
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 3 April 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr T Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if planning applications refused under PPS14 will continue to be considered by the Planning Appeals Commission under the criteria set out in PPS14 or under the new criteria in PPS21. (AQW 5861/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its independent tribunal status, its Chief Commissioner has been asked to provide a response directly to you, and we understand that she has written to you in the following terms:

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

In determining appeals the Planning Appeals Commission must have regard to the development plan (if material) and to any other material considerations.

Each appeal submitted to the Commission is considered and determined in the context of the evidence presented by all participants in that appeal. The Commission would expect that evidence to include the relevant Planning Policy Statements.”

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Mr P Weir asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what controls exist to monitor the expenditure of the Northern Ireland Children’s Commissioner. (AQW 5965/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The amounts paid in legal fees by the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland in each of the last three years were:

2005/2006	£27,360.68
2006/2007	£39,336.68
2007/2008	£52,914.55

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has various controls in place to monitor the Commissioner’s expenditure. These controls in the main are operated by its sponsoring body, the Children and Young People’s Unit within OFMDFM.

The relationship between the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Commissioner is set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM). The MSFM sets out the broad framework within which the Commissioner operates and is based on a Treasury model. The Financial Memorandum section of the MSFM sets out in great detail certain aspects of the financial provisions, which the Commissioner is required to observe. The MSFM is “signed off” by the Commissioner and the OFMDFM Accounting Officer.

OFMDFM and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) also agree the Commissioner's business plan. The Business Plan includes key targets and milestones for the year immediately ahead, and links to budgeting information so that resources allocated to achieve specific objectives can readily be identified by OFMDFM.

To monitor actual expenditure against planned expenditure, the Commissioner's monthly draw down requests are accompanied by monthly profiles and explanations on expenditure, which are scrutinised before approval of payment is given. Also, updates are requested from the Commissioner at each of the financial monitoring rounds.

Quarterly liaison meetings take place between the Commissioner and departmental officials. An official from the Children and Young People's Unit also attends the Commissioner's Audit and Risk Committee quarterly meetings and reports back to the department any issues raised.

To monitor the Commissioner's accountability functions a senior OFMDFM official holds Accountability Meetings with the Commissioner and her Chief Executive every six months, mid year and end of year. The end of year meeting is attended by the Department's Accounting Officer.

In addition to these procedures, all circulars and guidance issued by DFP are brought to the Commissioner's attention.

However, we would ask you to note that, in order to ensure appropriate independence of the Commissioner's office, relationships between the Commissioner, Ministers and OFMDFM are governed by the 'arm's length' principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Commissioner's legal and financial framework and the structure of her funding and management. Within this framework it is the role of the Commissioner to determine her policy and activities in keeping with her statutory responsibilities and the requirements of Assembly policy. OFMDFM has the right of access to carry out any examination of the internal financial control systems as may be required by its Accounting Officer.

The total amount of funding provided to the Commissioner in financial year 07/08 was £1,897,000.

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Mr P Weir asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the total amount of funding for the Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner, in the last financial year. (AQW 5966/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The amounts paid in legal fees by the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland in each of the last three years were:

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Infrastructure Projects

Mr A McQuillan asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline all infrastructure projects planned for the East Londonderry constituency through the Investment Strategy; and the monetary value of each investment, up to 2011. (AQW 6210/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Please find the information you requested in Annex A. Projects of £0.5m or more have been listed separately. In some cases it has been necessary to include the full value of projects covering an area greater than East Londonderry and where costs cannot be disaggregated by constituency.

Annex A

ISNI PROJECTS OF £500,000 & OVER IN EAST LONDONDERRY CONSTITUENCY UP TO THE END OF 2011

Department	Project Title	Value	Comments
Department of Education	Ballykelly Primary School	£4.5m	New Building & Nursery Unit on Existing Site. Due on site June 2010 to June 2012.
Department of Education	Rossmar Special School, Limavady	£6.5m	New Building on the former site of Limegrove Special School. Estimated cost. Due on site May 2010 to December 2011.
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Telecoms infrastructure projects – Northern Ireland Wide	£12.9m	£6.5m investment in 2009/10 & £6.4m investment in 2010/11. Although these projects are province wide they will include the East Londonderry constituency.
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development	Coleraine – Lodge Burn Flood Alleviation & Drainage Infrastructure Scheme	£1.3m	
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development	Limavady – River Roe Flood Alleviation Scheme	£4.5m	Due to commence prior to December 2011.
Department for Regional Development	Rail Projects Purchase 20 new trains sets to improve services on the Derry line and surrounding areas.	Not Available	Department for Regional Development are unable to provide costs at this stage.
Department for Regional Development	Relay of line between Coleraine & Londonderry	£70m	Work commences in 2011 and extends beyond 2010/11. Costs are estimated.
Department for Regional Development	Extend track life between Ballymena & Coleraine	£12m	Expected to be completed by 2010. Costs are estimated.
Department for Regional Development	Sea Defences between Whitehead & Larne and Coleraine & Derry	£0.64m	Scheduled to complete in 2010. Costs are estimated.
Department for Regional Development	3 replacement bridges between Coleraine & Derry	£0.69m	

Department	Project Title	Value	Comments
Department for Regional Development	Water Projects Limavady Wastewater Treatment Works	£5.3m	Northern Ireland Water does not hold details of capital projects broken down by parliamentary constituency. However, projects listed in this group are within the Coleraine & Limavady Borough Council Area, which covers most of the East Londonderry constituency.
Department for Regional Development	Portballintrae Zone Watermain Improvements	£4.3m	
Department for Regional Development	Portrush Sewer Improvements	£1.2m	
Department for Regional Development	Limavady Zone Watermain Improvements	£1.8m	
Department for Regional Development	Coleraine Drainage Area Plan	£0.6m	
Department for Regional Development	Ballinrees Central Zone Watermain Improvements	£1.0m	
Department for Regional Development	Benone Area Sewerage	£7.0m	
Department for Regional Development	Feeny Wastewater Treatment Works	£1.3m	
Department for Regional Development	Limavady Drainage Area Plan	£2.0m	
Department for Social Development	Housing Projects The new 5 year Social Housing Development Programme(2009/10 – 2013/14)	Not Available	This is a province wide scheme and costs are not available at this stage of the process. Any relevant schemes for this constituency will published on the Housing Executives website in due course.
Department for Social Development	Coleraine town centre – Public Realm works	£1.23m	Due to complete March 2009.
Department of Culture Arts & Leisure	Dungiven Library	£0.92m	Expenditure up to 2011. Estimate cost.
Department of Culture Arts & Leisure	John Mitchells GAC Claudy (Building Sports Programme	£0.7m	To commence May 2009. Expenditure up to 2011.
Department for Employment & Learning	High Voltage Replacement	£3.33m	University of Ulster, Coleraine Campus. Planned projects.
Department for Employment & Learning	Wind Turbines	£2.38m	
Department for Employment & Learning	Diamond Refurbishment	£2.20m	

ISNI PROJECTS UNDER £500,000 IN EAST LONDONDERRY CONSTITUENCY UP TO THE END OF 2011

Department	Projects	Group Value	Comments
Department for Regional Development	Roads Projects A number of Infrastructure projects	£0.86m	Roads Service does not hold details of capital projects on a constituency basis. However, information on other capital expenditure projects with a value of less than £500,000 in the East Londonderry is included in the Autumn 2008 council reports for Coleraine and Limavady. Please see :- http://www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm
Department for Regional Development	Water Projects Water & wastewater infrastructure improvement projects	£0.15m	Current estimated cost of these projects.
Department for Regional Development	Bus Projects Workshop/garage related projects	£0.43m	
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development	Lower Bann Sluice Structures at Portna and Cutts - Painting and Renovation	£0.2m	Due to commence prior to December 2011
Department for Social Development	Blackburn Pass - Environmental Improvement Scheme	£0.06m	
Department of Culture Arts & Leisure	9 Sports Projects	£1.08m	
Department for Education and Learning	University of Ulster, Coleraine campus – Combined Heat & Power	£0.44m	Planned project.

Northern Ireland Terrorist Victims Together

Mr J Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have been held with Northern Ireland Terrorist Victims Together about funding for their organisation. (AQW 6369/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: There has been no approach to the department from a group named “Terrorist Victims Together” for help, advice or funding.

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Mr R Beggs asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions it has held with the Commissioner for Children and Young People in relation to its annual budget. (AQO 2362/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Commissioner has a set budget to work within every year. The Children and Young People’s Unit (CYPU), in OFMDFM is the sponsoring body for the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Discussions take place between the Commissioner and officials in CYPU in relation to the Commissioner’s budget on a regular basis. CYPU discuss and agree the Commissioner’s annual Business Plan which is linked to budgeting information on the Commissioner’s objectives. The Commissioner’s financial performance is discussed at quarterly liaison meetings and also at the Commissioner’s Audit and Risk Committee meetings which an official from CYPU attends. Accountability meetings on the Commissioner’s expenditure are held with the Commissioner twice yearly.

Efficiency Savings: Regional Co-operative

Mr D Kennedy asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what contact it has had with its counterparts in Scotland and Wales on identifying efficiencies that could be gained through closer co-operation between the three regions. (AQO 2364/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have an extensive range of ongoing contacts with our counterparts in Scotland and Wales. These are held both at official and at Ministerial level, on a formal and informal basis, and are aimed at improving co-operation and identifying synergies on issues of mutual interest. For example, we met the Prime Minister and the Heads of the Devolved Administrations on 25 February 2009 and agreed that all regions should consider and share instances of good practice and ideas which had been developed to effectively address problems emerging from the economic downturn.

In addition, the Minister for Finance and Personnel attended a quadrilateral meeting of Finance Ministers on 12 March 2009. One of the items for discussion during the course of the quadrilateral was the approach to delivering efficiency savings across the four jurisdictions over the period to 2010-11.

Equality Commission: Amending Legislation

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how it intends to bring forward amending legislation as requested by the Equality Commission. (AQO 2365/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, wrote to Junior Ministers on 5 February 2009 to highlight a number of areas where the Commission believes that Northern Ireland equality legislation needs to be amended. The Commission submitted a detailed paper setting out six priorities for legislative amendment with a summary of the rationale underpinning each recommendation.

The Commission has recommended the introduction of new legislation to prohibit age discrimination in non-employment areas and has recommended significant amendments to five separate pieces of anti-discrimination legislation dealing with race, disability, sex and fair employment. Each of the recommendations would require the introduction of primary legislation to secure the necessary legislative change.

We need to ensure that our citizens enjoy the same rights and protections as others across the European Union. We will therefore consider the Commission's recommendations in conjunction with proposed developments elsewhere when deciding the future direction of anti-discrimination legislation here.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many employees in the Department travel from Derry/Londonderry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6720/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Two of our employees travel from Derry/Londonderry to work in Belfast.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the allocation of Farm Modernisation Scheme funding met with all the relevant EU legislative rules regarding the allocation of EU funds. (AQW 6347/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The Farm Modernisation Programme is an integral part of the Rural Development Programme approved by the European Commission in July 2007. As such, my officials considered that it met all relevant EU legislation.

EU rules associated with implementing rural development programmes do not oblige my Department to seek clearance from the European Commission on either selection criteria or operational matters.

My Department is obliged to consult the Rural Development Programme's Monitoring Committee on the selection criteria and it has done so.

Farm Modernisation Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the EU authorities have approved the application process for the Farm Modernisation Programme that commenced on 17th February 2009.

(AQW 6372/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: EU rules associated with implementing rural development programmes do not oblige my Department to seek clearance from the European Commission on either selection criteria or operational matters. Consequently, my Department did not seek the Commission's approval of the application process for the Farm Modernisation Programme. My Department is obliged to consult the Rural Development Programme's Monitoring Committee on the scheme selection criteria which it has done.

Badger Baiting

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what co-operation exists between her Department and the Department of the Environment in relation to ending the practice of badger baiting.

(AQW 6414/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal. It is also a specific offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal by causing, procuring, assisting or spectating at the baiting of that animal. Any person found guilty of these offences is liable, on summary conviction, to up to three months imprisonment or a fine up to £5,000 or both.

While the PSNI is responsible for enforcing animal welfare legislation with regards to non-farmed animals such as badgers, my officials form part of a multi-agency body known as The Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW). PAW partners include representatives of organisations involved in wildlife law enforcement including the PSNI, NI Environment Agency, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, conservation organisations, field sports organisations and land-owning interests. PAW liaises closely with the PSNI Wildlife Officer, and other key enforcement agencies. It aims to facilitate an exchange of information and also to increase public awareness of the key issues, including animal welfare, arising from badger persecution and illegal hunting of wild deer.

The issue of the level of penalties available to the Courts will form a significant part of my deliberations on new animal welfare legislation. It is my intention to ensure that the penalties available for animal cruelty, whether fines or custodial sentences, are a sufficient deterrent. This will include offences relating to badger baiting. When bringing forward my legislative proposals I will, of course, be liaising closely with the Environment Minister and my other Ministerial colleagues.

Meetings with MEPs

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail any meetings she has held over the past 12 months with Northern Ireland's three MEPs individually or as a group.

(AQW 6428/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Over the past 12 months, I have had 2 meetings with Jim Nicholson MEP, 1 meeting with Ms Bairbre De Brun MEP, and 1 joint meeting with Jim Nicholson and Bairbre de Brun.

Careers in Fishing

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she is taking to encourage people into a career in fishing considering that only seven people responded to a fishing advertisement that was circulated to over 50,000 people. (AQW 6485/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The key encouraging people into a career in fishing is to have an efficient profitable industry which is of a size and capability appropriate to the fishing opportunities available to it. There are a range of financial assistance possibilities under Axis 1 of the European Fisheries Fund to help adapt the fleet to make it more economically efficient. I have asked the Fisheries Forum to advise me on how best to target the €14m of public money to achieve better profitability. I hope to receive the Forum's report shortly which will no doubt consider issues such as the attracting new entrants and maintaining skills in the industry.

Small Boat Fishery

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she would support a locally based small boat fishery, targeting shellfish in Northern Ireland waters; and what management and encouragement her Department would be able to offer those interested in such a venture. (AQW 6715/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am happy to support any fishery that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable and my Department will work with the industry to develop sustainable management measures for such fisheries. The inshore area is complex however with both static and mobile gear fishermen operating in the same areas as well as environmental designations, water quality and food hygiene issues to be considered. This means that any new proposals require careful consideration and the involvement of all stakeholders that may be affected.

Mussel On-Growing Sites in Belfast Lough

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) If she is aware that an application for a mussel on-growing site in Belfast Lough had been submitted in 2001 by a Strangford constituent; and (ii) if she will advise where the application is in the process; and when the constituent can expect a decision. (AQW 6717/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am aware there are a number of outstanding licence applications for mussel on-growing sites in Belfast Lough including one submitted by a Strangford constituent of Mr Shannon. These licence applications have been placed on hold due to the current moratorium on the granting of any further licences for the bottom culture of mussels. The moratorium was introduced because of concerns about the ability of local sea loughs to sustain what was a rapid development of the industry and about demand for seed exceeding supply.

Carrying capacity models have been developed and are being tested. Once fully operational the models will help inform decision-making on lifting the moratorium. Furthermore, one of the recommendations in a subsequent review of the bottom grown mussel sector is that no further sites should be licensed until the end of 2009 at the earliest. The moratorium therefore remains in place and I wrote to Mr Shannon's constituent in November 2008 to advise him of this position.

Wild Mussel Fishery in Copeland Sound

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) if she is aware that a wild mussel fishery in Copeland Sound was planned for January 2009 in which 20 local vessels have expressed an interest and expended money for equipping the fishery; and (ii) if she can explain why the fishery has not yet been opened; and if she will confirm an opening date. (AQW 6718/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am aware that some fishermen interested in this fishery may have hoped to be able to fish it by January 2009. However before this fishery can start several stages must be gone through. Management measures have to be agreed and this requires consultation with all relevant stakeholders that may be affected by this fishery. The fishery also requires an Appropriate (environmental

impact) Assessment due to its proximity to the Outer Ards Special Protected Area for birds and in order for the mussels to be sold directly for human consumption the area has to be classified by the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

A consultation on management measures was held from January to March and subject to a favourable Appropriate Assessment we intend to add these as conditions to the general fishing licence so that as soon as the area is classified by the FSA fishing may commence in a sustainable manner. I understand that the FSA may be in a position to classify the site during April.

School Children Receiving Milk

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail her Department's target to ensure that 100% of school children receive milk; and to give a time-scale for the completion of this target.

(AQW 6810/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I understand fully your desire to increase uptake under the EU School Milk Scheme but have to balance this with what is practical and achievable with the finite funding available.

My Department has been proactive to encourage uptake. This included writing on two occasions to the Chief Executive of each of the five Education and Library Boards and the Principals of all nursery and primary schools in the north of Ireland. In particular the letter outlined the important contribution that milk can make to a healthy balanced diet as well as encouraging those schools that did not provide drinking milk to pupils to consider doing so. I am pleased to advise that in 2007/08 almost 75% of nursery and primary schools in the North participated in the Scheme which compares with less than 40% in the South where a higher rate of national subsidy was paid.

My Department has also been working with the Dairy Council for NI (DCNI). In 2007/08 it was awarded funding under the Regional Food Programme for activity to encourage more schools to participate in the provision of dairy products under the Scheme and to communicate the benefits of taking school milk to parents of all P1 children. As a result a further 13 primary schools agreed to make milk available to pupils under the Scheme.

