follows:-

- 30 October 06 - 31 December 06 — no incidents recorded
- 01 January 07 - 31 December 07 — 17 incidents recorded
- 01 January 08 - 31 December 08 — 75 incidents recorded
- 01 January 09 - 06 February 09 — 11 incidents recorded

Roads Service does not hold complete records of incidents in its off-street charged or free car parks, prior to 30 October 2006. However, the number of incidents that have been recorded are as follows:-

- 1 January 2006 – 30 October 2006 — 22 incidents recorded
- 1 January 2005 – 31 December 2005 — 62 incidents recorded
- 1 January 2004 – 31 December 2004 — 109 incidents recorded

Road Service Car Parks

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development has his Department given any consideration to implementing security measures at Roads Service car parks similar to that of the 'Parksafe' car park in Bold Lane, Derby. (AQW 4739/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is not aware of the security measures in place at the 'Parksafe' car park in Bold Lane, Derry. However, I can confirm that my Department's Roads Service has recently implemented security measures at its Town Centre multi-storey car park in Ballymena. This car park had been subject to an escalation in incidents of vandalism, including extensive graffiti and various other forms of anti-social behaviour, the majority of which took place in the stairwells and lift cars.

The security measures implemented included the introduction of a CCTV system, which not only provides a suitable deterrent for potential vandals, but also significantly improves customer safety. In addition, the existing gates and fencing were upgraded to prevent access to the multi-storey portion of the car park outside operational times, when the majority of vandalism and anti-social behaviour took place.

Roads Service has advised that these security measures have proved to be very successful, with the occurrences of vandalism significantly reduced since their implementation.

There have been no specific trends of vandalism, theft or associated incidents in other Roads Service charged car parks that would justify implementing such widespread security measures as in Town Centres multi-storey car park. However, Roads Service, in conjunction with NCP

Services Ltd (NSL), monitor all recorded incidents and consider any suitable mitigating measures that may be required.

Traffic Assessment in Newcastle

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will authorise a traffic assessment in Newcastle, County Down to obtain data on the number of vehicles using the roads in this area throughout the year. (AQW 4754/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has permanent traffic counters, which are installed on the strategic and trunk road network, to collect data, to determine the annual traffic volume at particular sites.

Roads Service considers that the installation of such traffic counters, on all or any of the roads in the Newcastle area, would be cost prohibitive.

However, I can advise that Roads Service are currently awaiting the results from temporary traffic counters recently installed at Dundrum Road, on the approach to Railway Street and at Donard Street. I have asked the Divisional Roads Manager, Mr Bertie Ellison, to write to you when the results of these assessments become available.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department and all its agencies and bodies operating, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4762/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Department has taken steps to advise its staff on the revised 10 day prompt payment pledge. The Senior Finance Director of the Department wrote to all DRD non industrial staff on 1 December 2008 advising on measures to be taken to achieve the revised target and asking all staff to take steps, where possible, to ensure that all of the Department's creditors are paid as quickly as possible. The Directors of Finance, in December 2008, also wrote to Finance Officers and Business Units drawing attention to the revised 10 day target and asked that all appropriate steps be taken to facilitate compliance with it. The Department measures its invoice payment performance and provides feedback to managers on a monthly basis.

With regard to the Department's arm's length bodies, the position is as follows. Translink has confirmed that it has changed its system creditor terms to comply with the 10 day target. The Department is currently discussing with Northern Ireland Water the implementation of the 10 day target.

Speed Limit Signage

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the UK Government and the Republic of Ireland about having speed limit signage displaying both miles and kilometres in each jurisdiction. (AQW 4808/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have had no discussions with my counterparts in Britain or in the South, about having speed limit signage displaying both miles and kilometres in each jurisdiction, thus far.

The legislative position with regard to the metrication of road signs is articulated within 'The Units of Measurement Regulations 1995', and is currently a reserved matter, and as a consequence, does not give me the powers to make such a change currently.

Programme for Government Targets

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development what risk assessment he has carried out on the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4829/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Programme for Government 2008-11 contains 23 Public Service Agreements (PSAs), four of which contain objectives and targets for my Department.

Each year, my Department develops a Business Plan containing in-year targets that contribute towards the overall achievement of the PSA targets. As part of this process, my Department identifies risks to the achievement of the Business Plan targets. Those risks are assessed and formally monitored by the Departmental Board twice a year.

The Departmental Board also receive a quarterly performance update on all PSA and Business Plan targets as well as a progress report on the management of their associated risks.

Re-Plant Trees at Castle Park Avenue, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department intends to re-plant trees at Castle Park Avenue, Bangor, following road repairs. (AQW 4869/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the original trees along Castle Park Avenue, Bangor were removed to:

- enhance pedestrian safety by improving visibility of pedestrians, especially the many school children, who use this road;
- enable the safe passage of double-decker buses and other Heavy Goods Vehicles;
- remove tripping hazards that the exposed roots systems of the existing trees created; and
- assist the installation of a new kerbline for the recently resurfaced carriageway.

Roads Service has no plans to plant replacement trees along Castle Park Avenue. However, prior to removal of the trees, Roads Service consulted with North Down Borough Council on this issue and offered to plant replacement trees at another suitable location.

Road Safety

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to improve road safety in the Craigtantlet hills area. (AQW 4870/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has commenced a route improvement study of the B170 Ballymiscaw Road/Craigtantlet Road/Ballysallagh Road. The study aims to identify schemes that will improve the safety and efficiency of the route. This study will include analysis of the traffic flows, both current and projected, as well as collision history.

As part of this work, Roads Service is currently investigating a potential large scale Minor Works scheme to provide new roundabouts at the junction of the B170 Craigtantlet Road/ Dunlady Road/Hollywood Road at Craigtantlet Crossroads, and also at the nearby junction of Ballymiscaw Road/Whinney Hill. This scheme is at an early stage of development, and programming will depend on the scale and cost of the required work as well as the availability of the necessary land and funding.

I should advise that to help identify sites where engineering measures could make a positive contribution to road safety, Roads Service receives from the PSNI reports of all road traffic collisions that cause personal injury. However, there is currently no location on Craigtantlet Road being considered for inclusion in a collision remedial programme.

I can also advise that, within this vicinity, Roads Service has recently completed the provision of approximately 100 metres of new safety barrier at the bend opposite No 51 Ballysallagh Road, Bangor. In addition, new chevron signs and marker posts have also recently been provided at the bend near No 92 Ballymiscaw Road.

Road Safety

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will undertake to improve road safety in and around the hamlet of Ballywhisken, and if so, what measures he intends to take. (AQW 4882/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Traffic calming measures were introduced in Ballywhisken some years ago.

A recent inspection by my Department's Roads Service has revealed that the original enhanced speed limit signs have become faded, therefore, Roads Service is currently arranging for these signs to be replaced and erected on high visibility backing boards.

There are no plans to introduce any further measures in Ballywhisken at this time.

Departmental Staff Numbers

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister for Regional Development 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 4906/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The attached tables provide the information requested.

Civil Service Staff						
Grade (and analogous)	Staff Numbers at May 2007			Staff Numbers at January 2009		
	DRD Core	Roads	Total	DRD Core	Roads	Total
Senior Civil Service (Grade 5 and above)	9	7	16	10	6	16
Grade 6	7	7	14	6	9	15
Grade 7	27	44	71	32	53	85
Deputy Principal	64	155	219	67	157	224
Staff Officer	83	265	348	79	280	359
Executive Officer 1	67	447	514	48	427	475
Executive Officer 2	96	84	180	69	83	152
Administrative Officer	115	241	356	96	218	314
Administrative Assistant	52	361	413	28	337	365
Industrial	2	645	647	1	612	613
Total	522	2,256	2,778	436	2,182	2,618

Agency Workers						
Category	Numbers at May 2007			Numbers at January 2009		
	DRD Core	Roads	Total	DRD Core	Roads	Total
Administrative	1	30	31	2	46	48
Professional/Technical		8	8		7	7
Support	1	5	6	1	10	11
Industrial		7	7		3	3
Total	2	50	52	3	66	69

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 2701/09, what involvement (i) he; and (ii) the CEO of Translink has in negotiating and approving these agreements.