Recently this funding was complemented by almost €285,000 EU funding towards an information programme which aims to reinforce the role of dairy products in our daily breakfast and to increase uptake of milk under the EU School Milk Scheme. The programme commenced in October 2008 and it will use a mixture of radio and TV (both supported by PR activities), direct mail and school education to achieve its goal.

So the current position is that we are doing what we can to help the dairy sector under the EU School Milk Scheme.

Horses Slaughtered in England

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide statistics or information held by her Department about the number of horses that leave here to be slaughtered in England for sale in the European market.

(AQW 6815/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Records for 2008 show 720 horses were exported from here for slaughter in Britain.

Records for 2009 to date show 190 horses were exported from here for slaughter in Britain.

Single Farm Payments

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development considering issue of Single Farm Payments commenced at the beginning of December 2008, on what date did final farm inspections end for the 2008/09 year.

(AQW 6863/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The final inspection in relation to Single Farm Payment for the 2008/09 year was completed on 19/01/09, and covered the protection of water against nitrate pollution.

Dangerous Dogs Legislation

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she expects to introduce dangerous dogs legislation in the Assembly. (AQO 2432/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Review of the dangerous dogs legislation is drawing to a close.

I expect to have all the relevant evidence presented to me in a matter of weeks. I intend to bring forward proposals for consideration by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in early May. I will then publish my proposals for consultation with key stakeholders.

I will then decide what legislation is needed.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how applicants for the Farm Modernisation Scheme are classified; and (ii) if all the farmers who queued for funding were considered applicants; or only those that were successful in submitting an application. (AQO 2436/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There is no classification of applicants and anyone who submitted an application whether it was over the counter, by proxy or by post is considered an applicant.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the way in which the application process for the Farm Modernisation Scheme has reduced bureaucracy, considering that three out of four of the documents in the application process for the scheme were over ten pages long. (AQO 2437/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My assessment of the application process based on the level of interest that has been expressed by farmers, and the feedback that I and the Department have received is, this programme has achieved reduced bureaucracy, has reduced red tape and the requirements to apply have been easily understood. This is borne out by the very low error rate on applications and the ease with which the applications are being processed.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the decision to accept applications to the Farm Modernisation Programme on a first come first served basis was compliant with the Departmental Equality Impact Assessment for the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. (AQO 2438/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I believe that the first come first served method of accepting applications is compliant with the Equality Impact Assessment for the NI Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. People who work in agriculture and live in rural areas have a right to be treated equally and I am keen to ensure that this issue is at the heart of the Department's work. The opportunity to submit applications was made as accessible as possible over the counter, in person or by proxy, and by post.

In addition, and in keeping with this ethos, you will be aware that I had asked for a review as late as last October to ensure that all stakeholders were on board with this approach. This indeed was the case as no other method was being put forward for consideration which could stand up to audit scrutiny and maintain my desire for reduced bureaucracy. I am content that it was the right thing to do but having said that, I have asked for a review of what happened and further consideration given to future tranches in light of the experiences on this first round.

Woodland: Comprehensive Inventory

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration she has given to creating and maintaining a comprehensive inventory of all woodland. (AQO 2439/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have considered this matter in some detail as outlined in written answers to recent questions on the same subject from Mr D Ford (AQW 5818/09 and AQW 1912/09).

A very significant resource would be required to produce and periodically update a comprehensive woodland inventory. I am unable to commit the level of resource required at this time.

However, I have initiated a process whereby, in partnership with the NI Environment Agency (NIEA), other available woodland information will be collated to provide more comprehensive inventory data, allowing changes in woodland cover over the long term to be more fully captured.

Rural Businesses

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to increase resources for promoting rural businesses. (AQO 2440/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the correspondence her Department has received from the European Commission since the application deadline for the Farm Modernisation Scheme. (AQO 2441/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The deadline for submitting applications under the Farm Modernisation Scheme is 31 March 2009.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the advice she sought and from what sources before introducing the Farm Modernisation Scheme. (AQO 2443/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There are various stages European Programmes go through prior their implementation. This Programme was subject to an ex-ante appraisal, a policy appraisal, it was included in the Programme Document submitted to European Commission, legal advice was sought on a number of issues and it was also subjected to an economic appraisal. All of these stages were consulted on widely both internal and external to my Department and with the Monitoring Committee for the Fund.

Farm Modernisation Scheme

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the statement by the spokesperson for the EU's Agriculture Commissioner, that her Department's method of allocating the Farm Modernisation Scheme was "unacceptable" as it does not comply with the EU rules for offering financial support on an equal basis to all applicants. (AQO 2445/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The statements by the European Commission's spokesman on the 17 February certainly escalated media interest in the Farm Modernisation scheme but did not alter my opinion that the scheme had a selection process in place that met all the EU legislative requirements.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding his Department or its agencies provide to Neighbourhood Renewal areas, broken down by (i) organisation; and (ii) Neighbourhood Renewal area. (AQW 6286/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The requested information, where available, is set out in the attached Annex A.

Annex A

ARTS

The Arts Council Northern Ireland has targeted areas of social deprivation, including Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, through the Re-imagining Communities Programme.

The attached table details funding provided by the Arts Council Northern Ireland to NRAs through its Re-Imaging Communities Programme. Since 2006-2007 to date the Arts Council has awarded a total of £1, 484, 973 to projects within the NRAs through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme.

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	Organisation	Funding (£)	Year
Colin	St Lukes Family Centre	12, 901	2007/08
Crumlin/Ardoyne	Tudor Renewal Area Residents Association	54, 315	2007/08
	Manor St. / Cliftonville Community Group	50, 000	2007/08
	Ardoyne Association	30, 520	2008/09
Falls/Clonard	An Nase	4, 163	2006/07
	An Nase	50, 000	2007/08
Greater Shankill	Greater Shankill Community Council	30, 890	2006/07
	Shankill Womens Centre	49, 999	2007/08
Inner East Belfast	Glentoran Football Club	27, 600	2007/08
	Belfast City Council	28, 325	2007/08
	Belfast City Council	17, 000	2007/08
	Clooney Estate Residents Association	44, 500	2007/08
	East Belfast Historical & Cultural Society	5, 267	2008/09
	East Belfast Historical & Cultural Society	6, 445	2008/09
Inner North Belfast	Tigers Bay Concerned Residents	90, 000	2008/09
	Tigers Bay Concerned Residents	20, 000	2008/09
	Tigers Bay Concerned Residents	15, 000	2008/09
Inner South Belfast	Belfast City Council - Lower Ormeau Residence	16, 000	2007/08
	Markets Developments Association	14, 381	2008/09
South West Belfast	Greater Village Regeneration Trust	57, 895	2006/07
	Arellian Nursery School	4, 570	2007/08

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	Organisation	Funding (£)	Year
Tullycarnet	Charter for Northern Ireland (Tagit)	29,624	2008/09
	Charter for Northern Ireland (Tagit)	46,140	2008/09
Upper Springfield / Whiterock	An Munia Tober	7,010	2007/08
	Upper Springfield Development Company Ltd	8,950	2007/08
	An Munia Tober	21,460	2008/09
	Upper Springfield Development Company Ltd	22,000	2008/09
	Upper Springfield Development Company Ltd	30,000	2008/09
Triax	Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership	46,500	2007/08
	Cathedral Youth Club	44,850	2007/08
	Long Tower Youth and Community Centre	11,000	2007/08
	Creggan Enterprises Ltd	48,400	2007/08
Outer North	Shantallow Community Residents Association	47,800	2008/09
Outer West	Ballymagroarty Hazelbank Community Partnership	5,900	2006/07
Waterside	Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Association	14,650	2006/07
	Waterside Area Partnership	30,000	2008/09
Limavady	Bovalley Community Association	7,447	2007/08
	Roevalley Community Education Forum	7,710	2007/08
Armagh	Armagh City and District Council	12,780	2007/08
	Armagh City and District Council	68,550	2007/08
	Darkley & District Community Association	9,800	2007/08
Ballymena	Dunclug Partnership	5,500	2006/07
	Harryville Partnership Initiative	15,000	2006/07
Bangor	North Down Local Strategy Partnership	10,639	2007/08
	Intra Community Cohesion Project	48,290	2008/09
Brownlow	Craigavon Borough Council	43,587	2007/08
	Drumbeg North & South Residents Association	15,000	2008/09
	Craigavon Borough Council	17,000	2008/09
Coalisland	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	22,550	2007/08
Downpatrick	Ballyhornan and District Community Assc	15,000	2006/07

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	Organisation	Funding (£)	Year
Dungannon	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	10,931	2007/08
	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	81,314	2007/08
Newry	Newry & Mourne District Council	49,820	2007/08

In addition, a total of £46,778 has been awarded through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme to District Councils and other organisations for projects which each cover several NRAs.

District Council	Organisation	Funding (£)	Year
Belfast City Council	Citywide Feasibility Study - large - this covers several neighbourhood renewal areas.	22,978	2007/08
	Chinese Welfare Assc	5,500	2007/08
City Council of Londonderry	Art and Re-imaging Feasibility Study - large - covers several neighbourhood renewal areas	18,300	2008/09

The Arts Council Northern Ireland also awarded the City Council of Londonderry a grant of £180,254 in January 2005 under the Art of Regeneration Programme which works closely with the Re-imaging projects.

FORAS NA GAEILGE

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	Organisation	Funding (£)
Crumlin/Ardoyne	Club Óige Mhachaire Botháin	3,480
Inner South Belfast	An Droichead	2,900
Falls/Clonard	Ionad Uíbh Eachach	3,500
Inner North Belfast	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	2,370
Inner South Belfast	An Droichead	3,430
Colin	Scoil na Fuisioige	3,500
Falls/Clonard	Coláiste Mhuire	1,500
Crumlin/Ardoyne	Club Óige Machaire Bóthain	22,469

GAELTACHT QUARTER

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	Organisation	Funding (£)	Year
Falls / Clonard	Gaeltacht Quarter Development Company	538,000	2006
	Gaeltacht Quarter Development Company	500,000	2007

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) to outline his Department's strategy for contributing to Neighbourhood Renewal objectives; (ii) what targeted measures are in place to deliver the objectives; and (iii) what funding is available to meet them. (AQW 6287/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The work of my Department and its arms length bodies, both in areas designated as Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) and throughout Northern Ireland makes a real contribution to providing better opportunities for those in disadvantaged areas.

Examples of work my Department is doing in the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland, including in NRAs, are set out below:

- (i) The Arts Council Northern Ireland has specifically targeted areas of social deprivation, including NRAs, through its Re-imaging Communities Programme. One of the strategic themes of the programme is 'Working to complement the existing Neighbourhood Renewal programmes and policy'. The Arts Council Northern Ireland has been administering the Re-Imaging Communities programme over the period 2006/07 to the present.
- (ii) When it launched in July 2006, the programme aimed to deliver 60 to 80 community-based projects within three years, with a spend of £3million. This number of projects has been exceeded, with 112 projects funded to date.

The objective of the scheme is to help people feel part of the communities in which they live by enhancing the physical and natural environment; and removing displays of sectarian aggression and intimidation.

- (iii) The Arts Council Northern Ireland has awarded a total of £1, 484, 973 to projects within the NRAs through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme since it opened in July 2006.

In addition, a total of £46, 778 has been awarded through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme to District Councils and other organisations for projects which each cover several NRAs. The Arts Council Northern Ireland also awarded the City Council of Londonderry a grant of £180, 254 in January 2005 under the Art of Regeneration Programme which works closely with the Re-imaging projects.

The Arts Council Northern Ireland suspended the Re-imaging Communities Programme on 19 June 2008 as the budget had been assigned or earmarked in full. Following discussions with the Arts Council Northern Ireland, my Department submitted a bid in the September Monitoring Round exercise. On 3 November 2008, the Finance Minister, Nigel Dodds announced an additional £500k for the Re-Imaging Communities Programme in the September Monitoring Allocations.

- (i) Sport Northern Ireland's proposed Active Communities Investment Programme has been designed to employ, deploy and train a network of full time and part time sports coaches and leaders to deliver activities in community and club settings across Northern Ireland, with a view of increasing participation in sport and physical recreation, especially among under represented groups.
- (ii) Sport Northern Ireland is working in partnership with key stakeholders, e.g. Community/Voluntary, Statutory and Governing Bodies of Sport to achieve the following Programme Outcomes:
 - the creation of a network of community sports coaches and leaders to deliver sport and recreational activities in sports club and community settings;
 - increased participation in sport and physical recreation among under represented groups including young people, older people, women and girls, people with a disability, people from minority ethnic groups and people from socio-economically deprived groups;
 - the provision of opportunities that support lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation in sports club and community settings; and,
 - the development of effective working partnerships within and between district councils, governing bodies of sport, schools, sports clubs, and statutory, community and voluntary organisations.
- (iii) The programme is open to applications from 11 consortia of district councils as outlined in Model 11b of the Review of Public Administration Consultation (March 2005), and will be implemented between 1 April 2009- 31 March 2014.

Each consortium has been allocated an investment amount from the total available of circa £13m, based on population, health deprivation (need) and area. It is anticipated that this investment programme will create

approximately 100 full time equivalent coaches who will deliver sport and physical activity across each consortium including NRAs.

Ireland Rugby Team

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he would consider holding a reception for the Ireland Rugby Team at Parliament Buildings. (AQW 6525/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I have congratulated the Irish rugby team including current and former Ulster players; Stephen Ferris, Rory Best, Tom Court, Paddy Wallace and Tommy Bowe following their momentous victory over Wales in Cardiff to win the 6 Nations Championship, the Triple Crown and the Grand Slam and I propose to discuss with the Ulster Rugby Football Union any arrangements for marking this achievement.

Northern Ireland Football Team

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he would issue a statement to congratulate the NI football team on the victory over Poland on Saturday, 28 March 2009. (AQW 6791/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: It would not be appropriate for me to issue a statement of congratulations every time the Northern Ireland team win a match. However I would hope to be in the position of being able to issue a statement of congratulations to the Northern Ireland football team when they have successfully qualified for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

I will continue to support the Northern Ireland football team throughout the duration of the qualifying competition and wish them every success.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Retired Teachers

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education when her Department provided the latest guidance to schools about the re-employment of recently retired teachers. (AQW 5598/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): I mí na Samhna 2006, spreag an Roinn fostóirí, nuair a bhí folúntais le líonadh - folúntais sealadacha san áireamh, chun tosaíocht a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí nua chailithe nó do mhúinteoirí cleachta a bhí ag iarraidh filleadh chuig an fhostaíocht. (Imlitreach na Roinne 2006/23).

The Department last exhorted employers in November 2006 to give preference to newly qualified or experienced teachers seeking to return to employment when filling vacancies, including those of a temporary nature (Departmental Circular 2006/23). This reinforced earlier advice given in December 1999 (Circular 1999/30) and August 1991 (Circular 1991/34).

Reports have been provided at intervals to Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools since 1994 to assist them in monitoring the re-employment of retired teachers.

Capital Projects

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education to list all capital projects that have been delayed for more than 6 months. (AQW 6071/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sonraithe i dTábla A thíos, príomhthionscadail caipitil atá i mbun pleanála agus a bhfuil moill níos mó ná sé mhí ag baint leo. Sonraíonn Tábla B cúig thionscadal a bhfuil an mhoill ama is faide orthu agus fad measta na moille.

Table A below details major capital projects in planning that have been delayed for more than six months. Table B details the five projects that have been delayed by the longest period of time and the estimated length of delay.

The projects identified have been subject to delay for a variety of reasons including site acquisition issues; review of projected long term enrolments; revised plans required; revisions to economic appraisals; and a legal challenge to the Major Works Construction Framework. The position has been assessed against the stage they might otherwise have expected to have reached by now.

TABLE A

School	Details of Project
St Mary's P.S. Portglenone	New school on extended site
St Joseph's P.S. Carryduff	New school on extended site
St Patrick's G.S. Downpatrick	New school on existing site
Our Lady & St Patrick's College	New school on existing site
Lagan College	Extension & Refurbishment
Tor Bank Special School	New school on new site
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	New school on existing site
Loreto G.S. Omagh	New school on existing site
Lurgan College	New school on existing site
Portadown College	New school on existing site
Methodist College, Belfast	Extension & Refurbishment
Omagh Integrated Primary School	New school on new site
Holy Family P.S. Magherafelt	New school on extended site
Carrick P.S. Warrenpoint	New school on extended site
St Columba's P.S. Straw	New school on new site
Magherafelt H.S.	New school on existing site
Whitehouse P.S. Newtownabbey	New school on existing site
St Clare's Abbey P.S. Newry	New school on extended site
Bangor Grammar School	New school on new site
Magherafelt P.S.	New school on new site
St Colman's P.S. Lambeg	New school on extended site
St Teresa's P.S. Lurgan	New school on extended site
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	New school on extended site
St Conor's P.S. Omagh	New school on extended site

TABLE B

School	Details of Project	Estimated Delay
Methodist College, Belfast	Extension & Refurbishment	23 months
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	New school on existing site	20 months
Loreto G.S. Omagh	New school on existing site	20 months
Holy Family P.S. Magherafelt	New school on extended site	17 months
Magherafelt P.S.	New school on new site	17 months

Capital Projects

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education to list the five capital projects that have been delayed for the longest period of time and by how long each has been delayed. (AQW 6072/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sonraíthe i dTábla A thíos, príomhthionscadail caipitil atá i mbun pleanála agus a bhfuil moill níos mó ná sé mhí ag baint leo. Sonraíonn Tábla B cúig thionscadal a bhfuil an mhoill ama is faide orthu agus fad measta na moille.