(AQW 4933/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have no direct involvement in the negotiation and approval of these arrangements. NITHC operates commercially under the Transport Act (NI) 1967. The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed between NITHC and my department defines operational roles and responsibilities.

The NITHC Board is formally responsible for agreement of all contracts entered into by NITHC and will delegate day to day operational issues to executives.

Strangford Ferry Service

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if effective signage in relation to the Strangford ferry service will be installed in Newtownards to provide sailing time information to travellers. (AQW 4937/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a variable message sign is to be re-installed on the Portaferry Road, Newtownards. However, this sign is only for the purpose of providing information of any service unavailability.

The timetable, listing sailing times, is available in information leaflets, on the Roads Service website - www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/strangfordferry.htm, at the ferry point, or by phoning the ferry terminal.

A5/N2 Dualling Project

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the A5/N2 dualling project, (i) what progress has been made; (ii) what are the next stages of the project; and (iii) what is the estimated date for completion. (AQW 4958/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The first key milestone for the A5 dualling project was achieved ahead of target when the scheme's preferred corridor was announced in November 2008. Since then, my Department's Roads Service has been developing route options within that corridor.

Route options will be presented for consultation during a series of public information events, arranged during February 2009, to advise interested parties of the current position and to invite comments on the route options. The public feedback received from these events will allow Roads Service to comprehensively explore all possible routes before the realisation of the second key milestone, to identify a preferred route option within the preferred corridor, by the summer 2009.

It is hoped that construction of this scheme will commence in 2012 with completion in 2015. However, this will be subject to:

- satisfactory progress through the statutory processes;
- economic appraisal;
- the availability of funding through the normal budgetary process; and
- satisfactory progression through the procurement process.

Gritting Roads

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development for the average daily cost of gritting roads. (AQW 4983/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the cost for a single application of salt, to the North's entire winter gritting schedule, is some £73,500.

This figure is based on the 2007/2008 winter service season, the latest year for which figures are available.

Gritting Services

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development if he is aware that another school bus has crashed on rural ungritted roads in East Antrim; and what plans he has to carry out a detailed assessment to establish the cost and benefits of extending gritting services to include all Translink operated bus routes that provide a service for children traveling to and from school. (AQW 5014/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I am aware of an incident involving a school bus on the Shanksbridge Road between Ballyclare and Ballymena, on 5 February 2009.

I can also advise that the salting of school bus routes was considered in the 2001 review of my Department's Winter Service policy and procedures. One of the key outcomes of that review, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly, was that the practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes, should continue.

The review also estimated that to include all school bus routes within the Department's gritting schedule, would more than double the annual cost of our salting operation. In addition to a substantial capital investment in new vehicles, it would cost some £4.5-7.0 million extra every year.

Nevertheless, the review recommended that buses in service, including school buses, receive special consideration when determining whether a road should be included in the salting schedule. A 40 seat bus is now counted as 40 vehicles, for the purpose identifying qualifying routes. Also as a result of the review, road links to small settlements containing 100 dwellings or more are now salted.

Whilst I fully understand your concerns, there is a fine balance to be drawn between putting even further funds into salting and increasing funding for other activities, such as road maintenance, or Roads Service's collision remedial works programme. You may be interested to note that the latter resulted in reducing the total number of target collisions in 2006/07 by 68%, while increased investment in road maintenance would improve the wet weather skidding resistance of road surfaces throughout the whole of the year.

I have no plans to carry out a further review of my Department's Winter Service policy, as there has been no significant change in circumstances since the completion of the 2001 review. However, I can advise that officials are currently examining the operational response to areas around schools, which are regularly affected by adverse weather conditions.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number; and (ii) the nature of complaints lodged by Northern Ireland Water staff through internal grievance procedures against management, broken down by each Water Service office/depot, in the last three years. (AQW 5043/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that information relating to formal grievance proceedings initiated by its employees was not recorded centrally until 1 May 2007 and can therefore only be provided from that date. Since then, 34 formal grievances have been received covering a wide range of issues and these are listed in Table A below. In the timescale available, Northern Ireland Water is unable to provide a breakdown of the nature of grievances across its offices, but the total number of grievances received from each office is set out in Table B.

TABLE A

Nature of grievances	Number
Restructuring	5
Pay and Grading	7
Recruitment	5
Career Break	1
Transfers	4
Alleged Discrimination	2
Issue with Manager	1
Communications	4
Maladministration	1
Privacy	1
Attendance on courses	1
Disciplinary	1
Unknown as of date of response	1

TABLE B

NI Water Office / Location	Number of Grievances
Academy – Ballymena	1
Armagh	1
Ballykeel	2
Bretland – Belfast	2
Castor Bay – Craigavon	1
College Street - Belfast	3

NI Water Office / Location	Number of Grievances
Conlig – Ards	2
Craigavon	2
Dorisland – Carrick	1
Downpatrick	1
Enniskillen	3
Northland – Belfast	1
Omagh	2
Seagoe – Craigavon	2
Westland	8
No fixed location	2

Construction Industry

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has any plans for projects that would help create jobs in the construction industry. (AQW 5059/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I would refer the Member to my recent reply to Oral Assembly Question AQO 1956/09, in which I provided information on the number of construction projects and maintenance works provided to the construction industry.

Duneaney Road from Glarryford to Rasharkin

Rev Dr R Coulter asked the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the Duneaney Road from Glarryford to Rasharkin if (i) there have been accidents involving vehicles, specifically buses carrying school children; (ii) the road has been gritted to date; and (iii) there will be provision for gritting in the future. (AQW 5132/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Northern Ireland Office has advised that the PSNI only maintain records on injury collisions. The PSNI has confirmed that, from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008, there were no injury collisions reported to the PSNI that involved vehicles carrying school children on the Duneaney Road, from Glarryford to Rasharkin. The statistics for January 2009 are not, as yet, available.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Duneaney Road is not on the salting schedule, as it does not meet the current criteria, and there are no plans to extend the salted network to include it. However, it has been gritted on occasions, such as recently, when there were extreme wintry conditions. I can further advise that Roads Service provides salt piles on the road, at appropriate locations, for use by the public on a self help basis.

With regard to extending the salted network, as you are probably aware, a review of the winter service policy and procedures operated by Roads Service was carried out in 2001. One of the key outcomes of the review, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly, was that the practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service, on the busier main through routes, should continue.

Roads Service is fully committed to playing its part in reducing the number of deaths and injuries on our roads. However, PSNI statistics, at the time of the review, showed that frost, ice and snow were a factor in only 2.4% of all road injury accidents, and less than 1% occur on roads outside the normal salted road network. Extending the salted network is not the best way of achieving a reduction in road casualties.

Roads Service considers that it would be better to spend more resources on funding for road maintenance, which would improve the wet weather skidding resistance of road surfaces, throughout the whole of the year, or by increasing the allocation for the accident remedial and traffic calming programmes, which have a proven track record of cutting accidents by 40%.

While I understand and appreciate both you and your constituents' concerns for those who use the remaining more lightly trafficked roads, which are not on the salted network, it simply is not practical to salt all roads. The

North is already top of the league, compared to other regions across these isles, in terms of the length of road salted per head of population, and there is a fine balance to be drawn between putting even more funds into salting, or into the many other worthwhile demands on Roads Service's limited resources, many of which are also safety related.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ulster Scots Agency

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development how much money her Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Agency; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4757/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): My Department does not fund the Ulster Scots Agency and has not incurred any expenditure in relation to Ulster Scots projects in the last two years.