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Tor Bank Special School	New school on new site
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	New school on existing site
Loreto G.S. Omagh	New school on existing site
Lurgan College	New school on existing site
Portadown College	New school on existing site
Methodist College, Belfast	Extension & Refurbishment
Omagh Integrated Primary School	New school on new site
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Holy Family P.S. Magherafelt	New school on extended site	17 months
Magherafelt P.S.	New school on new site	17 months

Transfer 2010

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education if the criteria proposed for Transfer 2010 has been the subject of equality screening; and if so, to detail what the outcome was. (AQW 6195/09)

Minister of Education: I mo ráiteas chuig an Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009, rinne mé gealltanais le haird a thabhairt ar chomhionannas sna moltaí a bhain leis na Treoir 2010.

In my statement to the Assembly on 2 February 2009 I made a commitment to equality proof the recommendations contained within the Transfer 2010 guidance. That work is ongoing, and will involve the publication of an Equality Impact Assessment document for consultation. As part of the consultation process the Department of Education intends engaging with the Joint Consultative Forum, which provides a formal working link between public authorities in the education sector and the community and voluntary and trade union sectors and statutory equality authorities namely, the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council and the Human Rights Commission.

Transfer 2010

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education if the criteria proposed for pupil Transfer 2010 has been discussed with the Equality Commission; and if so, what advice was given by the Commission. (AQW 6207/09)

Minister of Education: I mo ráiteas chuig an Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009, rinne mé gealltanais le haird a thabhairt ar chomhionannas sna moltaí a bhain leis na Treoir 2010.

In my statement to the Assembly on 2 February 2009 I made a commitment to equality proof the recommendations contained within the Transfer 2010 guidance. That work is ongoing, and will involve the publication of an Equality Impact Assessment document for consultation. As part of the consultation process the Department of Education intends engaging with the Joint Consultative Forum, which provides a formal working link between public authorities in the education sector and the community and voluntary and trade union sectors and statutory equality authorities namely, the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council and the Human Rights Commission.

Hope Centre in Ballymena

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education if funding could be provided to support the Hope Centre in Ballymena to help it to continue to educate young people about the misuse and abuse of drugs. (AQW 6218/09)

Minister of Education: Is mar chuid den sainchuram atá ag an Roinn Sláinte Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábhailteacta Póiblí é an beartas um drugaí agus alcól, agus an cistiú leis an bheartas seo a fheidhmiú.

Drugs and alcohol policy and the funding to implement that policy sit within the remit of Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety. My Department does not provide funding directly to any organisation to provide drugs and alcohol education.

However, schools and youth services have an important role to play in educating all our children and young people about the effects on the body of legal and illegal substances and the risks and consequences of their misuse. A number of steps have been taken to help schools to deliver this 'universal' drugs and alcohol education.

In May 2004, the Department issued Circular 2004/09, along with comprehensive guidance produced by a CCEA-led working group, to all schools on drawing up a drugs and alcohol policy and drug and alcohol education programme and on managing suspected drug and/or alcohol related incidents.

The revised curriculum includes a new area of Personal Development (PD) & Mutual Understanding/Learning for Life and Work, which provides opportunities for young people to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to deal with issues such as drugs and alcohol.

In addition, the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have Drugs Education Officers to provide support to schools and my Department allocates funding to each ELBs and the Youth Council to support youth provision. Each of the boards issues funding for frontline youth provision which includes addressing, as part of an overall youth development programme, drugs and alcohol awareness sessions for young people.

Lislagan Primary School

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education what action the North Eastern Education and Library Board will take in relation to car parking facilities at Lislagan Primary School after the recent meeting with stakeholders. (AQW 6241/09)

Minister of Education: I ndiaidh cruinnithe ar 26 Feabhra ina raibh oifigigh ó Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt páirteach ann, cuireadh in iúl don scoil gur chóir di foirm iarratais ar mhionobreacha a chur isteach chuig an NEELB maidir le háiseanna pairceála.

Following a meeting on 26 February involving North Eastern Education and Library Board officials the school was advised that it should submit a minor works application form to the NEELB in respect of car-parking facilities. The Board will consider the request in due course, along with other competing priorities for minor works and the resources available.

Integrated Schools

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on the progress of her review of the viability criteria for integrated schools. (AQW 6447/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an Roinn Oideachais tiomanta do théarmaí an athbhreithnithe agus tá siad faoi mheasúnú agam le m'oifigigh. Mar a léiríodh sa fhreagra a thug mé ar AQO 1786/09 agus ar AQW 4148/09, a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 23 Eanáir agus 30 Eanáir 2009 faoi seach, tá sé ar intinn agam an t-athbhreithniú a chur i gcrích i mbliana.

I am considering with officials the terms of the review to which I have committed the Department of Education. As indicated in my response to AQO 1786/09 and AQW 4148/09 published in the Official Report on 23 January and 30 January 2009 respectively it is my intention to complete the review this year.

The necessity for an equality impact assessment will be considered once the terms of the review have been established.

Integrated Schools

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether she has carried out an equality impact assessment for her review of the viability criteria for integrated schools, and if so to provide details. (AQW 6448/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an Roinn Oideachais tiomanta do théarmaí an athbhreithnithe agus tá siad faoi mheasúnú agam le m'oifigigh. Mar a léiríodh sa fhreagra a thug mé ar AQO 1786/09 agus ar AQW 4148/09, a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 23 Eanáir agus 30 Eanáir 2009 faoi seach, tá sé ar intinn agam an t-athbhreithniú a chur i gcrích i mbliana.

I am considering with officials the terms of the review to which I have committed the Department of Education. As indicated in my response to AQO 1786/09 and AQW 4148/09 published in the Official Report on 23 January and 30 January 2009 respectively it is my intention to complete the review this year.

The necessity for an equality impact assessment will be considered once the terms of the review have been established.

Education and Library Boards

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education (i) what funds are held by Education and Library Boards in contingency budgets; and (ii) what is the purpose of these contingency budgets. (AQW 6454/09)

Minister of Education: Táispeántear thíos na cistí a choinníonn an cúig Bhórd Oideachais agus Leabharlainne i mbuiséid teagmhasacha don bhliain 2008/09:

Funds held in contingency budgets by the 5 Education and Library Boards for the 2008/09 year is as follows:

	LMS Contingency Provision	Curriculum Reserve Support Fund
BELB	£0	£0
NEELB	£580k	£ 0
SEELB	£807.8k	£100k
SELB	£834k	£158k
WELB	£339.1k	£19.2k

The funds set aside for contingency purposes are utilised during the year depending on need. Funds not utilised can be used to meet other pressures.

LMS Contingency Funds are used to correct any significant errors in the application of the formula budget, provide for emergency costs, deal with changes in the characteristics of the school including in-year growth in pupil numbers, and other circumstances which the funding authority judges exceptional.

Curriculum Reserve Support Funding can be made available to schools that claim support for funding against criteria set out by the relevant funding authority. This includes assistance to phase in a reduction in teaching staff, avoidance of a reduction in teaching staff caused by a short term dip in enrolments, additional support for schools under a rationalisation proposal/study or development proposal, a need to maintain essential curriculum provision, and the appointment or retention of teachers from a particular community background in the case of integrated schools.

Fleming Fulton School

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education what plans there are, when the Education and Skills Authority replaces the five Education and Library Boards, to consider granting Fleming Fulton School regional 'centre of excellence' status in light of its free provision of the LILAC project to all schools. (AQW 6475/09)

Minister of Education: Níl stádas dá leithéid ar fáil faoi láthair agus níl sé beartaithe go mbeidh sé ar fáil do scoileanna speisialta.

There is no such status currently available or planned to be available to special schools.

The current policy review of special educational needs and inclusion within the Department has considered issues within the existing framework around unacceptable levels of bureaucracy attached to the statutory assessment process, the need for early identification, prompt interventions and capacity building in mainstream schools for teachers of children with special educational needs. The future role of special schools in the sharing of expertise between and across school sectors is being considered as part of the Review. It will be a matter for the Chief Executive of the Education Skills Authority if he wishes to consider how the work of the LILAC project might be taken forward in the future.

Rathmore Primary School

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to provide a new school at Rathmore Primary School in Bangor. (AQW 6523/09)

Minister of Education: Tugadh le fios ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt nach bhfuil plan ar bith aige, faoi láthair, le scoil nua a thógáil ar son Rathmore Primary School.

The South Eastern Education & Library Board has advised that it has no plans, at this time, for a new build for Rathmore Primary School.

Education Welfare Service

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 7060/08, to detail the number of pupils referred to the Education Welfare Service for truancy problems, broken down by (i) household; (ii) social class, or socio-economic status, in each of the last five years. (AQW 6587/09)

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

The Department does not collect the requested information.

As stated in my previous answer, information about referrals by schools to the Education Welfare Service because of concerns about attendance, is collected from each of the Education and Library Boards on an annual basis. These statistics are not broken down in the manner which the member requests.

Referrals can be for a variety of reasons, which include truancy but not exclusively so.

Statistics on the number of referrals for non-attendance are published annually on the Department's website at www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils_parents-pg/21-pupils_parents-non-attendance_pg.htm.

The table below shows the number of pupils referred for non-attendance by schools to the Education Welfare Service in each of the last five years.

School Year	Number of pupils
2003/04	8,041
2004/05	5,633
2005/06	4,467
2006/07	5,083
2007/08	4,275

Donaghadee High School

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education if she will consult with the Minister for Regional Development about the road problems around Donaghadee High School, before any decision is made on the future of the site. (AQW 6593/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt go ndéanfaidh siad teagmháil go díreach leis an tSeirbhís Pleanála, sula ndéanfar aon obair ag Donaghadee High School lena dtuairimí a fháil maidir le haon úsáid mholta eile a mbainfear as Donaghadee High School. Ba chóir go sainaithneofaí aon fhadhbanna bóthair a d'fhéadfaí bheith ann tríd an teagmháil seo.

The South-Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that it will liaise directly with the Planning Service, prior to carrying out any work at Donaghadee High School in order to get their views of any proposed alternative use of Donaghadee High School. This liaison should identify any potential road problems.

Primary Schools

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education what action she has taken to encourage more males to become teachers in primary education. (AQW 6611/09)

Minister of Education: Tá iarrtha ag mo Roinn, agus iarrfaidh mo Roinn, ar sholáthraithe cúrsaí in oideachas tosaigh múinteoirí (ITE) aird a tharraingt ar an éagothroime inscne sa ghairm bheatha, in earnáil na mbunscoileanna go háirithe.

My Department has encouraged, and will continue to encourage, all of the providers of initial teacher education (ITE) courses to draw attention to the gender imbalance in the profession, particularly in the primary sector.

As a result, the Higher Education Institutions are ensuring that males are well represented in publicity materials for their ITE courses and are targeting all-male schools and male groups in mixed schools for careers talks and presentations. They also meet regularly with careers teachers and senior staff to seek their help in encouraging males to apply for all ITE courses.

My Department is fully committed to integrating equality and diversity into its core priorities and functions. I recognise not only the importance of promoting equality, including gender equality, within education itself, but also the contribution that education can make to promoting equality throughout society.

Primary Schools

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how many primary schools have no male teachers in their staff. (AQW 6612/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an freagra le fáil sa tábla thíos.

The answer is given in the table below.

PRIMARY¹ SCHOOLS WITH NO MALE TEACHERS, 2007-2008

Number of primary schools with no male teachers	Total number of primary schools
255	884

¹ Includes the preparatory departments of grammar schools.

Primary Schools

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage of teachers in primary schools in the controlled and maintained sectors who are (i) male; and (ii) female. (AQW 6613/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an freagra le fáil sa tábla thíos.

The answer is given in the table below.

TEACHERS IN CONTROLLED AND CATHOLIC MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND BY SEX, 2007-2008

Sector	Total number of teachers	Number (percentage) of male teachers	Number (percentage) of female teachers
Controlled ¹ sector	4,124	522 (12.7%)	3,602 (87.3%)
Catholic maintained sector	3,775	713 (18.9%)	3,062 (81.1%)

¹ Includes the preparatory departments of controlled grammar schools.

Secondary School Pupils

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education (i) what percentage of secondary school pupils have continued to study history up to GCSE level; and (ii) to detail the results, in each of the last five years. (AQW 6615/09)

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas ar fáil san fhormaid a iarradh, ach sonraítear sa tábla thíos céatadán na ndaltaí i mbliain 12 a iontráladh ar stair GCSE agus a ngnóthachtálacha.

The information is not available in the format requested, however the table below details the percentage of year 12 pupils entered for GCSE history and their achievements.

Year	(i) Percentage of year 12 pupils entered for GCSE history	(ii) Percentage of entries in history achieving grades *A- C	(ii) Percentage of entries in history achieving grades *A- G
2007/08	31	78	98
2006/07	32	78	98
2005/06	34	78	98
2004/05	33	78	98
2003/04	34	76	98

Source: Forvus

Post Primary Transfer

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on each of the available options for Transfer (i) 2010; and (ii) 2011. (AQW 6661/09)

Minister of Education: Beidh costais ar an scála céanna i gceist leis na socrúithe d'Aistriú 2010, a bhí bunaithe ar an Treoir a foilsíodh ar 2 Feabhra 2009, agus a bhí na costais a tabhaíodh sna blianta roimhe, agus is é an difear is mó eatarthu ná an easpa caiteachais ar riaradh teiste lárchomhordaithe a d'éascaigh 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.

The cost of work carried out by CCEA on a test commissioned as a contingency is around £100,000. In the absence of Executive agreement on regulations for post primary Transfer 2010, around £9,000 has been spent on the printing and distribution of guidance material for schools and parents.

Excluding the administration of a 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.

Arrangements for Transfer 2011 have yet to be determined.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education what role InCAS (Interactive Computerised Assessment System) will play in assisting parents and schools in post primary transfer. (AQW 6662/09)

Minister of Education: Ní bhaineann measúnúithe InCAS le haistriú daltaí ón bhunscoil chuig an iar-bhunscoil ar chor ar bith. Ceapadh mar mheasúnúithe diagnóiseacha iad le cuidiú a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí an teagasc a phleanáil le freastal ar riachtanais aitheanta na ndaltaí.

InCAS assessments are not in any way related to the transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary school. They are designed as diagnostic assessments to help teachers plan their teaching to meet the identified needs of pupils.

School Building Projects

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to how many school building projects are underway in the Upper Bann constituency. (AQW 6679/09)

Minister of Education: Tá seacht mórthionscadal tógála i dtoghcheantar na Banna Uachtaraí faoi láthair. Tá sé thionscadal acu ag céimeanna éagsúla pleanála agus tá ceann amháin acu á thógáil faoi láthair.

There are currently seven major building projects in the Upper Bann constituency. Six are at various stages of planning and one is currently under construction.

St Malachy's Primary School

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to provide a new school building for St Malachy's Primary School, Bangor. (AQW 6684/09)

Minister of Education: Is ceist í pleanáil eastát na scoileanna faoi chothabháil a bhaineann le Comhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil (CCMS) sa chéad dul síos.

The planning of the maintained schools estate is a matter for the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) in the first instance. A potential capital major works scheme for St Malachy's Primary School is one of a number of schemes that CCMS has indicated it intends to pursue with the Department in the next number of months. The possibility of a new school building for St Malachy's is therefore at a very early stage of consideration.

Rebuilding of Schools

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education how many schools have been (a) built (b) closed; and (c) rebuilt, in the last 10 years. (AQW 6702/09)

Minister of Education: Le deich mbliana anuas, (a) tógadh 20 scoil nua, (b) druideadh 70 scoil, agus (c) aththógadh 98 scoil. Is scoileanna iad na scoileanna nua thógtha a osclaíodh leis an éileamh ar áiteanna i gceantar a fhreastal nó le cónascadh dhá scoil nó níos mó a éascú.

In the last 10 years there have been (a) 20 new schools built (b) 70 schools closed, and (c) 98 schools rebuilt. The new schools built are schools that were opened to meet demand for places in an area or to facilitate the amalgamation of two or more schools.

Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Education (i) is there a register of interests for the staff of the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team; and (ii) is it included on the ESAIT website and if not, if a copy could be placed in the Assembly library. (AQW 6705/09)

Minister of Education: Tá foireann ón Roinn Oideachais agus foireann ar iasacht ón cúig Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna), ó CCMS agus ó CCEA ar Fhoireann Forfheidmithe an ESA. Bíonn an fhoireann seo faoi réir chód iompraíochta a n-eagraíochtaí féin, ó thaobh dearbhaithe leasa de.

The ESA Implementation Team comprises staff from the Department of Education and staff seconded from the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), CCMS and CCEA. These staff are subject to the code of conduct of their respective organisation with regard to declaration of interests.

There is no separate register of interests for the ESA Implementation Team. The Chief Executive Designate of ESA, Gavin Boyd, completes an annual declaration which is included in the DE annual accounts. The Education and Library Boards, CCEA and CCMS all maintain a register of interests which are available to the public by written request.