Housing Benefit Applications

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development, how long on average does it take to process housing benefit applications in the North Down Borough Council area. (AQW 4768/09)

Minister for Social Development: Within the administrative area covered by the Housing Executive's Bangor District Office, an average of 78% of new Housing Benefit claims were assessed within 14 days of all information being received for the period April to December 2008.

Employment Support Allowance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of customer calls go unanswered, on a monthly basis, since Employment Support Allowance commenced. (AQW 4818/09)

Minister for Social Development: In line with the position in Great Britain, the call volumes for ESA in Northern Ireland are more than twice those anticipated at the initial planning stage. The percentage of unanswered calls rose rapidly in December and January. An additional 18 staff were recruited and trained in January. The staff are now in post and this has had an immediate impact on the percentage of unanswered calls. The table below provides details of the unanswered calls each month.

PERCENTAGE OF UNANSWERED CALLS

Month	Percentage of Unanswered Calls
October	1.2
November	4.0
December	38.9
January	54.6
February*	21.2

* Latest information available at close of business on 13 February 2009

Management and staff have responded well to the high level of interest in the new telephony based service by handling over 31,000 calls since ESA was introduced on 27 October 2008. It is expected that performance will continue to improve as the new staff gain experience.

10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department and all its agencies and bodies, are complying with the 10 day prompt payment pledge. (AQW 4842/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department for Social Development (including its sponsored bodies) is currently achieving 80% clearance within 10 days for all payments and is striving to achieve 100% as soon as possible.

Social Security Agency

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development if she will consider the concerns of Social Security Agency staff about the proposals in the SSA Strategic Business Review and if she will withdraw these proposals. (AQW 4875/09)

Minister for Social Development: Social Security staff have had the opportunity to raise any concerns about the proposals during the first stage of public consultation and these will now be considered fully as part of the second stage i.e. the completion and issue of an Equality Impact Assessment.

The proposals will not be withdrawn as I believe it would be wrong to deny all stakeholders and the public the opportunity to have their say.

Winter Fuel Payment

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development when the extra £150 winter fuel payment will start to be issued. (AQW 4877/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Financial Assistance Bill was given royal assent on 4 February. The Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) will now designate a department to deliver a Household Fuel Payment. I am unable to confirm precisely when the Household Fuel Payment will be made, as there are still a number of key decisions to be made around how it will be processed. Those decisions will not be made until the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister has designated a department to deliver the payment. It is likely, of course, that the designated department will be the Department for Social Development.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding has the Citizens Advice Bureau received from her Department in each of the last five years; and if funding will be increased due to the current economic conditions. (AQW 4889/09)

Minister for Social Development: DSD funding allocated to Citizens Advice Bureaux including the Regional Office and Local Bureaux for 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 totals £9,701,299.76. This has been detailed in an excel spreadsheet with data table notes and placed in the Assembly Library.

DSD funding for local voluntary advice is distributed to local Councils through the Community Support Programme. Local Councils then allocate funding to voluntary advice providers within their area. During 2007/08 and 2008/09 I ensured an additional £1 million was ring fenced specifically for voluntary advice within the Community Support Programme budget.

At present I am taking forward "Opening Doors" The Strategy for the Delivery of Voluntary Advice Services to the Community. It sets out a plan for the future of voluntary advice within Northern Ireland focussing on the best use of available resources and will ensure that high quality advice services are delivered to those who need them most.

In addition Citizens Advice has been involved in the delivery of the Social Security Agency's Benefit Uptake Programme since 2006. To date £554,282.15 has been paid to Citizens Advice Regional Headquarters with further payments likely to be made in May 2009.

In January I also announced plans to recruit 150 new staff to the Social Security Agency frontline. This is a direct result of the economic downturn, with many more people claiming benefits. Most of the new staff

will be posted to the front line Jobs & Benefits Offices with some working in the new Employment & Support Allowance Centre. This is a proactive response to the current difficult economic situation. By recruiting extra staff into the front line, we will ensure customers continue to receive the best possible service.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many meetings she has had with each of the three MEPs from 2007 to date. (AQW 4895/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have met each of Northern Ireland's MEPs, in their official capacity, once since 2007.

Social Housing

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development if property developments in the Castle Street area will have any provision for social housing; and if these developments are subject to Article 40 agreements. (AQW 4922/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department's draft masterplan for the West Side Regeneration District, which includes the Castle Street area, highlights the potential to provide 322 residential units in the study area, 20% of which have been designated as affordable residential units, including social housing. DSD does not have the statutory authority to use Article 40 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 to enter into planning agreements.

Social Security Offices

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development whether the 150 additional posts, that were announced to fill front-line services in Social Security offices, are part of the 300 current vacancies or additional vacancies. (AQW 4923/09)

Minister for Social Development: The 150 posts announced are new front line posts for the Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) within the Social Security Agency network of Jobs & Benefits and Social Security Offices. The Agency's pool of vacancies cover all areas of its work, of which JSA is one element. These new posts to the JSA front line will enable the Social Security Agency to address the significant increase in Jobseekers Allowance claims arising as a result of the economic downturn and have been facilitated by the reprioritisation of existing resources across all areas of the Agency's business.

Social Housing Projects

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to list all the social housing projects scheduled for the Strangford constituency in the next two financial years and to the total value of each investment. (AQW 4943/09)

Minister for Social Development: The new 5 year Social Housing Development Programme listing the social housing projects for Northern Ireland for 2009/10 – 2013/14 is currently being formulated and, pending appropriate approvals by my Department, will be published on the Housing Executive's website at www.nihe.gov.uk. The Housing Executive will of course provide details of the relevant schemes when the Programme is available and approved by my Department.

Social Housing Projects

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to list all the social housing projects currently under way in the Strangford constituency and the total value of each investment. (AQW 4944/09)

Minister for Social Development: There are currently sixteen social housing projects underway in the Strangford Constituency as follows:-

- 1 general needs housing unit at 4 Inisharoon Court, Newtownards *

- 40 general needs housing units at 31-35 Donaghadee Road, Newtownards *
- 20 Category 1 Elderly units Church Street, Newtownards *
- General maintenance Woodstock/Willowbrook windows - £374,000
- External cyclical maintenance Bowtown Phase 1 - £218,000
- External cyclical maintenance Ballybeen Phases 6, 7 and 8 - £690,000
- Revenue replacement kitchens Greyabbey/Kircubbin - £126,000
- Revenue replacement kitchens Scrabo - £894,000
- Multi element improvement Westwinds Phase 3 - £1,626,000
- Multi element improvement Main Street, Islandview - £220,000
- Multi element improvement Ballybeen Phase 4 - £2,225,000
- Environmental improvement Bowtown Phase 1 - £853,000
- Heating replacement Movilla - £247,000
- NIHE area wide heating replacement scheme - £146,000
- Heating replacement Movilla Phase 2 - £430,000
- Estate infrastructure Rectory Road parking - £264,000

* For reasons of commercial sensitivity the Housing Executive does not release individual scheme costs with regard to the Social Housing Development programme.

Environmental Improvement Scheme

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development when Fallon Construction will be given permission to begin work on the Environmental Improvement Scheme in Dunclug in Ballymena. (AQW 4984/09)

Minister for Social Development: Faloon Construction has been awarded the contract for the Environmental Improvement Scheme in Dunclug, Ballymena. An Economic Appraisal is currently under consideration and once the scheme has been formally approved and resources identified to take forward the agreed works Faloon Construction will be given permission to begin.

Dunclug Action Plan

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development to list each deadline that has been missed in the Dunclug Action Plan and when this work will be completed. (AQW 4985/09)

Minister for Social Development: Two of the 22 actions within the Dunclug Action Plan have not yet started; the relocation of the play park and the implementation of a NIHE estate strategy. Planning permission has been sought for the play park and subject to this being granted, it is anticipated that work will commence on site in spring 2009. An Economic Appraisal for the NIHE estate strategy is currently being considered by Department of Finance and Personnel as the scheme is above the Housing Executive's delegated limit. The start date will depend on when clearance from the Department of Finance and Personnel is secured and the availability of the necessary funding.

Winter Fuel Payment

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on winter fuel credit payments for pensioners. (AQW 4990/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Financial Assistance Bill was given royal assent on 4 February. The Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) will now designate a department to deliver a Household Fuel Payment. I am unable to confirm precisely when the Household Fuel Payment will be made, as there are still a number of key decisions to be made around how it will be processed. Those decisions will not be made until the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister has designated a department to deliver the payment. It is likely, of course, that the designated department will be the Department for Social Development.

Capital Projects

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social 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 5005/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department's Housing budget has been under pressure throughout the 2008-09 financial year because of the virtual collapse of house and land sales and increased volumes in revenue programmes. The resultant shortfall in funding regrettably means that a number of schemes within the remainder of this year's programme of improvement schemes are being held back to next year. If funding becomes available in the February Monitoring Round, the Housing Executive plans to release a number of schemes for new social housing, as well as contracts for major improvements to Housing Executive properties before the end of March 2009.

Eight Comprehensive Development projects (where contracts have been awarded by the Department following "developers' brief" competitions) are being affected by the current financial climate. Preferred developers are experiencing difficulties in obtaining the bank funding to carry out the developments. In some cases other factors are also contributing to the delay.

In five Urban Development Grant projects, developers are also having difficulties in obtaining funding from the banks to finance their schemes. All have accepted grant offers and are trying to secure funds from other sources, but so far without much success.

On the Planning issue, two developers have claimed that the backlog in planning applications has hindered the commencement of their developments. Similarly, the start date of one Regional Development project has been held up due to delays in securing planning permission.

Dales Flats in Seymour Hill

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development to estimate the timescale for the £5 million multi-element scheme of improvements in the Dales Flats in Seymour Hill. (AQW 5027/09)

Minister for Social Development: The economic appraisal for the Housing Executive improvement scheme for Dales Flats is currently being considered by the Department. If approval is given, the Housing Executive could proceed immediately with advertising/tendering for the scheme. However, due to the high cost, the Housing Executive will advertise in the 'Official Journal of the European Union'. This process usually takes approximately 6 months, with a further 2 months for preparation of tender report and subsequent tender approval. The scheme will last for approximately 30 months.

Volunteer Bureau Initiative Budget

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development if she will give assurances that no decisions will be made about the Volunteer Bureau Initiative budget and the local volunteering infrastructure post March 2010, until she has considered the proposal from the centres opposed to option B. (AQW 5036/09)

Minister for Social Development: No decision has been taken on the shape of any future volunteering infrastructure. The findings from the forthcoming consultation on the volunteering strategy will determine the interventions needed to implement the strategy. In turn these interventions will help determine the type of infrastructure that is needed. The consultation document on the volunteering strategy will have a full public consultation.

Local Volunteering Infrastructure

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the adequacy of a centralised model for the local volunteering infrastructure to meet the needs of the community/voluntary sector as it takes away decision making from local people best placed to service those needs. (AQW 5037/09)

Minister for Social Development: No decision has been taken on the shape of any future volunteering infrastructure. The findings from the forthcoming consultation on the volunteering strategy will determine the interventions needed to implement the strategy. In turn these interventions will help determine the type

of infrastructure that is needed. Assessment of the adequacy of any models will be made at that time. The consultation document on the volunteering strategy will have a full public consultation.

Draft Volunteering Strategy

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the draft volunteering strategy. (AQW 5038/09)

Minister for Social Development: We have a vibrant voluntary sector and a strong and active volunteer base. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities and the binding force in our community life. For the first time Northern Ireland will have a Volunteering Strategy to support the hundreds of thousands of people who freely give their time to help others. I hope it succeeds in encouraging more people to become volunteers, enriching their own lives as well as the lives of those they are helping.

The Strategy will focus on making it easier for everyone to become involved and have a more rewarding volunteering experience. It will recognise the value and the benefits of volunteering for individuals and society. It will support and strengthen the infrastructure that supports volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

Officials will be taking a consultation document to the Social Development Committee on 26 February. I will then take the consultation document to the Executive. I hope the Executive will endorse the consultation document for what is a very important strategy which has the potential to have a very positive impact on the volunteers and people of Northern Ireland. I hope to publish the consultation document in May. There will be a full public consultation and a series of consultation events across the country.

Social Security Agency

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answers to AQW 3024/09 and AQW 3025/09, why there is a discrepancy between her claim of a reduction of staff by 495 and the Social Security Agency's claim of a reduction of 200, if the SSA Strategic business Review Proposals were implemented. (AQW 5039/09)

Minister for Social Development: AQW 3024/09 asked that I detail the number of SSA staff employed at each Jobs & Benefits Office. The initial response that issued set out the overall headcount for each location.

AQW 3025 asked that I detail the number of projected SSA staff that would be employed at each JBO/SSO arising from the Strategic Business Review. As was stated in the response, it is not possible at this stage to detail the projected number of staff that would be employed at each Site. Nevertheless, the response did set out indicative numbers of posts for each site.

The Agency has a significant number of part-time staff and, as such, the number of people employed can, and will, outweigh the actual number of funded posts. For example, two part-time staff can equate to one full post. Consequently, no direct correlation can be made to the figures quoted in the two responses referred to above and is not valid to subtract one from the other.

Strabane District Housing Executive

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Social Development if the maintenance budget for the Strabane District Housing Executive has been frozen; and if so, what action she will take to ensure that basic maintenance work is carried out on houses. (AQW 5040/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is too early in the review of the Housing Executive's programmes to state the specific locations that might be affected by the shortfall in the Housing Executive's budget. The Housing Executive has been working alongside my Department to minimise the impact of the shortfall and 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. The Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes within its programmes at the earliest opportunity and will ensure that all emergency and urgent tenant repairs will be completed.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Social Development in relation to the Warm Homes Scheme to detail (i) the current status of funding; (ii) why funding for most measures have been frozen; (iii) when funding will be restored; and (iv) when funding is restored will applicants on waiting lists be considered first. (AQW 5041/09)

Minister for Social Development: The budget available for the very popular Warm Homes Scheme has been fully committed for the financial year. My department is on track to meet its public service agreement target to alleviate fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures. I have tried to secure additional funding for the Scheme through submitting bids during the various monitoring rounds but these bids were not met. A new scheme will be operational in the spring and a budget for 2009/10 will be allocated. Some outstanding referrals for assistance will be carried forward and assessed under the new criteria, and I expect that the majority of those outstanding warm home referrals will receive assistance under the scheme. Inevitably, some applicants who are on the waiting list will not be eligible for assistance under the new scheme.

Private Pensions

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about the value of private pensions. (AQW 5052/09)

Minister for Social Development: I appreciate that people are concerned about their pensions in the current economic climate. A number of measures are already in place to ensure people can continue to have confidence to save for their future. The Pension Protection Fund was established to provide a safety net to protect the pensions of members of defined benefit schemes in the event of their employers becoming insolvent. A more powerful and proactive Pensions Regulator has been put in place to reduce the risk of problems arising in the first place.

It is important to remember that while fluctuations in financial markets will affect the value of assets in the short-term, it is the long-term return which is important for pensions. It is widely accepted that pensions remain one of the best ways of saving for retirement. Many employers provide a contribution towards their employees' pensions and tax relief is given on both pension contributions and capital growth.

I met recently with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and our discussions centred on largely benefit-related issues. In line with section 87 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I will be having further meetings with Mr Purnell and private pensions will be one of the issues for discussion.

Pensioners Working Part-Time

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about pensioners who work part-time and are taxed on their extra income. (AQW 5054/09)

Minister for Social Development: I met with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, James Purnell, in November 2008. A range of issues were discussed relating to our responsibilities for social security, child support and pensions. No discussion took place regarding taxation of pensioners. Taxation, which is an excepted matter under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Benefit Office

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what steps she has taken to promote the benefit that replaces incapacity benefit; and (ii) to ensure that people who have not been able to get through to the Benefit Office on the phone, have their applications backdated. (AQW 5061/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is as follows.