Strandtown Primary School

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Education when the start date is for the rebuild of the Strandtown Primary School as part of the Phase 2 of the Belfast Education and Library Board strategic partnership arrangement capital build programme. (AQW 6706/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mo Roinn ag déanamh breithnithe ar an bhreithmheas leasaithe eacnamaíochta don scéim mhóroibreacha caipitil ag Strandtown Primary School agus tá sí i mbun oibre le cuidiú le Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste chun teacht ar réiteach, a sholáthróidh an luach ar airgead is fearr is féidir. Ní féidir, mar sin de, dáta deifnídeach tosaigh a thabhairt ag an am seo.

My Department is currently considering the revised economic appraisal for the major capital works scheme for Strandtown Primary School and is working to assist the Belfast Education and Library Board in arriving at an outcome, which will be the best value for money solution possible. It is, therefore, not possible to offer a definitive start date at this time.

Glenwood Primary School

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Education when the start date is for the rebuild of the Glenwood Primary School as part of the Phase 2 of the Belfast Education and Library Board strategic partnership arrangement capital build programme. (AQW 6707/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mo Roinn ag déanamh breithnithe ar an bhreithmheas leasaithe eacnamaíochta don scéim mhóroibreacha caipitil ag Glenwood Primary School agus tá sí i mbun oibre le cuidiú le Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste chun teacht ar réiteach, a sholáthróidh an luach ar airgead is fearr is féidir. Ní féidir, mar sin de, dáta deifnídeach tosaigh a thabhairt ag an am seo.

My Department is currently considering the revised economic appraisal for the major capital works scheme for Glenwood Primary School and is working to assist the Belfast Education and Library Board in arriving at an outcome, which will be the best value for money solution possible. It is, therefore, not possible to offer a definitive start date at this time.

Integrated Schools

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education how the failure to follow best employment practice affects the charitable status of an integrated school. (AQW 6708/09)

Minister of Education: I ndiaidh don Roinn Oideachais dul i gcomhairle leis an Roinn Forbartha Sóisialta, cuireadh in iúl dom, as siocair gur ceist bainistíochta seachas ceist carthanachta í nach bhfuil dea-chleachtais fostaíochta i bhfeidhm i scoil imeasctha faoi chothabháil stáit, ní dhóchúil go mbeadh aon tionchar aige seo ar stádas carthanachta na scoile.

After consultation with the Department of Social Development, I am advised that as the failure of best employment practices within a grant maintained integrated school is a management and not a charity matter, this would not be likely to have any impact on the school's charitable status.

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what the consequences are for a grant maintained integrated college if it fails to follow the code for practice that it signed with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. (AQW 6709/09)

Minister of Education: Ní éilíonn an Roinn Oideachais ar scoileanna imeasctha glacadh le Ráiteas Prionsabal an NICIE ná é a shíniú. Is ceist í a shocraíonn na scoileanna féin cé acu atá siad ag iarraidh glacadh leis.

The Department of Education does not require an integrated school to sign up to the NICIE Statement of Principles. It is a matter for individual schools to decide if they wish to do so.

Integrated Schools

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education if employees of integrated schools are entitled to parity of esteem with colleagues in (i) the Education and Library Board; (ii) Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; and (iii) Irish speaking sectors of education who are in similar jobs. (AQW 6710/09)

Minister of Education: Is mór agam an obair a dhéanann fostaithe i ngach scoil, is cuma cén earnáil ina bhfuil siad. Bíonn ról ríthábhachtach acu in oideachas na ndaoine óga inár scoileanna.

I appreciate and value the work of employees in all schools, irrespective of sector. They play a vital role in the education of the young people in our schools.

Grant-maintained integrated schools are employers in their own right and it is wholly the responsibility of individual Boards of Governors to appoint all staff. It is fair to say, however, that grant-maintained integrated schools adopt the principle of parity with employees of other sectors in relation to the pay and terms and conditions of employment of their staff.

Board of Governors

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what consequences Board of Governors face if they are in breach of the Nolan Principles. (AQW 6711/09)

Minister of Education: Ní riachtanais ar leith iad The Nolan Principles a bhaineann le ceapachán, le hainmniúchán nó le toghchán ball de Bhord Gobhanóirí na scoile. Bíonn socrúithe eile i gceist le leasa bainistíochta na scoileanna deontaschúnta a chosaint.

The Nolan Principles are not a specific requirement associated with the appointment, nomination or election of the members of a school Board of Governors. Alternative arrangements apply to safeguard the management interests of grant-aided schools.

Before taking up office, a school governor must sign a declaration of acceptance of membership which requires him/her to carry out their duties in accordance with the scheme of management approved by the Department for the school.

This scheme includes provisions which disqualify governors from service and which are designed to protect the school against any conflict of interest on the part of the school's governors. Also, systems of audit and accountability exist to safeguard the proper use and management of funds and procurement procedures.

Youth Workers

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 6288/09, how many (i) youth clubs; (ii) youth workers; (iii) detached youth workers; and (iv) young people are the Belfast Education and Library Board area, broken down by (a) north; (b) south; (c) east; and (d) west Belfast. (AQW 6730/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas seo a leanas don bhliain 2008/09 curtha ar fáil ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste.

The Chief Executive of the Belfast Education and Library Board has provided the following information for 2008/09.

Pursuant to the answer given to AQW 6288/09, information has also been included on the financial support provided by the BELB from DE funding for youth work and the number of small voluntary groups (SVG) registered with the BELB by constituency area.

		South	East	North	West
Estimated financial support for youth work (£) (i)		633,204	462,937	669,987	1,188,802
Number of youth clubs/ units/ SVG (ii)	Full time units	4	3	6	11
	Part time units	8	5	4	13
	SVG	44	61	54	36
Number of youth workers (iii)	Full time workers	5	5	8	15
	Part time workers	45	28	41	98
Number of full time detached youth workers (iv)		2	0	2	8
Number of young people enrolled/ registered in youth clubs/units/SVGs		4,916	7,213	6,578	9,840

Notes

- (i) This relates to DE funding for the youth service, including intervention work and community relations programmes.
- (ii) This relates to youth clubs/ units/ small voluntary groups registered with the Boards and is the latest information available. Not all registered clubs/ units receive funding through the Board. Small voluntary groups will include uniformed, and small community and church based youth groups.
- (iii) This relates to full-time and part-time youth workers funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board from the DE youth and community relations budget.
- (iv) This relates to detached youth workers funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board from the DE youth and community relations budget. There are no part-time detached youth workers

Initial Teacher Education Provision

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education, given the proposed merger of Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis University College, what assessment she has made of the effect of this merger on the allocation of initial teacher education places. (AQW 6767/09)

Minister of Education: Is soláthar ar leith é an soláthar a chuireann an dá institiúid ar fáil maidir le hOideachas Tosaigh do Mhúinteoirí (ITE).

The nature of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision at the two institutions is distinct.

The School of Education at Queen's University Belfast provides for students who, following completion of an undergraduate course, wish to enter ITE through the one-year Post-Primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course, whilst Stranmillis University College largely provides for students who wish to enter ITE straight from school through the four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) course.

As part of the annual process of determining intakes, I carefully consider the needs of these students, the schools' sector and of the ITE providers in terms of ensuring a viable and vibrant ITE sector that meets the needs of our pluralist education system, and will continue to do so in the event of a merger between Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis University College.

Initial Teacher Education Provision

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education to confirm if there will be a reduction in the number of initial teacher education places allocated to Queen's University, Belfast, following the merger with Stranmillis University College. (AQW 6768/09)

Minister of Education: Is soláthar ar leith é an soláthar a chuireann an dá institiúid ar fáil maidir le hOideachas Tosaigh do Mhúinteoirí (ITE).

The nature of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision at the two institutions is distinct.

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As part of the annual process of determining intakes, I carefully consider the needs of these students, the schools' sector and of the ITE providers in terms of ensuring a viable and vibrant ITE sector that meets the needs of our pluralist education system, and will continue to do so in the event of a merger between Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis University College.

School Meals

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education if she will ensure that Roma children receiving free school meals will continue to receive them after April. (AQW 6812/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an Roinn ag déanamh breithnithe ar na critéir cáilitheachta do bhéilí saora scoile a leathnú faoi láthair le go n-áireofar na daltaí sin a gcreideann an scoil gur 'páistí le riachtanais' iad agus tá an Roinn i mbun phlé leis an Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí ó thaobh na mionshocruithe riaracháin de.

The Department is presently considering extending the eligibility criteria for free school meals to include those pupils a school believes to be "children in need" and is in discussions with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding the detailed administrative arrangements for this.

It is likely that a number of the Roma children currently enrolled at schools here will come within this definition and would therefore be entitled to free school meals.

Children in Need

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education to detail her Department's guidance in relation to those children categorised as 'children in need'. (AQW 6813/09)

Minister of Education: Baineann seirbhísí sláinte agus sóisialta úsáid as an chatagóiriú 'Páistí le riachtanais' agus aithnítear go bhfuil páistí agus daoine óga ann a bhfuil tacaíocht nó seirbhísí de dhíth orthu de bhreis ar na príomhsheirbhísí a sholáthraítear don phobal i gcoitinne.

The categorisation of 'children in need' is used by health and social services and recognises that there are children and young people who require support or services in addition to those mainstream services provided to the entire population.

While the categorisation of 'children in need' is not used within the education sector, it is recognised that many children and young people do experience barriers to learning and require additional or specialist support to sustain their engagement with the learning process. A range of advice and guidance documents have been issued to schools on issues such as promoting positive behaviour and tackling bullying and these have included advice on supporting vulnerable children and young people.

Further as vulnerable pupils with new support requirements are identified appropriate action is taken, such as that outlined in the response to AQW 6812/2009.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Queen's University

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning the religious breakdown of students attending Queen's University, Belfast. (AQW 6389/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): Information on religion is only collected for Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students studying at NI institutions.

On that basis, the number of NI domiciled students enrolled in courses at Queen's University, Belfast, broken down by religious background in 2007/08 academic year is detailed in the table below:

Religion	Number
Protestant	6,735
Catholic	8,245
Other	1,105
Not Known/available	3,540
Total	19,630

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 and due to rounding the sum of figures in each row may not match the total.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and has a high non-response rate.

Apprentices

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans he has to promote women in apprenticeships. (AQW 6390/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Historically the male to female ratio for apprenticeships has typically been 70:30. The first year review of Training for Success in 2008, resulted in a revised flagship provision for apprentices entitled ApprenticeshipsNI. Improvements included the introduction of an all age programme, coupled with capacity for those on reduced hour employment contracts of 21 hours per week.

Collectively these changes have had a positive impact with 46% of Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices at 4 March 2009 being female. This compares favourably to 32% on the Jobskills Modern Apprenticeships at 31st August 2007.

The Department will continue through its future marketing campaign and work with Sector Skills Councils to further promote the ApprenticeshipsNI programme and its availability to all.

Apprentices

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he is considering how the public sector can be used to assist the retention of apprentices during the economic downturn. (AQW 6392/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Although the Department has made the ApprenticeshipsNI provision open to a wide range of participants, employees within the Public Sector and Local Authorities have historically been excluded in order to focus the funding available on these developments in the private sector. However, the Department is presently engaged with DFP's Central Personnel Group (CPG) and Government Skills, the Sector Skills Council for the public sector, to explore apprenticeship programmes in the NI Civil Service. Consideration will also be given to the broader public sector including local authorities and health trusts.

Southern Regional College

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students in the Southern Regional College who are engaged on courses above level 3. (AQW 6433/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year, the latest year for which validated data is available, there were 1,701 student enrolments on courses above Level 3 at the Southern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record.

Southern Regional College

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much income the Southern Regional College and its constituent colleges made from non-governmental sources, in the past three years. (AQW 6434/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Southern Regional College was formed on 1 August 2007 following the amalgamation of Upper Bann Institute, Newry and Kilkeel Institute and Armagh College. The total income received by the Southern Regional College, and its constituent colleges, from non-governmental sources for the three years from 2005/06 to 2007/08 was £13,307,000.

Southern Regional College

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many full cost recovery courses are operating currently in the Southern Regional College. (AQW 6436/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year, the latest year for which validated data is available, there were 500 full cost recovery courses operating at the Southern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

South Eastern Regional College

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students in the South Eastern Regional College who are engaged on courses above level 3. (AQW 6437/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year (latest available data), there were 1,257 student enrolments on courses above Level 3 at the South Eastern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

South Eastern Regional College

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Governors of the former constituent colleges of the Southern Regional College are serving on the Board of the Southern Regional College. (AQW 6438/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There are presently seventeen persons serving on the Governing Body of Southern Regional College. Of these seventeen persons, four have previously served as a member of the governing body of one of the constituent colleges which comprise Southern Regional College.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much income the South Eastern Regional College and its constituent colleges made from non-governmental sources in the last three years. (AQW 6439/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The South Eastern Regional College was formed on 1 August 2007 following the amalgamation of the North Down and Ards Institute, Lisburn Institute and East Down Institute. Audited accounts are not yet available for 2007/08 which was the first year of the merged college. In the three previous years, from 2004/05 to 2006/07, the constituent colleges received total non-governmental income of £13,470,000.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many full cost recovery courses are operating currently in the South Eastern Regional College. (AQW 6441/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year, the latest year for which validated data is available, there were 244 full cost recovery courses operating at the South Eastern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

Northern Regional College

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students in the Northern Regional College who are engaged on courses above level 3. (AQW 6442/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year, the latest year for which validated data is available, there were 1,037 student enrolments on courses above Level 3 at the Northern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

Northern Regional College

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many full cost recovery courses are currently operating in the Northern Regional College. (AQW 6443/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the 2007/08 Academic year, the latest year for which validated data is available, there were 562 full cost recovery courses operating at the Northern Regional College.

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

Northern Regional College

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much income the Northern Regional College and its constituent colleges made from non-governmental sources, in the past three years. (AQW 6444/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Northern Regional College was formed on 1 August 2007 following the amalgamation of North East Institute, East Antrim Institute and Causeway Institute. The total

income received by the Northern Regional College, and its constituent colleges, from non-governmental sources for the three years from 2005/06 to 2007/08 was £10,672,000.

Northern Regional College

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Governors of the former constituent colleges of the Northern Regional College are still serving on the board of the Northern Regional College. (AQW 6449/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There are presently fourteen persons serving on the Governing Body of Northern Regional College. Of these fourteen persons, five have previously served as a member of the governing body of one of the constituent colleges which comprise Northern Regional College.

South Eastern Regional College

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Governors of the colleges that formerly constituted the South Eastern Regional College are still serving on the board of the South Eastern Regional College. (AQW 6451/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There are presently fourteen people serving on the Governing Body of South Eastern Regional College. Of these, three have previously served as a member of the governing body of one of the constituent colleges which comprise South Eastern Regional College.

University Courses

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people over the age of 40 have enrolled for University courses in each of the last five years. (AQW 6531/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of student enrolments over the age of 40 enrolled on Higher Education courses at NI Higher Education Institutions in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below:

Year	Enrolments
2003/04	5,780
2004/05	6,185
2005/06	6,210
2006/07	5,300
2007/08	5,115

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.

St Mary's College

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions has he had with the Minister for Education on future student numbers for St Mary's College. (AQW 6651/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I have not had any recent discussions with the Minister of Education on future student numbers for St Mary's University College. I have, however, written to her twice since last summer on a number of issues in relation to teacher education, including student numbers for all of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Queens University and Stranmillis College Merger

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the view from Queens University and Stranmillis College, that their proposed merger is a fait accompli. (AQW 6653/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I do not regard the merger as a fait accompli. As I have previously stated, the merger between Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis requires a fully costed economic appraisal to be approved by both my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel. Subject to approval of the appraisal, my Department will carry out a public consultation exercise prior to any decision being taken on the merger and to any enabling legislation being drafted. The Departmental Committee and the Assembly will be involved fully in any approval process. Until such time as this due process is finalised the proposed merger will not be completed.

North West Regional College

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he is aware of a resolution passed on 20 February 2009 by members of the University and College Union at the North West Regional College expressing no confidence in the institution's Director and calling for the governing body to take direct control of the running of the college. (AQW 6727/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I have noted the resolution passed on 20 February 2009 by members of the University and College Union at the North West Regional College expressing no confidence in the Institution's Director and calling for the governing body to take direct control of the running of the college. This is not, at least initially, a matter for my Department. The Director is an employee of the Institution, and the Governing Body, as the employer, has responsibility for any matter relating to discharge of his duties.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

All-Island Public Procurement by InterTrade Ireland

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the commissioning of a report on All-Island Public Procurement by InterTrade Ireland, to give his assessment of the economic gains from all-island procurement. (AQO 2392/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The draft report commissioned by InterTradeIreland, entitled 'All Island Public Procurement: A Competitiveness Study' is unlikely to be published until April 2009. DETI cannot therefore respond to the findings and recommendations at this stage.

The objectives for this study were to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the public procurement market and to make recommendations for mutually beneficial co-operative action.

DETI will look forward to receiving the final report in due course.

In terms of the importance of public procurement in relation to economic recovery, Minister Dodds in his statement made to the Assembly on 23 March, 2009, pointed out that significant capital investment has been made for example, in relation to the construction industry. During this financial year alone, it is expected that Government capital investment will be in the order of £1.5 Billion, compared with £676 Million five years ago. The devolved administration recognises the importance of capital investment in infrastructure and working with the construction industry to deliver.

Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel has, on behalf of Northern Ireland Departments, provided construction industry representatives at the Procurement Task Group of the Construction Industry Forum with a comprehensive list of the projects that are to be advertised or are already at various stages of the procurement process. This list includes some 60 projects with an aggregated value in excess of £400 Million.

Public sector investment is set to continue to increase over the remaining years of the Investment Strategy. The gross capital investment planned for the next two financial years is intended to be more than £3 Billion.

Electricity Prices

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the rise in electricity prices of 52% since September 2008; and, following the reduction in oil prices, when she expects electricity prices to fall to their previous level. (AQW 6284/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department has no statutory powers to set or to direct energy companies in setting tariffs. The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR) has a statutory obligation to regulate and closely monitor the tariff setting process for NIE Energy (NIEE) and other regulated energy providers, and 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.

In Spring 2008, NIEE took the 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 on their part in order to protect consumers over the winter period.

However although wholesale energy costs have fallen considerably since summer 2008, the NIEE strategy has meant that the company is not currently in a position 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.

NIAUR is expected to publish its detailed plans and timetable on the forthcoming electricity contract year shortly, and it is their expectation that, should wholesale fuel costs continue to stay low or fall further, that this will be translated into lower electricity bills during 2009. The next scheduled review of prices is October 2009.

Invest NI

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the expenditure by Invest NI in the (i) Dungannon; (ii) Cookstown; (iii) Omagh; (iv) Magherafelt District Council areas, in the financial years (a) 2006/07; (b) 2007/08; (c) 2008 to date, and the number of jobs it created. (AQW 6337/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI does not budget for, allocate or record expenditure per District Council Area.

However, the table below provides information on the amount of assistance offered by Invest NI within the four District Council Areas during the time period requested. This represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. Total assistance includes that relating to business innovation activities, which is not specifically employment related. The latter is highlighted within the table.

The table also includes assistance offered through the Northern Ireland Start a Business Programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland. It should be noted that job promotion figures with regard to locally-owned projects is not available for 2006-07.

		Cookstown	Dungannon	Magherafelt	Omagh
	Invest NI Direct Support				
	Total Assistance Offered	1,436,738	2,452,965	931,850	679,819
	Employment Related Assistance Offered	662,886	1,245,845	403,420	308,133
	Number of Jobs Promoted	*	*	*	*
	Number of Jobs Safeguarded	*	*	*	*
	Invest NI Indirect Support				
	SABp Assistance Offered	32,400	44,600	37,200	43,000
	SABp Jobs Promoted	120	157	133	156
2006/07					

		Cookstown	Dungannon	Magherafelt	Omagh
2007/08	Invest NI Direct Support				
	Total Assistance Offered	2,531,681	8,890,605	2,370,630	3,675,740
	Employment Related Assistance Offered	1,003,330	6,778,526	1,627,752	2,477,408
	Number of Jobs Promoted	140	245	116	137
	Number of Jobs Safeguarded	4	0	80	0
	Invest NI Indirect Support				
	SABp Assistance Offered	38,800	46,200	47,600	53,400
	SABp Jobs Promoted	138	168	163	195
2008/09 (Apr 08 - Feb 09) - Provisional	Invest NI Direct Support				
	Total Assistance Offered	2,345,273	5,537,671	1,566,701	1,091,431
	Employment Related Assistance Offered	961,367	2,044,471	753,090	289,005
	Number of Jobs Promoted	101	248	88	38
	Number of Jobs Safeguarded	103	293	10	0
	Invest NI Indirect Support				
	SABp Assistance Offered	15,200	24,000	11,400	28,800
	SABp Jobs Promoted	86	126	81	148

Note: *Job promotion data for locally-owned clients was not available for 2006/07

Figures for 2008/09 (Apr 08 - Feb 09) are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Employment related assistance is contained within total assistance

Invest NI

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the total amount of money that has been paid in bonuses to Invest NI staff; and (ii) how the bonuses were distributed across each staffing grade, in each of the last three years. (AQW 6346/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Three types of bonus are payable in Invest NI: -

- The remuneration package for the Chief Executive has a bonus element;
- bonuses are paid to Managing Directors (equivalent to NICS Grade 3) and Directors (equivalent to Grade 5) on the same basis as applies to the Senior Civil Service. These bonuses are based on the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body and form part of the annual pay settlement.
- staff up to and including a level equivalent to Grade 6 level in Invest NI are eligible for bonuses under the Special Bonus Scheme to reward exceptional performance. This scheme is applied on the same basis as the NICS scheme of the same name.

All bonuses are non-consolidated and non-pensionable.

Amounts paid in bonuses, together with the grade distribution of awards, are set out in the tables below.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Year	Total Bonuses £	Grade 5	Grade 3	Chief Executive
05 - 06	77817	9	3	1
06 - 07	99398	10	4	1
07 - 08	111866	9	4	1

The application of SCS pay policy has meant that the bonus (as distinct from pensionable pay) element increased from 2.3% of the SCS paybill in 2002 to 8.6% in 2008.

OTHER STAFF

Year	Total Bonuses £		AO	EO II	EO I	SO	DP	G7	G6
05 - 06	7300			4	1	1	8	1	1
06 - 07	1000						1		
07 - 08	16100		4	6	2	6	7	4	

Energy Infrastructure

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what work her Department has undertaken in preparation for expanding the energy infrastructure. (AQW 6362/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI is presently developing a new Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland. The overall emphasis will be a shift towards a cleaner and more efficient energy mix, including greater use of renewable energy sources, and extending the benefits of natural gas.

In relation to energy infrastructure, DETI is involved in plans to strengthen the electricity grid to support an increase in the amount of electricity generated from sustainable sources. This follows the All-island Grid Study report, published in 2008, which noted that much higher levels of electricity could be generated from plentiful renewable sources.

In addition, Northern Ireland is working with Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland on the Isles Tripartite off-shore grid project, to explore the potential for an offshore electricity grid to capture marine renewables, namely, wind, wave and tidal.

The Department also plans to consider the technical feasibility and economics of taking natural gas to towns in the West and North-West of Northern Ireland, and is in the final stages of commissioning a study. The Department is also considering the merits of a proposal to take natural gas to towns in the Downpatrick economic corridor in East Down.

In addition DETI has commissioned a study to investigate the geology in the East Antrim area, including the off-shore area, to determine its suitability for underground energy storage. The development of large-scale energy storage facilities would help to improve Northern Ireland's security of energy supply.

In preparation for the development of offshore wind and marine renewables, in particular tidal stream, DETI is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment to identify the potential effects such developments may have on the environment. This work will enable my Department, in conjunction with The Crown Estate as owners of the seabed, to launch a competitive call for development projects later in 2010.

Laying Power Cables

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what the comparative costs per mile are for laying (i) underground; and (ii) overhead power cables. (AQW 6478/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The costs of installing transmission grid cables are project specific and are significantly influenced by the size of the cable and the nature of the route. Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) recently published a report by Parsons Brinckerhoff that compared the cost of the 400kV transmission cable options for the planned Cavan - Tyrone circuit. This report indicates that the construction of a 400kV overhead line could cost approximately £760,000 per mile, compared to an estimated cost of £5.611 million per mile for an underground line.

NIE estimates that the cost of constructing an overhead 33kV distribution grid line could range from £55,000 to £113,000 per mile depending on the type of construction required. For an underground line the estimated cost could be about £255,000 per mile. This is based on a typical single circuit route laid on roadway in an urban area.

The company estimates that the cost of constructing an overhead 11kV distribution grid line could be approximately £30,300 per mile, while the cost of laying the line underground could be £130,000 per mile. This is based on a typical route comprising footpaths and roads.

Small Businesses

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what help she is giving to small businesses. (AQW 6487/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI offers a wide range of support to encourage the growth and development of the small business sector. It 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.

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 recently introduced new schemes focused on supporting small business growth, including the Growth Accelerator Programme, that assists Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to achieve faster growth in export markets.

In addition, 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.

Invest NI

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail Invest Northern Ireland's North West Action Plan, including identifying target areas and planned deliverables. (AQW 6534/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI continues to be committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in the North West, including Councils and is actively investing in relevant projects in the Region in line with their current Corporate Plan.

However, there is currently no formal North West Action Plan (NWAP). The economic environment has changed significantly since NWAP Phase I and Phase II (2003 – 2008). The relevance, content and extent of any future plan must to be considered in the context of a number of factors including:

- The desire of the original Council partners (Londonderry, Strabane, Coleraine, Limavady and Magherafelt) to move away from this traditional grouping and begin to develop new partnerships within the context of the new RPA Council clusters.
- The significant European Funding now available via the Interreg, Rural Development and DETI Competitiveness and Employment Programmes.
- The role of the North West Gateway Initiative in providing a framework for future investment in the wider North West Region

Invest NI will continue to engage with Councils in the North West to explore the most appropriate mechanism for delivery of relevant joint projects and initiatives.

Invest NI

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the Invest NI North West Action Plan, (i) to outline the targets set; and (ii) to provide Invest NI's assessment of progress, in each of the past 3 years. (AQW 6535/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI's North West Action Plan phase II covers a proportion of the past three years, specifically the period 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2008. It concentrated on consolidating the gains made in the first action plan as well as a series of specific joint initiatives with the NW Councils. These initiatives were designed to address capability weaknesses within SME's throughout the NW region focusing on three main themes Innovation, Internationalisation and Business Development.

The Councils awarded contracts for delivery of the programmes to consultants following appropriate tendering exercises, the key targets set were:

Innovation

- Delivery of 5 Regional Seminars

Internationalisation

- 100 Businesses profiled
- 47 Businesses to participate in workshop/mentoring activities
- 15 Export Plans Developed

Business Development

- 250 Businesses profiled
- 80 Business Audits
- 320 Mentoring Sessions
- 30 Businesses Referred to Invest NI

Invest NI have confirmed that these targets have been largely met or exceeded. There has been no formal North West Action Plan in operation since March 2008.

Invest NI

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what funding opportunities are available under Invest Northern Ireland's North West Action Plan. (AQW 6536/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI do not currently have a formal North West Action Plan. However, the agency continues to engage with Councils in the Region to explore the most appropriate mechanism for delivery of relevant joint projects and initiatives.

Invest NI funding for good, eligible projects is not diminished by the absence of a North West Action Plan. Invest NI is keen to encourage project promoters to present proposals and will assess any project in line with standard appraisal and approval procedures. Invest NI personnel both locally and from across the organisation engage actively with local stakeholders and businesses to deliver relevant investment and services to the North West in line with Invest NI's Corporate Plan 2008-2011.

Project Kelvin

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the technical basis by which the solution proposed by Hibernia Atlantic for Project Kelvin will guarantee 99.999% availability between the three mandatory locations and New York. (AQW 6601/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Hibernia Atlantic is contracted to deliver 99.999% availability at all 13 mandatory locations specified in the Project Kelvin contract.

Hibernia Atlantic is not due to complete the commissioning of the terrestrial infrastructure until October 2009 and the technical design is ongoing. The network will be fully tested for compliance with the contracts performance standards when both the terrestrial and submarine elements have been completed. The Department will continue the monitoring and testing of the network until the contract ends in December 2018.

Project Kelvin

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) when the re-design of the technical solution proposed by Hibernia Atlantic for Project Kelvin will be completed; and (ii) to detail the independent technical advice that will be sought to assess compliance with the Invitation to Tender requirements. (AQW 6603/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Hibernia Atlantic is due to complete the overall network design and commissioning of the terrestrial infrastructure associated with Project Kelvin by October 2009. The telehouse forms part of this infrastructure and Hibernia Atlantic has indicated its intention to submit a request to seek a variation to the existing contract to facilitate a relocation of the telehouse from Coleraine to the city of Londonderry. This will involve a redesign of the telehouse and it is likely to be several weeks before the revised proposal is submitted by Hibernia Atlantic to DETI and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR).

Central Procurement Directorate, on behalf of the Department, will shortly be running a full EU procurement competition for the appointment of technical consultants to advise the Department during both the construction phase and the first two years of the operational phase of this contract. The consultants will assist the Departments in assessing compliance with the performance and other technical aspects of the Kelvin contract. The new consultants are expected to be appointed before the end of May 2009.

Project Kelvin

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to Project Kelvin, if she will request that Hibernia Atlantic demonstrate in a technical proof, how it will achieve 99.999 percent availability in each of the mandatory locations. (AQW 6719/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Hibernia Atlantic is contracted to deliver 99.999% availability at all 13 mandatory locations specified in the Project Kelvin contract.

Work on the technical design by Hibernia Atlantic is ongoing and not due to be completed before the commissioning of the terrestrial infrastructure in October 2009. There is no value in requesting a technical proof when the network design has not been completed.

The network will be fully tested for compliance with the contracts performance standards when both the terrestrial and submarine elements have been completed. The Department will continue the monitoring and testing of the network until the contract ends in December 2018.

Visteon's Manufacturing Plant

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) what financial assistance has been provided by Invest NI to Visteon's manufacturing plant in Belfast; (ii) what safeguards are in place to protect any assistance. (AQW 6867/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI provided Visteon UK with financial assistance in 2003 for the development of a fuel rail. The offer totalled £109,305 of which £97,210 was paid.

The Letter of Offer contained clauses to protect Invest NI's investment and, where appropriate, claw back of monies paid will be invoked.

Visteon's Manufacturing Plant

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what report she was provided to her, by Invest NI in January 2009, about the viability assessment initiated by Visteon. (AQW 6868/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has kept me informed of a number of companies facing difficulties, on an ongoing basis, including Visteon.

The viability of Visteon Belfast has been an issue for a number of years with management trying to address the issue primarily through managing costs. At a meeting in February 2009 the Managing Director of Visteon

UK Ltd stated that he was tasked to come up with a plan by 30 March 2009 to establish financial break even over the next twelve months. Similar discussions had taken place between Invest NI and Visteon in 2006.

Invest NI had discussions with local management around possible areas of assistance in March 2009 but no proposals were forthcoming. A further meeting was organised for 8 April 2009.

I am assured that Invest NI were exploring how Visteon could be encouraged to continue to operate in Belfast and would have reported to me on the outcome of such discussions. Unfortunately, the decision to place Visteon UK in administration was taken without any reference to Invest NI or DETI.

Visteon's Manufacturing Plant

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what advice she was given by her officials on the future of Visteon operations in Belfast following meetings between Invest NI and the company in February and March 2009. (AQW 6869/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: No decision on the future of the UK manufacturing operations had been made when Invest NI officials met with Visteon management in February and March 2009. These meetings were a continuation of meetings that had taken place for a number of years. Invest NI continued to work with Visteon UK Ltd on a national and local basis.

Invest NI had a meeting planned with local management and the Department for Employment and Learning on 8 April 2009 to explore opportunities for providing financial assistance towards training activities. This meeting and any subsequent advice has been overtaken by the decision to place Visteon UK into administration.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5621/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): For some years now, virtually all documents produced by the Department have been created electronically. Similarly, the use of electronic mail has been the norm for internal Departmental and, where possible external, communications. However, to comply with public records legislation and official PRONI guidance, all records of Departmental business had to be printed to file.

With the introduction of Records NI electronic document and records management system in 2007, the vast majority of business records are now held exclusively in electronic format, and new paper files may only be created in exceptional circumstances. Where possible, incoming paper documents are scanned and also held in Records NI. The introduction of Records NI will result in a significant reduction in the amount of paper used by the Department.

Cookstown Aggregates

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the total costs of visits to Cookstown Aggregates by his Department; and the total cost of court cases against the company. (AQW 6364/09)

Minister of the Environment: In my Department only Agencies involved in a significant number of site visits and preparation of court cases keep detailed records of staff costs associated with this work area. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), records staff costs associated with pollution investigations including site visits and subsequent enforcement action.

NIEA received 68 reports of pollution incidents attributed to Cookstown Aggregates for the period 1996 to 2009 with total staff costs, which including site visits, estimated at £13,243.

NIEA has successfully prosecuted Cookstown Aggregates a number of times for breaches of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

The cost to the Department in preparing both the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 prosecutions amounted to £1,174; however, costs are not available in relation to the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 prosecution.

Council Expenditure

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment what proportion of the rates of each Council area are spent on (i) centrally provided services; (ii) capital investment; and (iii) infrastructure. (AQW 6477/09)

Minister of the Environment: Centrally provided services are met from councils' district fund, which is made up of income from district rates; General Grant; and any balance applied at the beginning of a financial year. Capital investment and expenditure relating to infrastructure are financed from the capital fund and separate figures are not maintained for each category.

The table below details the 2008/2009 estimates for centrally provided services and capital expenditure for each council and also expresses the figures as a proportion of the overall estimated expenditure.