- (i) Prior to the launch of the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in October 2008 my Departmental officials held awareness sessions with a wide selection of customer representative groups to promote the new benefit and to address any concerns raised.

All political parties, Assembly Members, Councillors, Members of Parliament, Health Boards, Education Boards, General Practitioners and the major customer representative groups in Northern Ireland were provided with information packs on ESA and offered awareness sessions. Some availed of this offer.

Literature on ESA, including information on how to make a claim to the new benefit, can be obtained from the local Jobs and Benefits Offices/Social Security Offices, the Benefit Shop in Castle Court, customer representative groups, on line or by contacting the ESA Centre directly.

- (ii) Social Security legislation provides for a claim to ESA to be accepted for up to 3 months prior to the date on which a customer notifies the Department of their intention to claim benefit, as long as supporting medical evidence can be provided.

The backdating of a claim to ESA to a date within the 3 month period before the claim is received will be considered by the Department. A customer does not have to make a specific request for this to be done.

Departmental Staff with Disabilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of employees in her Department that have disabilities. (AQW 5072/09)

Minister for Social Development: Information on the number of staff who have disabilities is collected for equality monitoring purposes by Department of Finance and Personnel, on behalf of all Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments.

The Minister of Finance and Personnel will, therefore, be responding on behalf of all Departments.

Social Housing

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development to estimate the time-scale for the conversion of the former Ministry of Defence houses at Pond Park, to social housing standards. (AQW 5075/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Oaklee Housing Association have already inspected the homes at Pond Park and are satisfied that they can start to be allocated to those families in greatest need from April 2009.

Social Housing

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development to detail any future plans for the conversion of the former Ministry of Defence houses to address the need for social housing. (AQW 5076/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have made it clear that I am prepared to consider each and any opportunity that may exist to increase the supply of housing. I have already acquired 112 former Ministry of Defence homes at Pond Park, Lisburn, and my Department is keeping under review other sites that may also be available either now or in the future.

Addressing housing need is my first and foremost priority and if that need can be met in former Ministry of Defence housing, as with Pond Park, I shall not hesitate to act.

Social Security Agency

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development in what languages does the Social Security Agency publish its literature. (AQW 5079/09)

Minister for Social Development: In addition to English, the Social Security Agency routinely publishes benefit information fact sheets and rates of benefit in relation to Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance and the Social Fund in Arabic, Chinese, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. The Agency also provides, on request, benefit leaflets and other publications in alternative languages, Braille, large print and audio cassette format.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department supports the rights of people who are registered blind to receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. (AQW 5102/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have raised this issue with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the need to consider this important change to the arrangements for the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance is understood. My Department is continuing to work with the Department for Work and Pensions looking at how this can be taken forward.

Warm Homes Scheme

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have benefited from the Warm Homes Scheme, in the South Antrim area, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5117/09)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details separately the number of heating and insulation measures carried out in South Antrim from 2005/06 until 2007/08.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Heating	160	180	179
Insulation	380	611	467

Dunclug Action Plan

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Dunclug Action Plan. (AQW 5133/09)

Minister for Social Development: Out of the 22 actions in the Dunclug Action Plan, 5 actions have been completed and 13 actions are being implemented. 2 actions will not now proceed. These are the piloting of police community support officers, which have been delayed due to a shortfall in PSNI funding and Ballymena Council's application to Reimaging Communities to address political graffiti in the estate was unsuccessful. Actions not yet started are the implementation of the Housing Executive's estate strategy and Ballymena Council's proposal to provide a new play park. Work is ongoing to progress these projects.

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 4156/09, to confirm the date in March when projects and communities will be informed of the decision on category 2 posts, given that funding will cease at the end of that month. (AQW 5142/09)

Minister for Social Development: I intend to make an announcement, prior to March, on how services currently funded by my Department but which fall within the functional responsibility of other Departments, may be delivered in the future.

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm when her Department will make a decision about category 2 posts as part of Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes. (AQW 5143/09)

Minister for Social Development: Decisions on how services, currently funded by my Department but which fall within the functional responsibility of other Departments, will be delivered in the future is the subject of continuing discussions.

I intend to make an announcement shortly on how those services which address priority needs in deprived areas, will be safeguarded.

Housing Associations

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what strategies and guidelines are in place to ensure Housing Associations apply efficient and consistent standards for new house builds. (AQW 5148/09)

Minister for Social Development: DSD provide in the Housing Association Guide detailed guidance for all Housing Associations. It is a condition of payment of Housing Association Grant funding (HAG) that all new social housing provided by Housing Associations must comply with the "Design Requirements" for Housing Associations. DSD requires Housing Associations to formally certify with their application for scheme approval that they have complied with the design requirements. The Department also records the implementation of standards such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, Eco-Homes, Secured by Design, Lifetime Homes that attract additional funding and monitor the take up of these standards to inform their future policy and funding provision. DSD Inspection Team audit the compliance of Housing Associations with the requirements of the HA Guide including the design requirements to ensure provision of sustainable, safe and durable homes.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 4408/09 (i) what readings were given; and (ii) from which stations were readings given, for the (a) BT71; (b) BT70; and (c) BT80 areas. (AQW 5150/09)

Minister for Social Development: The BT71 postcode area is covered by the Katesbridge weather station. When the Cold Weather payment period was triggered on 29 December 2008, the 7 day rolling mean temperature ending 28 December 2008 was recorded and reported by the Met Office to my Department as 6.1 Degrees. The comparable figure for postcode areas BT70 and BT80 which came within the area covered by the Castlederg weather station was reported as 4.7 degrees.

On 29 December 2008 the Met Office advised that the 7 day mean rolling temperature for the period up to 4 January 2009 was forecast to be 0 degrees or below in the areas covered by the Castlederg weather station (including BT 70 and 80 but not BT71). Further information can be obtained from the Met Office.

Housing Condition Survey

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 4597, to detail (i) the names; and (ii) from what companies, are the members of the steering group that compiles NIHE's Housing Condition Survey Questionnaire. (AQW 5283/09)

Minister for Social Development: The steering group that supports preparation of the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey form consists of:

Northern Ireland Housing Executive:

- Stewart Cuddy (Chair)
- John McPeake
- Esther Christie
- Joe Frey
- Jahnet Brown
- Donna McLarnon

Belfast City Council:

- John Corkey

NISRA:

- Chris Morris
- Kevin Sweeney
- Stephanie Harcourt

Department for Social Development:

- Stephen Martin

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations:

- Chris Williamson

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Assembly Commission Staff Transport**

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission what percentage of its staff (i) take part in car-sharing schemes; (ii) use public transport; and (iii) take single-person car journeys to work every day. (AQW 3449/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission: Northern Ireland Assembly has been working in partnership with a consortium of other Stormont Estate users (OFMDFM, DFP, DARD, DHSSPS, DETI and NIO) in developing a Workplace Travel Plan (WTP).

The main objective of the WTP is to encourage staff to travel by sustainable modes to and from work as well as for business trips. As part of the WTP a staff travel study was undertaken of Assembly staff to establish workplace travel behaviours. A total of 92% of Assembly staff responded to the survey.

Figures obtained show that 9% of staff take part in a car sharing scheme; 15% use public transport whilst 63% of staff surveyed make single person car journeys. As a consequence of this survey a number of travel plan targets have been set for the whole of the Stormont Estate for a two year period as follows;

- Increase cycle modal share to 2% (2009) and 4% (2010)
- Increase walking from 1.4% to 2.5% (2009) and 3.5% (2010)
- Increase car sharing from 18.5% to 24% (2009) and 30% by (2010)
- Increase bus users to 12% (2009) and 15% (2010).

Assembly Question Time

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission if it would consider putting 'Question time' and other Assembly business on You Tube, to ensure that the public has easy access to this footage. (AQW 3799/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Moutray): Following the upgrade of the Assembly's broadcasting equipment (carried out during the Summer Recess in 2008), a full editing suite has been implemented, which allows greater flexibility in the way Plenary Sessions and Committee Meetings are recorded and broadcast. This new capability also enables footage of Plenary Sessions and Committee Meetings to be edited and repackaged for a number of uses and media, including the Assembly website.

One of the key objectives of the Assembly's Engagement Strategy is to enhance the public's perception and understanding of the role of the Assembly, its workings and proceedings. As a result, a project has been initiated to redevelop the Assembly website, in order to further exploit the new functionality enabled by the investment in broadcasting equipment and editing suite. One of the outcomes of this project will be an enhancement and expansion of the audio and video content available via the Assembly website. When the new website is launched, this enhanced content will cover more than the current live stream for Plenary Sessions and meetings held in the Senate and will include a listen again service and highlight packages e.g. Question Time, Committee Meetings, Audio Podcasts etc.

The Assembly is also co-operating with the BBC on its web-based "Democracy Live" project which is due to go live during summer 2009. This will be a multimedia portal offering live and on demand video from all the main UK institutions and the European Parliament. Users will be able to search the content for specific representatives and view their contributions on issues relevant to users.

At the moment the Assembly has no plans to make footage of Assembly business available on any commercial video sharing websites. There are currently in excess of 40 video sharing sites, and it would be impossible to maintain control of Assembly originated material spread over such a large number of sites and ensure that it would not be re-edited or re-used inappropriately.

ISO 1401

Mr B Wilson asked the Assembly Commission if it will seek ISO 1401 accreditation, which is the international standard for public sector organisations committed to greening their operations. (AQW 3821/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission has not yet sought accreditation for ISO 14001; however, the Commission is actively pursuing the appointment of a Head of Environmental Services to Properties Directorate with specific responsibility for sustainability. The primary focus of the appointee will be to develop a sustainability strategy with an associated Environmental Management System, following which accreditation will be sought for ISO 14001.

The Commission is very aware of the need to improve our energy efficiency and Properties Directorate has been taking part in the Public Sector Energy Campaign (PSEC) since 2001. Parliament Buildings was recently awarded a display energy certificate rating of 'C' which compares very favourably with other similar buildings and illustrates the progress that has already been made in improving our energy efficiency.

The Assembly Commission is working towards meeting all government targets, including the waste management strategy, and has been taking part in a Stormont Estate recycling initiative since 2006. Approximately 30% of our total waste is currently recycled and further investigations are taking place to determine if additional waste streams can be introduced to increase our recycling figures.

Properties Directorate work closely with our support services contractor, Eures, on all aspects of recycling and energy efficiency and Eures have recently been awarded ISO 14001, ISO 9001 and ISO 18001.

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Assembly Commission what steps it is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork it sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3833/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission is aware of the costs associated with the amount of paperwork that is issued to constituency offices and other organisations. At present, the Assembly is undertaking a review of the stationery office and its functions. Part of this review will look at how we can do our business in a more cost effective, efficient and environmentally friendly manner.

Recently the Assembly Commission has taken steps to reduce the amount of printed paper that it issues to constituency offices. During the latter part of 2008 Members were surveyed and asked to identify the various Assembly papers that they would like to receive either by hard copy or electronically. Following the outcome of this survey the Assembly has been able to reduce the amount of printed paper it issues to constituency offices by 30%. A further review of printed paper is planned to take place later this year.

Furthermore, the Assembly Commission is actively seeking to reduce the amount of paper documents created through better use of information and communication technology (ICT) solutions. As ICT systems are amended or reviewed, opportunities are sought to reduce or eliminate the production of paper records. Examples include;

- The Finance Office has recently upgraded its accounting system to allow remittance advice notes to be issued by email;
- Personnel Office are investigating the use of "electronic payslips" for Secretariat and other staff paid through the Cintra Payroll system;
- The Research & Library Information Packs on Private Members' motions and selected Committee motions scheduled for debate are available electronically to all Members through a secure internet connection.
- Investigations are underway on the delivery of Committee material in a similar fashion to the R&L Information Packs.
- The IS Office is conducting trials of "eBook technology" as a possible way to reduce the number of "single use" paper based Committee and R&L packs in circulation;
- The Business Office and IS office are exploring the potential of "print on demand" systems for the production of business papers.
- All internal circulars, Secretariat meeting minutes and advice & guidance material is available via the Intranet (AssISt)

Some paper based documents such as forms etc are still required where a Member's authorisation is necessary but these are kept to a minimum.

The Assembly Commission is committed to working with all other departments within the Stormont Estate to make the government estate carbon neutral by 2015 and is working towards this by looking at all aspects of work and processes within Parliament Buildings including the use of paper.

Security Costs

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission how much it spent on security in (i) 2005; (ii) 2006; (iii) 2007; and (iv) 2008. (AQW 3958/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): I would refer the Member to the following table. Please note that security costs have been spread over the relevant financial year.

Year	05/06	06/07	07/08	To 31/Dec/08
NIA Staff costs	875,405	803,285	938,868	685,323
BS* Staff costs	235,566	326,830	612,188	715,861
Cobra/PSNI	82,900	80,500	169,940	424,082
Security Equip	16,866	24,838	6,705	15,725
Keys	3,455	1,817	1,421	256
DFP Guarding	517,254	521,902	576,982	110,000 **
Misc (security cards, vetting etc)	620,475	629,057	7,483	11,110
Sub Total			762,531	561,173
Security Review Implementation costs			475,869	
Total Costs	1,731,446	1,759,172	2,789,456	1,962,357

* Brook Street Recruitment Agency

** Estimate: 75% of annual costs for Estate Guarding

Assembly Shop

Mr S Gardiner asked the Assembly Commission to provide details of the agreement that applies to the sale of produce by Northern Ireland suppliers to the Assembly shop. (AQW 4442/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): At present, there are two distinct agreements that apply to the sale of produce by Northern Ireland suppliers to the Assembly shop as follows:

(i) Items that are purchased by our contractor, Eurest, for sale in the Gift Shop. These are purchased with the agreement of Facilities Branch, and are usually bespoke items that contain the Assembly blue flax crest. Generally, we have found that these items are extremely popular amongst the many visitors who attend Parliament Buildings each year. Eurest endeavours to source all of the “gift” items from local companies where possible. Most gifts are manufactured or processed within Northern Ireland.

(ii) Items that are brought in by local crafters. In May 2008, Facilities Branch introduced an initiative whereby we contacted local enterprise agencies to ascertain whether local crafters would be interested in displaying their merchandise in the Assembly Gift Shop on a month by month basis. This has proved extremely popular, and is currently due to run until April 2009, when Facilities Branch will assess the success of the initiative. All crafters who display items in the Assembly Gift Shop are local businesses from across Northern Ireland. All items are made in Northern Ireland, and where possible, made from materials sourced in Northern Ireland.

Recruitment Exercises

Mr A Attwood asked the Assembly Commission what is the total cost of the recent recruitment exercises for (i) clerical officer; and (ii) clerical supervisor. (AQW 4444/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): As both the Clerical Supervisor and Clerical Officer competitions are ongoing, I am not yet in a position to provide the information you have

requested. Interviews in the Clerical Officer competition are continuing and pre-appointment checks are being carried out in the Clerical Supervisor competition.

Recruitment Exercises

Mr A Attwood asked the Assembly Commission (i) what is the total number of applicants for the recent employment competition for the posts of clerical supervisor and clerical officer; (ii) how many applicants were interviewed for each post; (iii) how many were offered employment for each post; and (iv) how many NICS staff were offered employment for each post. (AQW 4445/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): There were 289 applications received by the closing date of 5 September 2008 for the Clerical Supervisor recruitment competition and 343 applications received by the closing date of 3 October 2008 for the Clerical Officer recruitment competition.