(i) District Council	(ii) Centrally Provided Services (CPS) £	(iii) CPS as % of Total Expenditure	(iv) Capital Expenditure £	(v) Capital Expenditure as % of Total Expenditure	(vi) Total Expenditure £
Antrim	19,237,462	71%	7,875,552	29%	27,113,014
Ards	22,081,985	84%	4,119,600	16%	26,201,585
Armagh	19,698,480	81%	4,759,000	19%	24,457,480
Ballymena	21,286,190	89%	2,644,782	11%	23,930,972
Ballymoney	8,470,451	88%	1,100,950	12%	9,571,401
Banbridge	13,614,148	71%	5,519,000	29%	19,133,148
Belfast	148,116,247	84%	28,299,650	16%	176,415,897
Carrickfergus	12,183,789	56%	9,527,547	44%	21,711,336
Castlereagh	19,543,548	80%	4,818,200	20%	24,361,748
Coleraine	23,593,779	77%	7,010,000	23%	30,603,779
Cookstown	12,898,164	85%	2,353,000	15%	15,251,164
Craigavon	30,733,398	95%	1,720,000	5%	32,453,398
Derry	41,334,400	81%	9,725,400	19%	51,059,800
Down	20,941,376	70%	9,022,571	30%	29,963,947
Dungannon and South Tyrone	15,233,931	83%	3,222,000	17%	18,455,931
Fermanagh	16,500,836	67%	8,086,897	33%	24,587,733
Larne	11,490,182	66%	5,968,430	34%	17,458,612
Limavady	10,138,499	87%	1,573,906	13%	11,712,405
Lisburn	31,487,720	93%	2,219,100	7%	33,706,820
Magherafelt	10,253,953	91%	1,004,000	9%	11,257,953
Moyle	7,606,776	87%	1,092,145	13%	8,698,921
Newry and Mourne	27,087,346	83%	5,615,000	17%	32,702,346
Newtownabbey	28,731,743	67%	14,064,527	33%	42,796,270
North Down	24,043,659	95%	1,362,000	5%	25,405,659
Omagh	15,925,275	75%	5,285,000	25%	21,210,275

(i) District Council	(ii) Centrally Provided Services (CPS) £	(iii) CPS as % of Total Expenditure	(iv) Capital Expenditure £	(v) Capital Expenditure as % of Total Expenditure	(vi) Total Expenditure £
Strabane	11,487,388	97%	355,000	3%	11,842,388
Total	623,720,725	81%	148,343,257	19%	772,063,982

Environmental Crime Unit

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment for (i) details; and (ii) success rates of the operation of his Department's environmental crime unit over the past three years. (AQW 6479/09)

Minister of the Environment: In an often difficult and dangerous climate, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's (NIEA) Environmental Crime Unit (ECU) has succeeded in increasing both legislative and financial enforcement against, and public awareness of, those engaged in illegal waste activities (which are criminal offences) in Northern Ireland.

The ECU receives over 1,000 reports of illegal dumping each year. Where the dumping is clearly on a commercial scale and where sufficient evidence is available and where it is in the public interest to prosecute, the ECU will recommend prosecution to the Public Prosecution Service. Since the inception of the ECU in 2003, it has secured 359 convictions and these have generated £948,115 in fines.

Courts are viewing environmental crime with increasing seriousness, as evidenced by the high level of fines that are often imposed and the jail terms handed down to some of the most serious offenders.

The ECU has been instrumental in having the first Northern Ireland environmental cases heard at the Crown Court, resulting in the first prison sentences and higher financial penalties for environmental offenders. In November 2007, the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA) (now the Serious Organised Crime Agency – (SOCA), working with NIEA secured the first UK confiscation order for £252,252 against a Tyrone farmer, relating to environmental crime.

The Unit is utilising the new and stronger powers of the Serious Crime Act 2007 to deal with serious and persistent environmental offenders and has pioneered the accreditation of financial investigators in line with the Proceeds of Crime Act. These financial investigators conduct confiscation investigations in-house, to remove illegal benefit from offenders.

Since November 2007, ARA/SOCA, working with the ECU has obtained four confiscation orders totalling £833,120, illustrating the power of this legislation in providing a deterrent and in denying funds for further offending.

On 26 March 2009, the ECU Financial Investigators secured their first confiscation independently of SOCA for £200,000.

The ECU will continue to develop its ability to tackle serious and persistent environmental offenders and will avail of all enforcement tools and legislation available in order to assist in this process.

Changes to Driving Test

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment what changes he is proposing to make to the driving test over the next three years? (AQW 6480/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have no specific plans to introduce any changes to the driving test in the near future. However I am monitoring the progress of the Driving Standards Agency's 2008 consultation "Learning to Drive" which was also issued in Northern Ireland, and will consider the proposals arising from it.

Planning Service

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning application T2006/0302/F, why Planning Service has not asked the applicant to produce (i) a daylight and sunlight study; (ii) a noise study;

and (iii) an impact study on the adjacent Old Mill Industrial Estate in relation to future expansion; and the consequences of this for job creation. (AQW 6481/09)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) An office meeting was held in Antrim Civic Centre on 4 February 2009 to discuss planning application T/2006/0302/F. As a result of issues raised at the meeting Planning Service has carried out a number of consultations. When all consultation responses are returned and assessed Planning Service will consider if it is appropriate to request a daylight and sunlight study.
- (ii) A noise study - In an initial consultation response received from the Environmental Services Department of Antrim Borough Council, received 9 May 2006, to application T/2006/0302 there were no noise concerns indicated other than during the construction period. Subsequently the applicant commissioned a desk top acoustic appraisal which Environmental Health were consulted on 27 November 2007 and which they considered acceptable. On 26 January 2009 an objection was submitted containing a "Detailed Rebuttal Statement" to the acoustic appraisal. In light of the "Detailed Rebuttal Statement", and a recent complaint regarding noise levels in the area by a local resident, Planning Service re-consulted the Environmental Services Department on 16 February 2009 asking if their position remains unchanged. When the response has been returned and assessed Planning Service will consider if a further noise report is necessary.
- (iii) Planning Service continues to consider this application having regard to both PPS4 and Draft PPS4. The outstanding consultation responses will help inform any impact that may result on the future expansion of the adjacent industrial premises and Old Mill Industrial Estate and the consequences of this for job creation. These issues will be fully taken into account when reaching a decision on this application.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment if land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency been leased or rented to an employee, for private business. (AQW 6493/09)

Minister of the Environment: No land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has been leased or rented to any NIEA employee for private business.

However NIEA has licensed the grazing of 126 hectares of Crossmurrin and Killykeeghan Nature Reserves at Marlbank, Fermanagh, to a Ranger employed at NIEA's Castle Archdale Country Park under a grazing management agreement, while retaining rights of access and other management responsibilities itself.

NIEA is charged with managing the Department's nature reserve lands to maintain their scientific interest in favourable condition, as was its predecessor body - the Environment and Heritage Service - which established most of the current grazing agreements. This conservation management often requires grazing at low stocking levels, avoiding certain stock medications, and grazing at times of year unattractive to the farming community.

Where a suitable licensee willing to comply with the required management regime can be found through open advertisement, NIEA uses their services thereafter for as long as they are willing to continue with the agreement.

NIEA levies an annual payment (formerly set by the Valuation and Lands Agency (VLA)) which reflects the constraints imposed. The VLA has advised that there is no need to re-advertise once a suitable partner had been identified.

In the case of the Marlbank reserves, the partner farmer (originally engaged through open advertisement) became ill and at short notice had to withdraw from the grazing agreement for the larger area. Due to the difficulties in securing satisfactory partners, NIEA was therefore delighted that one of its Rangers employed at Castle Archdale Country Park (who owned some stock and lived in that area) agreed to take over that part of the grazing. All of the employee's stock management is undertaken in his own time before and after work. This arrangement proved successful. When the farmer subsequently withdrew completely from grazing both areas, the employee took on all the grazing. Initially he paid the same amount as the previous partner. The rate is now set by NIEA's own Valuer.

As the Marlbank reserves are not grazed during May, June and July, NIEA also licences some 5 hectares of better quality farmland at Castle Archdale Country Park to this employee, so facilitating the grazing of his stock during the summer.

The employee claims single farm payment for the Marlbank reserve lands. The sum he pays the Department for the grazing reflects this. He does not receive the single farm payment for the Castle Archdale grazing, so pays at a lower rate.

NIEA also licences the grazing of its reserves on Rathlin Island at the townlands of Kebble and Kinramer North and South (215 hectares) to the RSPB Ranger for the Island. NIEA pays the RSPB for a proportion of his time for care of its reserves but does not employ him directly.

This Ranger took on the Kinramer reserve areas from a relative in 1993 following the relative's death. Records do not indicate whether the grazing was advertised, but as a satisfactory partner, his agreement has been renewed every three years. He then agreed to take on the grazing of Kebble after a previous farmer had proved an extremely unsatisfactory manager. The Ranger undertakes the care of his stock in his own time and the conservation quality of the reserves has markedly improved under his grazing management. He does not claim single farm payment.

Partner graziers must make a modest profit from their arrangement, but the primary reason for the agreements is the conservation management of special sites, not the facilitating of 'private business'.

As a result of the difficulties in securing satisfactory partners to provide grazing at its reserves, NIEA itself has now acquired a number of rare breed livestock which it uses to manage several of these special sites. This is more costly than the management agreements where a partner farmer or amenable employee can be persuaded to take up a grazing agreement for which they pay, but does enable more precise grazing and has been successful in improving the conservation condition of several reserves.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment if land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and leased or rented privately, has attracted single farm payments established by the tenant or tenants. (AQW 6494/09)

Minister of the Environment: No land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has been leased or rented to any NIEA employee for private business.

However NIEA has licensed the grazing of 126 hectares of Crossmurrin and Killykeeghan Nature Reserves at Marlbank, Fermanagh, to a Ranger employed at NIEA's Castle Archdale Country Park under a grazing management agreement, while retaining rights of access and other management responsibilities itself.

NIEA is charged with managing the Department's nature reserve lands to maintain their scientific interest in favourable condition, as was its predecessor body - the Environment and Heritage Service - which established most of the current grazing agreements. This conservation management often requires grazing at low stocking levels, avoiding certain stock medications, and grazing at times of year unattractive to the farming community.

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Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment if land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has been leased or rented to an employee for private business purposes without going to public advertisement. (AQW 6495/09)

Minister of the Environment: No land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has been leased or rented to any NIEA employee for private business.

However NIEA has licensed the grazing of 126 hectares of Crossmurrin and Killykeeghan Nature Reserves at Marlbank, Fermanagh, to a Ranger employed at NIEA's Castle Archdale Country Park under a grazing management agreement, while retaining rights of access and other management responsibilities itself.

NIEA is charged with managing the Department's nature reserve lands to maintain their scientific interest in favourable condition, as was its predecessor body - the Environment and Heritage Service - which established most of the current grazing agreements. This conservation management often requires grazing at low stocking levels, avoiding certain stock medications, and grazing at times of year unattractive to the farming community.

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Dry Recyclables

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for his assessment of whether kerbside sort is more beneficial than co-mingled collections of dry recyclables; and (ii) what steps are being taken to improve the quality of this material. (AQW 6500/09)

Minister of the Environment: Under Article 21 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) 1997 the provision of receptacles for the collection of waste is the responsibility of each district council.

Regardless of the method of collection used, there is a need to ensure that the materials being sent for recycling are of the highest possible quality. I emphasised this point in my press statement of 19 January 2009 when I encouraged everyone to play their part by placing only the appropriate materials in their recycling bins and boxes. This will ensure that the quality is as high as possible throughout the entire supply chain and is one of the key ways to ensure that sustainable markets for the materials can be found.

The delivery of high quality collections and recycling services remains a priority. My Department, with the assistance of the Waste & Resources Action Programme's (WRAP) Recycling and Organics Technical Advisory Team (ROTATE), provides support and advice to district councils in Northern Ireland for reducing residual waste for disposal and increasing recycling and diversion from landfill. Improving collection efficiencies and outputs (quantities and quality) also play an important part.

Littering

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what measures are being taken to reduce littering. (AQW 6502/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 places a duty on District Councils to keep land clear of litter. Significant powers are contained in the Order to help District Councils to deal with litter problems. For example, a £50 fixed penalty fine can be imposed on litter offenders. Alternatively a fine of up to £2500 can be imposed on conviction through the courts. My Department extended those powers with effect from 1 November 2005 to allow District Councils to retain the receipts from fixed penalties to help them to carry out their functions in relation to litter more effectively. Full details of the number of litter fines issued by each District Council are set out in my written answer (AQW 1723/09) to Simon Hamilton MLA.

Legislation and fines are important tools to help to reduce littering. However, I also recognise that a lot of good work is taking place to change the attitudes and behaviour of people who litter. For example, local anti-litter

campaigns and initiatives, website information and the employment of local litter wardens all play their part in reducing littering.

Littering

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department measures levels of littering; and if the problem has worsened over the past 10 years. (AQW 6503/09)

Minister of the Environment: There is no statutory requirement on my Department to measure levels of littering.

My Department provides core funding to the Tidy Northern Ireland organization to work with District Councils on litter issues and the running of litter campaigns and programmes. In its 2007 Northern Ireland Borough Cleanliness Survey Tidy Northern Ireland singled out cigarette, confectionery and chewing gum litter as major contributors to the litter problem but reported an overall improvement in cleanliness levels for the third year in a row.

My Department does not hold evidence centrally on the extent of the litter problem over the past 10 years.

Local Government Transition Committees

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what proposed legislation will address the issues of local government councillor severance and statutory transition committees. (AQW 6544/09)

Minister of the Environment: I intend to bring a Local Government Bill before the House in June of this year which will include provision for severance arrangements for councillors. The Bill will also provide for the establishment of statutory transition committees and will enable the Department to specify in regulations the functions, powers, composition, etc of the transition committees.

Subordinate legislation setting out:

- the detail of the severance scheme for councillors, and
- the functions, powers and composition of the transition committees is likely to come into operation in January 2010.

Local Government Transition Committees

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of the Environment when local government transition committees will have statutory powers. (AQW 6546/09)

Minister of the Environment: I intend to bring a Local Government Bill before the House in June of this year which will include provision for the establishment of statutory transition committees and will enable the Department to specify, in regulations, the functions, powers, composition, etc of these committees.

- I would anticipate that the earliest the Bill will have progressed through all its Assembly stages will be autumn 2009.
- The regulations setting out the functions, powers and composition of the transition committees are likely to come into operation in January 2010.

Housing Developments

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment to provide the number of planning applications approved for housing developments with access through established parks and cul-de-sacs, that have no footpaths in place. (AQW 6571/09)

Minister of the Environment: I regret the Department's electronic data storage and recovery system 20/20 does not record this level of detail for every planning application. The number could only be found through a manual search of all applications approved in each Divisional Planning Office and this could not be done in the time available and would incur disproportionate costs.

Demolition of Single Dwellings

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Department's policy in relation to demolishing single dwellings and replacing them with multiple dwellings. (AQW 6572/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning policy and guidance in support of the strategic approach for residential development provided in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS), is set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: Housing in Settlements, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: Quality Residential Environments, Area Plans and DCAN 8: Housing in Existing Urban Areas. Further supplementary design guidance is set out in the Creating Places document and Improving the Quality of Housing Layouts in Northern Ireland (a joint Planning Service, Roads Service, CEF and NIHE publication). The policy and guidance in these documents informs the consideration of planning applications for new residential developments, redevelopment and particularly intensification of use of an existing housing site.

The thrust of current policy for all new residential development proposals is a design-led approach, emphasising contextual and amenity tests, in which proposals should respect the character and built form of adjacent housing. It also seeks to ensure that the overall development does not result in unacceptable damage to the environmental quality, residential amenity and established character of the surrounding area. Full account is also taken of the potentially damaging effect of cumulative changes in a neighbourhood.

In recognition of public concern with the intensification of development within existing residential areas a Planning Circular on the assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas, villages and other small settlements was issued to Planning Service staff in August 2007. In addition, my Department's Planning and Environmental Policy Group is currently working on an Addendum to PPS 7 which will be published for consultation later this year.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the annual budget for the Management Of Sensitive Sites; and to give his assessment of the adequacy of the budget. (AQW 6576/09)

Minister of the Environment: Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), which are declared by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) under the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, are thought to be the most important of sensitive sites at national level. They are so declared because they are considered to be of special scientific interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological, physiographical or other features.

ASSIs may require intervention management to help maintain or enhance the special scientific interest for which they are declared, and this would be provided through the Management of Sensitive Sites Scheme (MOSS) that is administered by NIEA.

A budget of £500,000 was made available for this scheme in the 2008/09 financial year. The same amount has been allocated for 2009/10 and NIEA is satisfied that this is adequate to meet its present needs although this will be kept under review as the number of designations increases.

There is also potential for appropriate land management within ASSIs to be secured through the application of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme. This scheme is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which currently gives priority to applications that embrace lands that are within ASSIs.

Areas of Specific Scientific Interest

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many more Areas of Specific Scientific Interests the NI Environment Agency intends to declare; and what assistance his Department can give to those areas. (AQW 6577/09)

Minister of the Environment: Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) intends to increase its suite of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) from its present total of 275 to 440 by the year 2016. At this stage the declaration programme will be substantially complete.

Assistance for the management of these ASSIs for nature conservation purposes may be provided through the Management of Sensitive Sites Scheme (MOSS) that is administered by NIEA. If thought necessary, the Agency may enter into a management agreement with the owner or occupier of lands under MOSS to secure a land management regime considered necessary to sustain or enhance the special scientific interest of the ASSI. Payments made under such an agreement will vary according to the land management requirements prescribed.

Support for land management may also be provided through the application of the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme to declared lands. This scheme is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development which currently gives priority to applications that embrace lands that are within ASSIs.

Driving Theory Tests

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment why there is no office in the East Londonderry constituency where applicants can complete the driving theory test. (AQW 6600/09)

Minister of the Environment: There are six theory test centres strategically located throughout Northern Ireland. The centres are leased by Pearson VUE, the theory test contractor, and used to deliver the theory test for the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) and examinations for a range of other clients.

- The location of the theory test centres is designed to provide the best balance between accessibility and value for money. 2 centres (Londonderry & Ballymena) are in constituencies which border on East Londonderry.
- As a trading fund, the Driver & Vehicle Agency recovers costs from the fees charged to customers and the provision of additional theory test centres would result in a significant increase in the overall costs of the service and increase fees for all customers.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment how many employees are in his Department in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area. (AQW 6640/09)

Minister of the Environment: The number of employees working in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area is detailed in the table below.

Department	Address line 1	Address line 2	Address line 3	Total
DOE	Crown Buildings Lisnagelvin	2 Crescent Road	Lisnagelvin	4
DOE	New Buildings Industrial Estate	New Buildings Industrial Estate	Victoria Road	30
DOE	Orchard House	Orchard House	40 Foyle Street	51
DOE	Woodburn EHS Depot	Woodburn EHS Depot	1a Crescent Road	5
			Overall total	90

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment how many employees in his Department travel from Londonderry/Derry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6641/09)

Minister of the Environment: The number of staff who travel from County Londonderry to work in Belfast is not available.

Working Group on PPS21

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 6338/09, how (i) people with a disability; (ii) lone parents; (iii) migrant workers; (iv) older people; (v) carers; (vi) younger people; (vii) elected representatives; and (viii) members of the wider community contact the Working Group on the PPS21 consultation. (AQW 6654/09)

Minister of the Environment: The consultation on PPS 21 is a matter for my Department and anyone wishing to make comments on any aspect of the document should do so to the Department by 31 March.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Workplace 2010 Project

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail his Department's expenditure on the Workplace 2010 project. (AQW 5513/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): DFP incurred total costs of £12.85m on the Workplace 2010 project. This total includes costs on legal, commercial, financial and technical consultancy and other professional fees, all costs associated with the legal challenge to the procurement and an estimate of the internal costs associated with the procurement. The costs were incurred over a 4 year period from 2005 to present.

Approximately 45% of the work associated with consultancy and professional fees remains of value to the Department.

Government Art Collection

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the (i) estimated value; and (ii) insured value of art owned by the Executive that are not registered under the Government Art Collection. (AQW 5982/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The estimated value is £3,704,273. This figure does not include the small number of artworks owned by Departments that have not had professional valuation. Additionally, the National Museums Northern Ireland has a significant collection, but accounting requirements do not require recorded valuation.

The insured value is £3,435,082. This figure relates solely to the Arts Council Northern Ireland and Southern Education and Library Board, both of which have separate insurance for their art. NICS Departments carry their own risk against indemnity, in line with policy.

Departmental Accounts

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to outline the process by which his Department's accounts are audited; (ii) who audits his Department's accounts; and (iii) to detail his Department's final audited accounts, in each of the last three years. (AQW 6259/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: DFP's Resource Accounts are audited under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, and in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards, as issued by the Auditing Practices Board.

The accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), and his staff in the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

The C&AG formed the opinion that DFP's Resource Accounts for the 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08 financial years:

- gave a true and fair view;
- had been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance and Personnel directions issued under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001;

- that the information which comprises the Annual Report was consistent with the financial statements; and,
- that in all material respects, the expenditure and income had been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly, and that the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

These accounts are published on the DFP internet site at www.dfpni.gov.uk

Civil Service

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to detail the number of vacancies in the Northern Ireland Civil Service at Administrative Officer level in the Belfast area; and (ii) how many staff at this grade have applied for transfer from (a) Londonderry/Derry to Belfast; and (b) other locations to Belfast, in each Government Department. (AQW 6290/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of vacancies in permanent Northern Ireland Civil Service posts at Administrative Officer level, located in the Belfast area, within the eleven Northern Ireland Departments and their Agencies, is set out in the attached table. The figures are given on a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) basis, broken down by Departments, at 1 February 2009.

The table also gives numbers of staff at Administrative Officer level who have applied for a transfer (a) from Londonderry to Belfast or (b) from other locations to Belfast. These numbers, on a headcount basis and broken down by Department, are also at 1 February 2009.

NICS Administrative Officer (AO) Vacancies and Transfer Requests (to Belfast) at 1 February 2009

Department	(i) AO Vacancies in Belfast (FTE)	(ii) AOs Requesting Transfer to Belfast (Headcount)	
		(a) from Londonderry	(b) from other locations
DARD	6	0	0
DCAL	2	0	0
DE	0	1	0
DEL	14.5	0	5
DETI	3	0	0
DFP	39	0	10
DHSSPS	5	0	0
DOE	6	0	7
DRD	9	0	0
DSD	71	4	14
OFMDFM	3	0	0
TOTAL	158.5	5	36

Civil Service

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the average annual pension currently being paid to civil servants, broken down by retirement grade; (ii) the total sum of annual pension payments paid to retired civil servants in each of the last five years; and (iii) the individual annual totals of the ten largest pensions currently being paid to retired civil servants. (AQW 6408/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The average annual pension currently being paid to civil servants as at March 2009 is estimated at £7,119. It is not possible to provide this by retirement grade, as the information is not held in this format.

The estimated total sum of annual pension payments paid to retired civil servants is only available for the last 3 years. (Prior to this figures are only available for all scheme members, some of whom are not members of the NICS, and it would also include pensions paid to dependants.)

	2006/07 (£000s)	2007/08 (£000s)	2008/09 (£000s)
Civil Servant Pensioners	121,602	137,860	147,189

The overall annual total of the ten largest pensions currently being paid to retired civil servants is £612,202. I am unable to provide the individual totals as this would potentially identify individuals and would be a breach of Data Protection legislation. .

Efficiency Savings

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the present position in relation to the planned efficiency savings across all Government Departments. (AQW 6484/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: As part of the 2007 Budget process the Executive agreed that Northern Ireland departments would be set the target of delivering 3% per annum cash releasing efficiency savings over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11.

The responsibility for the planning and delivery of efficiency savings lies with individual Ministers and departments. DFP has a role in terms of monitoring progress.

The latest assessment by my officials is that the majority of efficiency savings are on track for delivery in the current financial year.

Civil Service

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what (i) specific training deficiencies have been identified across the Civil Service; (ii) steps have been taken to address these deficiencies; and (iii) whether an assessment has been made of savings in consultancy fees that could result from any additional training being undertaken. (AQW 6490/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Northern Ireland Civil Service corporate training priorities are agreed on an annual basis by departmental Personnel Directors prior to the commencement of a new financial year. For 2009/10 the key areas are:

- Those applying across the NICS - Financial Governance and Development Programmes, including Leadership and Management/Administrative Development; and
- those appropriate to limited groups of staff, within certain business areas or particular disciplines – Programme and Project Management, Policy and Legislative Skills, Freedom of Information, Essential Skills, Sustainable Development, Health and Well Being

These agreed corporate training priorities inform the learning and development provision which will be delivered by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL), the central NICS provider of generic training, for the forthcoming financial year.

CAL has responsibility for taking forward the development of generic training interventions in order to meet the training needs identified. Work is already ongoing to meet the identified needs with review and updating of existing training provision and development of new courses where the need is not met by existing provision.

The challenging environment in which the Northern Ireland Civil Service operates requires departments to consider new ways of carrying out their business and to draw on a wide range of skills and expertise. When such skills and expertise are not available 'in-house', departments may have to consider the engagement of external consultancy services, for a finite period to complete a particular piece of work. The use of consultants can have long term benefits to the NICS where knowledge and skills are passed to staff, increasing 'in-house' expertise and thereby reducing future need to engage external consultants. To ensure value for money, strict guidelines are in place with respect to the circumstances in which external consultants can be employed.

Civil Service

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the criteria that is used to pay bonuses to senior Civil Servants, including the method by which this criteria is applied; and by whom it is applied.

(AQW 6504/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: In line with the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body, non-consolidated bonus payments have since 2002 been part of the annual pay awards to Senior Civil Servants. Eligibility for a non-consolidated bonus payment aims to reflect achievements against personal objectives or other short-term personal contributions to wider objectives, as measured against specified criteria. The criteria for payment of non-consolidated bonuses are:

- Whether corporate, business and capacity related objectives have been met or not and to what degree;
- Judgements about how the objectives were achieved and in particular whether the leadership behaviours and professional skills part of the Professional Skills for Government framework have been demonstrated or not and to what degree;
- Additional consideration may also be given to the degree of difficulty or ease in meeting the objectives in the light of actual events.

The level of non-consolidated bonus awards payable is determined by applying the following definition of how objectives were achieved:

Bonus Level	Definition
LEVEL 1	Achieved objectives despite the most difficult political, operational and economic environment, displaying exceptional leadership in the business area and more widely.
LEVEL 2	Achieved objectives despite moderately difficult political, operational and economic environment, displaying a high level of leadership in the business area and more widely.
LEVEL 3	Achieved objectives encountering only some political, operational and economic obstacles, displaying leadership in the business area and more widely.

Recommendations on annual pay awards, including any non-consolidated bonus payments, for staff at Assistant Secretary level are made at departmental pay conferences chaired by the department's Permanent Secretary and including those Deputy Secretaries with line manager responsibility. The Permanent Secretary is responsible for final decisions and for pay awards for Deputy Secretaries in his/her department. The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Senior Civil Service Pay Committee, comprising the Permanent Secretaries of all NICS departments and chaired by the DFP Permanent Secretary, provides a moderation role. The Head of the NICS, with the assistance of an independent Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee, considers the annual pay awards, including any non-consolidated bonus payments, for Permanent Secretaries. The annual pay award, including any non-consolidated bonus payment, for the Head of the NICS is determined by the Whitehall Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee.

Civil Service

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many senior Civil Servants in each Department were paid bonuses in (i) 2003/04; (ii) 2004/05; (iii) 2005/06; (iv) 2006/07; and (v) 2007/08.

(AQW 6505/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The total number of Senior Civil Servants paid non-consolidated bonuses in each department in respect of performance years 2003/2004 through to 2007/2008 is as follows:

Dept	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
DE	9	11	11	13	13
DFP	23	31	36	33	36
DARD	14	17	15	15	15
DHSSPS	20	26	26	24	20

Dept	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
DCAL	5	6	5	5	3
DRD	11	17	16	13	11
OFMDFM	18	19	16	20	19
DSD	10	14	14	13	13
DETI	7	8	7	8	8
DEL	5	6	8	7	8
DOE	10	14	14	12	11

Events in the Grounds of the Stormont Estate

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to list those who have applied to hold an event in the grounds of the Stormont Estate in the next twelve months; (ii) the nature of the events; and (iii) whether the events have been given approval or have been refused. (AQW 6545/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The following requests have been made for events in the Stormont Estate over the next 12 months:

Applicant	Date	Nature of Event	Status
Donkey Breeding Society	Date to be confirmed	Active Donkey Award Scheme	Approved, awaiting confirmation of dates from FM & dFM
Delivery and Innovation Division, DFP	Mon 25th May 2009	DFP Charity fun day (Teddy Bears Picnic)	Approved
NI Amenity Council	Tues 26th May 2009	Tree Planting	Approved
Stormont Christian Initiative	Sat 30th May 2009	Christian worship event	Approved
Race for Life - Cancer Research UK	Sun 31st May 2009	Cancer awareness event. Sponsored walk and run	Approved
Samaritans Purse	Sat 6th June 2009	Charity walk	Approved
Diabetes UK	Sat 6th June 2009	Sponsored Walk and other events in front of Parliament Blds.	Under Consideration (Provisional Date)
Cruse Bereavement	Sat 13th June 2009	Charity Walk	Approved
National Osteoporosis Society	June 2009 (awaiting new date)	Sponsored walk	Approved Subject to change of date requested
Gold Wing Club	Sat 27th June 2009	Photo shoot	Under Consideration (Provisional Date)
Guide Dogs Association	Sat 22nd August 2009	20th Anniversary walk and celebration	Approved
Cystic Fibrosis Trust	September 2009	Sponsor 'space hopper' Challenge	Under consideration
Girl Guide UK	Sat 5th Sep 2009	Centenary Celebration Event	Approved

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Sports Association (NICSSA) also holds events at its Pavilion Complex. These events, including cricket matches, do not require Ministerial approval. We have been advised of the following major events:

Sun 26th April 2009	Ireland Vs Worcester Cricket Match
Thu 27th Aug 2009	Ireland Vs England international cricket match

Crossnacreevy Site

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if his Department has any responsibility for releasing or raising any finances needed because of the miscalculation of the value of the Crossnacreevy Site. (AQW 6556/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The responsibility for delivering capital receipts targets is primarily a matter for the relevant Department. The position of Crossnacreevy is an issue affecting the Investment Strategy in 2010/11 and my Department is considering the implications of this matter along with all other capital receipt forecasts in consultation with the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Land and Property Services

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps he is taking to improve the level of customer care in the Land and Property Services. (AQW 6604/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Steps being taken include the implementation of a new Customer Transformation Strategy, which will co-ordinate customer services across Land & Property Services, and which takes into account best practice in other organisations in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Improvements that have already taken place include significant reductions in backlogs of work, and improvements in handling correspondence. Land & Property Services is working closely with the first phase of Northern Ireland Direct to improve call-handling, particularly with regard to the more than 500,000 start of year rate bills to be issued at the beginning of April.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many employees are in his Department in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area. (AQW 6642/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of employees in the Council area is 168.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many employees in his Department travel from Londonderry/Derry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6643/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of employees from Londonderry travelling to work in Belfast is 37.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to specify the number of small and medium sized enterprises in the Upper Bann constituency that have been placed on tendering lists, in the last financial year. (AQW 6681/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) do not hold tendering lists. All NICS tenders are subject to open and transparent competition.

Since May 2008 all CPD procurement has been carried out through a web based procurement portal called eSourcingNI. At present there are approximately 2700 suppliers which class themselves as SME's currently registered on the system. This number is expected to grow significantly as the system is rolled out to other Centres of Procurement Expertise in Northern Ireland

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

MRSA

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the procedures in place in each Hospital Trust for (a) screening all hospital patients on (i) admission; and (ii) transfer, for MRSA; (b) treating patients who test positively for MRSA; (iii) notifying relatives of patients who test positively for MRSA; (d) offering medical advice to relatives of patients who test positively for MRSA; (e) washing the clothes of patients who test positively for MRSA; and (f) allowing family members to carry out minor medical care such as swabbing on patients who test positively for MRSA; and on how many occasions these procedures were not followed in the last calendar year, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4421/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Details for each Trust are given in the table attached. These procedures are subject to review.

Question	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	BHSCT
a) screening all hospital patients on admission;	<p>Northern Trust do not routinely screen every admission.</p> <p>The Trust screens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • known positive MRSA cases; • high risk areas e.g. Neonatal and Renal ICU • any other patient following assessment who has had frequent admissions etc on the advice of the Infection Control Team and the Infection Control Doctor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those about to commence renal dialysis and at quarterly intervals thereafter during their treatment • Neonates admitted to the special care baby unit from other hospitals • Intensive care unit (ICU) patients on admission and at weekly intervals during their stay in ICU • All patients admitted with a history of MRSA 	<p>The Trust has procedures for screening on admission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patients with a history of MRSA; • renal patients; • patients-admitted to HDU/ICU/Neonatal/Special Care Baby Unit; fracture patients 	<p>Not all patients are screened on admission for MRSA. Screening is carried out on all admissions to high risk units e.g. ICU, NICU, oncology etc and patients admitted for high risk surgery e.g. Orthopaedics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRSA screening is generally carried out in the following situations on all sites: • MRSA has been isolated from a laboratory sample; • If the patient has a past history of MRSA; • On admission to ICU/High Dependency Units and regularly thereafter; • Prior to Cardiac Surgery. • In addition, on each specific site: <p>Mater site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients admitted from a residential unit. • Musgrave Park • All orthopaedic surgery involving implants on pre-assessment. • All rehabilitation admissions to - Meadowlands 1, 2 & 3 and the Regional Acquired Brain Injury Unit. <p>Belfast City Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All admissions to vascular surgery. • All renal dialysis patients (3-monthly). • All patients on pre-assessment for lung/heart transplant.