173 candidates were interviewed in the Clerical Supervisor recruitment competition, but as the interviews in the Clerical Officer competition are ongoing (due to conclude on 29 January unless any of the panels reconvene), I am not yet in a position to provide you with the information you requested.

No offers of employment have been issued in either competition. Pre-appointment checks are being carried out in the Clerical Supervisor competition while interviews in the Clerical Officer competition are continuing.

Recruitment Exercises

Mr A Attwood asked the Assembly Commission if it has any requirement to buy out existing employment contracts for any staff offered employment as clerical assistant or clerical supervisor arising from the recent Assembly recruitment exercise prior to taking up employment in the Assembly. (AQW 4446/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): There are no terms or conditions in the current employment contracts of NI Assembly Commission staff or seconded NICS staff which would require buy out in the event of an offer of employment arising from the recent Assembly recruitment exercises for clerical officer and clerical supervisors.

There is no contractual commitment or actual payment made to Brook Street (UK) Ltd in respect of candidates placed. Neither is there any requirement for buy out in relation to Agency workers who are offered permanent employment as a result of the recruitment exercises.

Recruitment Exercises

Mr A Attwood asked the Assembly Commission whether the interview panel for the recent Assembly recruitment exercise for clerical officer complied with best practice governing the make-up of such panels. (AQW 4447/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): There were three two-member panels convened for the Clerical Officer competition. All panel members received training in Criteria Based Interviewing and each panel was balanced in terms of gender and community background.

Recruitment Exercises

Mr A Attwood asked the Assembly Commission whether the interview panel for the recent Assembly recruitment exercise for clerical supervisor complied with best practice governing the make-up of such panels. (AQW 4448/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): There were three three-member panels convened for the Clerical Supervisor competition. All panel members received training in Criteria Based Interviewing and each panel was balanced in terms of gender and community background.

IT Training

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission if training is available to MLAs to teach email and other IT skills. (AQW 4878/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): The Assembly Commission has approved the provision of ICT training to all Northern Ireland Assembly permanent pass holders. Classroom based training courses are provided through the Assembly Training Officer while the IS Office can arrange for assistance with the basic functions of all centrally provided software through informal coaching sessions.

Full details of the IT training provided and how to request assistance are provided in;

- The Members Handbook;
- The Parliament Buildings IT Handbook supplied to all Members;
- The Constituency Office Handbook supplied to all Members;
- The IS Office and Personnel Intranet pages on AssISt.

School Groups

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission how many (i) school groups; and (ii) others, have visited the Northern Ireland Assembly, in each month, over the last two years. (AQW 4913/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Moutray):

	2007		2008		2009	
	No. School Groups	Other Groups	No. School Groups	Other Groups	No. School Groups	Other Groups
January	19	52	32	88	35	77
February	16	32	40	130		
March	27	55	39	104		
April	27	64	82	159		
May	47	128	44	166		
June	56	180	61	179		
July	13	99	5	77		
August	5	111	4	67		
September	21	40	30	144		
October	26	175	30	142		
November	51	152	47	113		
December	29	66	26	81		

These figures include school groups and other groups handled by the Education Service, Events Office and the External Liaison Unit.

Broadband Speed

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission if it has made any decisions to improve the broadband speed of personal computers in parliament buildings. (AQW 4914/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): I would refer the Member to Assembly Questions AQW 2606/08, AQW 3232/08, AQW 8185/08 and AQW 1924/09 for previous replies on this matter.

I can report that the Assembly Commission at its meeting on 27 January 2009 considered a report on the status of the Northern Ireland Assembly internet connection. To address the issues identified, approval was given to

the IS Office to prioritise the move to a faster connection and review the performance of the internet connection following that improvement.

Traffic Management

Mr A Ross asked the Assembly Commission what steps have been taken to ensure that drivers do not speed on the grounds of Parliament Buildings. (AQW 4916/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission are responsible for the management of traffic within the boundary of Parliament Buildings and this is monitored by the Security Guards. The road layout and physical barriers in place at Glen East and Glen West mean that there is not normally a problem in relation drivers speeding.

Elsewhere within the Stormont Estate, outside the boundary of Parliament Buildings, responsibility for traffic management lies with the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Healthy Eating

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission how it promotes healthy eating within the Assembly. (AQW 4929/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The current Support Services Contract is held by Eurest, who provide all catering within the Northern Ireland Assembly.

From the outset of the contract, it was made clear to the supplier that healthy eating would be of high importance in the provision of the service. This commitment is demonstrated by the following comments incorporated within the contract specification, "The Contractor shall promote healthy eating and shall encourage a reduction in salt, sugar and fats, and an increase in foods high in dietary fibre."

Subsequently, Facilities Branch liaise with Eurest on a regular basis to ensure that healthy eating remains a priority, and since the commencement of the contract in March 2007, several innovative catering options that provide healthy eating have been introduced, to accompany previous healthy options.

By way of example, Eurest currently feature a range of food concepts that provide a healthy eating option. Included within this range of options are a:

- Porridge Bar - A breakfast high in oats and fibre. Served with a range of toppers that offer additional fruit and nuts to increase the nutritional value.
- Breakfast Cereal Bar - A range of PC cereals that is sugar free served with semi skimmed milk.
- Juice Bar - Served from a font there are a range of Apple, Orange & Cranberry juice served with no added sugar.
- Wild Greens - During the summer (2008) promotion of healthy salads was so popular Eurest has retained this offer as a daily option.
- Balanced Choices - Daily a main course and vegetable option is available. This option is nutritionally balanced. Guidance on specific information can be obtained via the Assembly Intranet.
- Fruit Pots - Selection of Mixed fresh fruit, Grapes, Pineapple
- Deli Bar - Range of 10 compound salads (dressing optional)
All fresh vegetable & pasta ingredients

In addition, prior to considering a proposal for a catering tariff increase in April 2008, Facilities Branch requested that Eurest factor in a freeze or reduction of tariffs for several healthy eating options. Facilities then assessed the proposals and negotiated further. Examples from the Blue Flax restaurant of these items were:

- Fruit items e.g. apples, bananas, oranges, pears, pineapple pots, grape pots saw a reduction of between 8.80% and 9.20%.
- Two salad boxes saw a reduction of 9.10% and 9.30%. A further salad box saw a freeze on the current tariff.

On behalf of the Assembly Commission, Facilities Branch will continue to analyse potential options that could lead to the introduction of further healthy eating options in the various catering outlets in the Northern Ireland

Assembly. Facilities Branch also remain committed to exploring ways to ensuring competitive and fair prices for the current healthy eating items that are offered in the Assembly.

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Department for Regional Development		Social Security Agency	100
10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	93	Social Security Agency	104
A5/N2 Dualling Project	96	Social Security Agency	106
Construction Industry	98	Social Security Offices	101
Departmental Staff Numbers	94	Strabane District Housing Executive	104
Duneaney Road from Glarryford to Rasharkin	98	Ulster Scots Agency	99
Gritting Roads	96	Volunteer Bureau Initiative Budget	103
Gritting Services	96	Warm Homes Scheme	105
Northern Ireland Water	97	Warm Homes Scheme	107
Programme for Government Targets	93	Winter Fuel Payment	100
Re-Plant Trees at Castle Park Avenue, Bangor	93	Winter Fuel Payment	102
Road Safety	94		
Road Safety	94	Department of Agriculture and Rural	
Road Service Car Parks	91	Development	
Road Service Car Parks	92	10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	6
Road Service Car Parks	92	Bovine Tuberculosis	3
Speed Limit Signage	93	Bovine Tuberculosis	4
Strangford Ferry Service	95	Bovine Tuberculosis	4
Traffic Assessment in Newcastle	92	Bovine Tuberculosis	5
Translink	95	Bovine Tuberculosis	5
		Bovine Tuberculosis	7
Department for Employment and Learning		Community Based Lifelong Learning Schemes	7
10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	48	Farm Modernisation Grants	7
Review of Further Education	49	Interferon Gamma Tests	4
Student Fees	49	Match Funding	3
Young People not in Education, Employment or Training	48	Meeting with MEPs	7
		Research Projects	6
Department for Social Development		Tuberculosis	5
10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	100	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	
Benefit Office	105	Anniversary of the Gaelic Athletic Association	8
Capital Projects	103	Building Ulster-Scots Links	8
Citizens Advice Bureau	100	Devolution of Broadcasting	12
Cold Weather Payments	108	Indigenous Language Strategy	10
Dales Flats in Seymour Hill	103	Introduction of Safety Certification	8
Departmental Staff with Disabilities	106	Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic Languages	9
Disability Living Allowance	107	Irish Language	13
Draft Volunteering Strategy	104	Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Events	9
Dunclug Action Plan	102	Language Arts Officers	9
Dunclug Action Plan	107	Maze Site	10
Employment Support Allowance	99	Meetings with MEPs	10
Environmental Improvement Scheme	102	Multi Sports Stadium	10
Housing Associations	108	Multi-Sports Stadium	13
Housing Benefit Applications	99	Music Performing Arts Society	12
Housing Condition Survey	108	Newtownards Library	10
Local Volunteering Infrastructure	103	North South Ministerial Council	12
Meetings with MEPs	101	Orange Lodge	11
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	107	Programme for Government Targets	10
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	107	Promotion of British Identity and Culture	11
Pensioners Working Part-Time	105	Regional Art Gallery	11
Private Pensions	105	Re-Imaging Communities Programme	9
Social Housing	101	Shared Future	14
Social Housing	106	Traditional Arts	13
Social Housing	106	Ulster-Scots Agency	13
Social Housing Projects	101		
Social Housing Projects	101		

Department of Education			
10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	25		
Academic Selection	14		
Academic Selection	43		
Academic Selection	44		
Attacks Against Teachers	17		
Bangor Grammar School	29		
Bangor Grammar School	37		
Bangor Grammar School	37		
CCEA Test Paper	25		
CCEA Transfer Test	28		
Chief Inspector of Schools	47		
Children with Hearing Difficulties	16		
Children with Vision Difficulties	16		
Composite Classes	41		
Creative Youth Partnerships	42		
Departmental Staff with Disabilities	38		
Educational Psychologists	24		
Educational Psychologists	38		
Educational Psychologists	41		
Educational Psychologists	42		
Entrance Examinations	41		
Entrance Examinations	43		
Glenravel Primary School	38		
Irish Language	46		
Languages in Primary Schools	42		
Mainstream Primary Schools	26		
Male Teachers	44		
Meetings with MEPs	26		
Newly Qualified Teachers	17		
P6 Children	18		
Post Primary Education	26		
Post-Primary Schools	40		
Post Primary Transfer	43		
Post Primary Transfer	44		
Post Primary Transfer	45		
Post Primary Transfer	45		
Post Primary Transfer	46		
Post Primary Transfer	47		
Primary School Enrolment Figures	14		
Primary School Teacher Graduates	38		
Priory Integrated College	29		
Priory Integrated College	30		
Pupils Suspended or Expelled	28		
Reading Centre in Derry/Londonderry	24		
Review of Public Administration	39		
Review of the Catholic Teaching Certificate	17		
Rural Primary Schools	39		
School Maintenance	27		
School Meals	30		
School Transport	25		
Special Needs Pupils	19		
Sustainable Schools Strategy	45		
Teachers in Full Time Permanent Posts	37		
Teaching Civics	46		
Transfer 2010	43		
'Transfer 2010' Scheme	18		
Urban Primary Schools	39		
		Voluntary Grammar Schools	19
		Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	
		10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	50
		Construction Industry	53
		Demolition Contractors	53
		Gaelic Football and Hurling	50
		Grants for Small Businesses	52
		Greyhound Racing Circuit	51
		Greyhound Racing Circuit	51
		Invest NI	51
		Loan Guarantee Scheme	52
		Northern Ireland Electricity	50
		Northern Ireland Tourist Board	49
		Project Kelvin	53
		Project Kelvin	53
		Project Kelvin	53
		Project Kelvin	54
		Project Kelvin	54
		Project Kelvin	54
		Department of Finance and Personnel	
		10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	79
		Capital Projects	80
		Civil Servants Dismissed from Posts	77
		Deprived Super Output Areas	80
		Fiscal Stimulus	80
		Meetings with MEPs	79
		Rates Collection	78
		Small Business Rates Relief Scheme	80
		Tender Processes	79
		Water Charges	80
		Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	
		10 Day Prompt Payment Pledge	86
		Agency Staff	90
		Ambulance Service	84
		Antrim Area Hospital	85
		Ardavon Park Complex	91
		Arthritis Sufferers	86
		Attacks Against Hospital Staff	88
		Cardiac Arrests	86
		Carers' Review	85
		Clinical Physiologists	87
		Clinical Physiologists	87
		Cost of Using Bank Staff	85
		Craigavon Hospital	89
		Direct Payments	88
		Direct Payments	88
		Foreign Nurses	89
		Hoax Emergency Calls	89
		MRI Scans	81
		MRI Scans	82
		MRI Scans	83
		MRI Scans	84
		MRI Scans	85
		Mullinure Hospital in Armagh	90

Nursing Staff	90	Town Planning Committee	77
Nursing Staff	90	Tree Protection Orders	60
Regional Public Education Programme	87	Ulster Farm By-Products	64
Review of Public Administration	89	Visitors Centre at the Giant's Causeway	70
Social Security Benefits	90	Visitors Centre at the Giant's Causeway	70
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	89	Walls of Derry/Londonderry	55
Staff Covered by Agency Workers	85	Waste Communication Strategy	76
Termination of Pregnancy	91	Wind Farms	56
		Wind Farms	56
Department of the Environment		Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	
Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts	55	Assembly Commission Staff Transport	109
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders	54	Assembly Question Time	109
Apartment Development at Chainé Memorial Road in Larne	70	Assembly Shop	111
Area Development Plans	73	Broadband Speed	113
Area Development Plans	75	Healthy Eating	114
Areas of Conservation	73	ISO 1401	110
Capital Projects	68	IT Training	113
Demolition of Dwellings	59	Recruitment Exercises	111
Demolition of Dwellings	59	Recruitment Exercises	112
Demolition of Dwellings	60	Recruitment Exercises	112
Departmental Staff Numbers	66	Recruitment Exercises	112
Disposal of Fish Process Effluence	69	Recruitment Exercises	112
Disposal of Fish Process Effluence	69	Reduction in Paperwork	110
Divisional Planning Office	58	School Groups	113
Divisional Planning Office	58	Security Costs	111
GAA Stadium in Antrim	65	Traffic Management	114
GAA Stadium in Antrim	65		
GAA Stadium in Antrim	66	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	
GAA Stadium in Antrim	66	Barracks in Omagh	2
George Best Belfast City Airport	71	Child Care Strategy	2
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	72	Implementation of EU Legislation and Regulation	1
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	72	Meetings with MEPs	1
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	72	Pork Dioxin	3
Illegal Dumping at Lough Cowey Reservoir	68	Programme for Government Targets	1
Lurgan Park	75		
Meetings with MEPs	65		
MOT Tests	68		
New District Councils	75		
New Local Government Authorities	69		
Northern Ireland Environment Agency	67		
Planning Applications	57		
Planning Applications	58		
Planning Applications	60		
Planning Applications	64		
Planning Applications	71		
Planning Policies	73		
Planning Service	58		
Planning Service	59		
Planning Service	68		
Planning Service	72		
Protection of Legitimate Charities	71		
Review of Local Councils	74		
Road Deaths	76		
Road Safety Council	76		
Single Use Carrier Bags	70		
Statutory Transition Committees	75		
Stretch Limousines	71		

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