Question	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	BHSCT
(i) Cont'd					Royal site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All admissions to the Burns Unit. Some Thoracic patients. Orthopaedic patients at pre-assessment. Pre-assessment clinic for some general surgery.
(ii) transfer, for MRSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All transfers, including inter Trust i.e. hospitals within the Trust All nursing/residential homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients being transferred to other hospitals for cardiothoracic procedures Orthopaedic patients prior to transfer to other hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All patients from outside the Southern Trust area. All patients being transferred to other Trusts for cardiac or orthopaedic procedures. 	All patients transferred from another ward / hospital or health care facility are screened for MRSA.	If the patient is transferred from a hospital outside Northern Ireland.
(b) treating patients who test positively for MRSA;	<p>Staff from the Trust's Infection Control Team request staff to assess for the possibility of decolonisation in consultation with the patient's consultant/medical staff and they prescribe the medication.</p> <p>If not suitable for full decolonisation, patients are assessed for the suitability for daily washes with triclosan/skisan (which also needs to be prescribed).</p> <p>Medical staff liaise with Consultant Microbiologist re antibiotic therapy, if required.</p>	<p>Following clinical/medical assessment patients who have tested positive for MRSA would commence a course of antibiotic cream to the nostrils and antiseptic skin washes. The patient would be isolated as appropriate and standard infection control precautions heightened. Those deemed to have an MRSA infection would be commenced on appropriate antibiotic treatment.</p>	<p>A risk assessment of patients with a positive diagnosis of MRSA will be made as to whether they are infected or colonised, and the multi-disciplinary team will plan their treatment accordingly. Treatment will be either systemic treatment with antibiotics plus or minus decolonization therapy or decolonization therapy.</p>	<p>Patients who test positive for MRSA are treated with decolonisation creams to their nose, axillae and groin & any broken skin areas.</p>	<p>Patients who are identified as MRSA positive are normally offered a decolonisation treatment of nasal ointment and antiseptic skin washes. There may be circumstances where this is not deemed clinically appropriate. The Belfast Trust has also developed a Care Pathway for patients admitted with MRSA or patients newly diagnosed with MRSA after admission.</p>
(c) notifying relatives of patients who test positively for MRSA;	See answer to AQW 2978/09, 12 December 2008				
(d) offering medical advice to relatives of patients who test positively for MRSA;	See answer to AQW 2978/09, 12 December 2008				

Question	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	BHSCT
(e) washing the clothes of patients who test positively for MRSA;	Nurses at ward level provide patients/relatives with a home laundry advice leaflet and explain the procedure. Relatives are provided with a laundry bag for infected laundry which also has the advice written on the side of the bag. Infection control staff issue to the ward an advice sheet re MRSA on new cases.	Information regarding washing of clothing is detailed in the DHSSPS MRSA information leaflet which is issued to patients/relatives as appropriate. Nursing staff would also provide patients/relatives with information relating to the laundering of patients' personal clothing.	Relatives will be advised to wash the clothes of all patients who test positively for MRSA separately from other clothes. They will be advised to wash the clothes at the highest temperature possible for the individual items using a non-touch technique.	Laundry is subject to thermal disinfection by the Trust laundries	Patients and relatives are advised to wash patients' clothes separately and at the highest temperature compatible with fabric, as described in the DHSSPS MRSA leaflet.
f) allowing family members to carry out minor medical care such as swabbing on patients who test positively for MRSA;	Infection Control advice would be that for close contact family members should wear apron and gloves and adhere to good hand washing.	Family members would not be involved in carrying out medical care.	Relatives who provide complex care to patients are advised on an individual basis of the infection control precautions required. Swabbing by relatives is not a practice advocated in the Southern Trust.	The likelihood of relatives being asked to 'swab' an MRSA positive patient is very small and would only be done following clear instruction and in very specific circumstances.	Family members are not expected to undertake swabbing of patients.
How many occasions these procedures were not followed in the last calendar year?	This information is not available.				

Genetically Modified Crops

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the types of genetically modified (GM) imported animal feed stuffs, broken down by (i) the quantity of each type; and (ii) the country of origin, in each year since 1998. (AQW 6276/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available. There is no legal requirement to collect information on the quantities, or country of origin, of imported genetically modified feed stuffs. Only those genetically modified feeds authorised by the European Union (EU) can be imported into the EU.

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has had any recent meetings with the Commissioner for Children and Young People; and, if so, to give the purpose of the meetings. (AQW 6279/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I met the Commissioner on Tuesday 24 February to discuss Speech and Language services for Children and Young People.

Residential Care Units

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the total cost of residential care units, broken down by Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 6280/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below sets out the total cost of residential care homes for 2007/2008, broken down by Health and Social Care Trusts.

HSC Trust	Expenditure £000s
Belfast HSC Trust	40,199
Northern HSC Trust	39,170
South Eastern HSC Trust	35,417
Southern HSC Trust	19,507
Western HSC Trust	32,796

Young People in Residential Care

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the cost of keeping a young person in residential care, broken down by (i) residential care unit; and (ii) Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 6281/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The cost of keeping a young person in residential care broken down by residential care unit is not available.
- (ii) The estimated cost of keeping a young person in residential care broken down by Health and Social Care Trust is shown in the table below;

HSC Trust	Average cost per occupied patient week (£)
Belfast HSC Trust	2,619
Northern HSC Trust	2,687
South Eastern HSC Trust	3,099
Southern HSC Trust	3,005
Western HSC Trust	3,683

Source: Annual Trust Financial Returns

The above unit costs take no account of individual case complexity.

Ambulances

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his definition of the golden hour for ambulances. (AQW 6293/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The 'golden hour' is regarded as the period immediately following traumatic injury in which medical treatment is most effective; although no generally accepted definition exists. However, this term is not normally used in the context of emergency ambulance response. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service aims to respond to all life-threatening calls, including traumatic injury, within 8 minutes.

Patients with Learning Disabilities

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the cost per year to the Health Service, of patients with learning disabilities. (AQW 6294/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost to the Health Service of providing learning disability services to clients in 2007/08 was £200m.

Muckamore Abbey Hospital

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what his long term plans are for Muckamore Abbey Hospital. (AQW 6295/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As supported in the Bamford Review Equal Lives Report, plans are being made at Muckamore Abbey Hospital for approximately 160 people who do not require hospital treatment, to be resettled into appropriate community services.

In addition, there are plans to provide 87 assessment and treatment beds for adults with learning disabilities who require a short-term inpatient admission but who will return home following their treatment. Of these beds, 68 will provide a service for people from the Belfast, South Eastern and Northern Health and Social Care Trust areas. The remaining 19 beds will provide a regional service for people with learning disabilities who require treatment because of offending behaviours.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether all Northern Health & Social Services Board jobs based at County Hall in Ballymena will be retained at County Hall, as indicated in an article in the Ballymena Guardian on 12/03/2009. (AQW 6302/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 4 February 2009 I wrote to Chairs and Chief Executives of Health and Social Care bodies announcing my decisions on the location of the headquarters of the new HSC organisations. In the letter, the text of which is set out below, I advised that as a result of those decisions, the majority of staff who will not be working in the new headquarters will remain in their current location at 1 April 2009.

Exact numbers will depend on the outcome of current staff mapping and the application of an agreed human resources framework. However, we estimate under these arrangements over 80% of staff affected by the reforms will remain in their current location.

Letter issued on 4 February 2009 to Chairs and Chief Executives of Health and Social Care bodies:

I am pleased to be able to write to you formally about the decisions on the location of the headquarters of the new HSC organisations with effect from 1 April 2009.

Through the consultation processes associated with this phase of the reforms, staff and Trades Unions have emphasised the importance of timely decisions on location and a commitment was given by the Department that an announcement would be made at the end of January 2009.

From the outset I made it clear that, irrespective of the location of the headquarters, the new structures would maintain the strong local presence that is a feature of the health and social care system. As a result of these decisions, the great majority of staff who will not be working in the new headquarters will remain in their current location in Londonderry, Ballymena, Armagh, Broughshane, Omagh, Lurgan and Belfast at 1 April 2009.

The following decisions have been the subject of a comprehensive scoping exercise for suitable accommodation, business case approval by DFP and equality screening, carried out in line with existing guidance:-

- The Health and Social Care Board headquarters will be based in the current EHSSB HQ from 1 April 2009. Commissioning Support Units will be based in Londonderry, Ballymena, Armagh and Belfast.
- From 1 April 2009, the Public Health Agency headquarters will be based in surplus DHSSPS accommodation in Stoney Road, Dundonald on an interim basis until March 2010, with other Belfast-based staff, such as the Health Promotion Agency, remaining in their current accommodation. Work will commence immediately on the development of a longer term solution for the Agency headquarters based in Belfast, which is intended to be in an area that will reflect its important role in addressing health inequalities. Agency staff will also be based in the four Commissioning Support Units.
- The Business Services Organisation headquarters will be located on an interim basis in the CSA headquarters in Franklin Street, Belfast where the great majority of its staff are currently based. Staff currently based in Londonderry and elsewhere will remain in their present location. A further comprehensive option appraisal will be carried out to determine the location and accommodation for the shared service centres. There will also be an exercise to determine the location of the permanent headquarters which will be sited outside Belfast.

- The PCC headquarters will be based in suitable leased accommodation in Antrim. Four of the five local offices will be based in the same locations as the existing HSS Councils – Broughshane, Belfast, Lurgan and Omagh. New premises will be required for the Omagh office because staff are currently housed on Trust property. The new local office for the South Eastern area will be located in Newtownards.

We estimate that under these arrangements over 80% of staff will remain in their current location and over one third of the tier 3 posts will not be in headquarters. We are also examining the scope for further regional functions to be provided from local CSUs.

These decisions have taken account of the need to minimise as far as possible the impact for the majority of staff and ensure resources are not diverted from frontline services. We are also committed to applying the agreed principles that were adopted as part of the Human Resource Framework. The Framework sets out the arrangements that will govern the management of staff and staff issues during the structural reforms and also provides important mitigating measures and protections for staff in terms of location and over the next two years we shall closely monitor its application. These steps are part of our clear commitment to make every effort to avoid compulsory redundancies.

I trust that this provides clarity on the important issue of location. Enquiries about individual circumstances should be handled by the existing employer until 31 March and by the new employer with effect from 1 April 2009.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many jobs there have been in the (i) Northern Health and Social Services Board; (ii) Western Health and Social Services Board; (iii) Eastern Health and Social Services Board; and (iv) Southern Health and Social Services Board in (a) 2006/07; (b) 2007/08; and (c) 2008/09. (AQW 6303/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

HSC JOBS1 AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER IN EACH HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD, 2006 - 2008

HSS Board	September 2006		September 2007		September 2008	
	Headcount ³	WTE ^{2,3}	Headcount ³	WTE ^{2,3}	Headcount ³	WTE ^{2,3}
Northern	256	236.7	237	214.5	203	180.8
Western	210	195.7	232	215.5	215	198.6
Eastern	333	307.5	259	233.1	273	247.5
Southern 4	383	282.6	212	186.7	186	165.8

Source: Human Resource Management System and Health and Social Care Workforce Vacancy Survey

Notes:

- ¹ Jobs are defined as staff in post plus vacancies at the mid-point of each financial year.
- ² WTE = whole-time equivalent.
- ³ Figures exclude bank staff or those with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03. Figures include staff on secondment.
- ⁴ The Southern HSS Board figures show a significant reduction in jobs from 2006 to 2008. This was due to the transfer of Internal Audit, Social Care Training Unit and Southern Area Urgent Care Services to the Southern HSC Trust.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Eastern Health and Social Services Board jobs there are per head of population in that Board area. (AQW 6304/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

HSC JOBS¹ AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2008 IN EACH HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD AREA PER 1,000 POPULATION.⁴

HSS Board area	Jobs (headcount ³) per 1,000 population	Jobs (WTE ^{2,3}) per 1,000 population
Eastern ⁵	48.4	40.2
Northern	28.7	23.3
Western	38.0	30.6
Southern	33.0	25.0

Source: Human Resource Management System and Health and Social Care Workforce Vacancy Survey

Notes:

- ¹ Jobs are defined as staff in post plus vacancies at 30 September 2008.
- ² WTE = whole-time equivalent.
- ³ Figures exclude bank staff or those with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03.
- ⁴ The 2007 mid-year estimate of population is the latest available from the General Register Office for Northern Ireland.
- ⁵ The Eastern Board area figures include jobs within Regional Services, such as Central Services Agency, Blood Transfusion Services and The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority which are located within the Belfast area but provide services to all of Northern Ireland.
- ⁶ Ambulance Trust jobs have been allocated to the Board areas in which they are primarily based.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Northern Health and Social Services Board jobs there are per head of population in that Board area. (AQW 6305/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

HSC JOBS¹ AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2008 IN EACH HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD AREA PER 1,000 POPULATION.⁴

HSS Board area	Jobs (headcount ³) per 1,000 population	Jobs (WTE ^{2,3}) per 1,000 population
Eastern ⁵	48.4	40.2
Northern	28.7	23.3
Western	38.0	30.6
Southern	33.0	25.0

Source: Human Resource Management System and Health and Social Care Workforce Vacancy Survey

Notes:

- ¹ Jobs are defined as staff in post plus vacancies at 30 September 2008.
- ² WTE = whole-time equivalent.
- ³ Figures exclude bank staff or those with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03.
- ⁴ The 2007 mid-year estimate of population is the latest available from the General Register Office for Northern Ireland.
- ⁵ The Eastern Board area figures include jobs within Regional Services, such as Central Services Agency, Blood Transfusion Services and The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority which are located within the Belfast area but provide services to all of Northern Ireland.
- ⁶ Ambulance Trust jobs have been allocated to the Board areas in which they are primarily based.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Western Health and Social Services Board jobs there are per head of population in that Board area. (AQW 6306/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

HSC JOBS¹ AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2008 IN EACH HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD AREA PER 1,000 POPULATION.⁴

HSS Board area	Jobs (headcount ³) per 1,000 population	Jobs (WTE ^{2,3}) per 1,000 population
Eastern ⁵	48.4	40.2
Northern	28.7	23.3
Western	38.0	30.6
Southern	33.0	25.0

Source: Human Resource Management System and Health and Social Care Workforce Vacancy Survey

Notes:

- ¹ Jobs are defined as staff in post plus vacancies at 30 September 2008.
- ² WTE = whole-time equivalent.
- ³ Figures exclude bank staff or those with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03.
- ⁴ The 2007 mid-year estimate of population is the latest available from the General Register Office for Northern Ireland.
- ⁵ The Eastern Board area figures include jobs within Regional Services, such as Central Services Agency, Blood Transfusion Services and The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority which are located within the Belfast area but provide services to all of Northern Ireland.
- ⁶ Ambulance Trust jobs have been allocated to the Board areas in which they are primarily based.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many people over 46 years old who have sexually transmitted diseases; and (ii) on average for how long they have suffered from this disease. (AQW 6318/09)

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

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people under 45 years of age who have sexually transmitted diseases; and on average, for the length of time they have suffered from the disease. (AQW 6319/09)

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

Abortions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department determines the legality of each abortion performed in each of the last five years. (AQW 6322/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Professionals must provide care within the law in Northern Ireland. The decision to advise a woman to have a termination of pregnancy will be a matter for professional clinical judgement, made within the legal framework which currently exists in Northern Ireland.

In September 2005 the then Chief Medical Officer, Dr Henrietta Campbell, wrote to all health workers who may be involved in the termination of pregnancy setting out the legal criteria under which a termination of pregnancy may be carried out. In March 2008 the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, wrote again reiterating the legal position.

On Friday 13 March my Department issued Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy: The Law and Clinical Practice in Northern Ireland to health professionals. This document re-states the legal criteria that must be met for a termination of pregnancy to be carried out in Northern Ireland.

Abortions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in which hospitals were abortions performed in each of the last five years. (AQW 6323/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Guidance issued by the Office of National Statistics states that “the identity of the practitioner as the person who carried out the procedure should be protected. Similarly the identity of the hospital as the place where the termination occurred should also be protected”. It is therefore not appropriate to state in which hospitals abortions were performed in each of the last five years.

Abortions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what official system his Department uses to monitor abortions. (AQW 6324/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Health does not hold an official system solely for monitoring terminations of pregnancy.

The Department holds information on the Hospital Inpatient System which records information on diagnosis and procedures carried out on patients admitted to acute Health and Social Care hospitals in Northern Ireland as inpatients or day cases. This includes patients who have had a termination of pregnancy.

Southern Health and Social Services Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Southern Health and Social Services Board jobs there are per head of population in that Board area. (AQW 6325/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

HSC JOBS¹ AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2008 IN EACH HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD AREA PER 1,000 POPULATION.⁴

HSS Board area	Jobs (headcount ³) per 1,000 population	Jobs (WTE ^{2,3}) per 1,000 population
Eastern ⁵	48.4	40.2
Northern	28.7	23.3
Western	38.0	30.6
Southern	33.0	25.0

Source: Human Resource Management System and Health and Social Care Workforce Vacancy Survey

Notes:

- ¹ Jobs are defined as staff in post plus vacancies at 30 September 2008.
- ² WTE = whole-time equivalent.
- ³ Figures exclude bank staff or those with a whole-time equivalent of less than or equal to 0.03.
- ⁴ The 2007 mid-year estimate of population is the latest available from the General Register Office for Northern Ireland.
- ⁵ The Eastern Board area figures include jobs within Regional Services, such as Central Services Agency, Blood Transfusion Services and The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority which are located within the Belfast area but provide services to all of Northern Ireland.
- ⁶ Ambulance Trust jobs have been allocated to the Board areas in which they are primarily based.

Northern Health and Social Services Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will take into account the Bain Report proposal that public sector jobs should be relocated to, not from Ballymena, when considering the location of jobs currently based in the Northern Health and Social Services Board area. (AQW 6326/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I made it clear from the outset in my proposals for the reform of Health and Social Care structures that, irrespective of the location of the headquarters, the new structures would maintain the strong local presence that is a feature of the health and social care system.

As a result of the decisions contained in my announcement of 4 February, it is estimated that over 80% of staff who will not be working in the new headquarters will remain in their current location in Londonderry, Ballymena, Armagh, Broughshane, Omagh, Lurgan and Belfast at 1 April 2009.

I have noted the recommendations in Professor Bain's Report and am aware that decisions around the future location of public sector jobs could have important implications for communities throughout Northern Ireland. Indeed, the wide dispersal of 70,000 health and social care sector jobs in NI, particularly high quality jobs outside Belfast, is already in evidence.

I will therefore engage with colleagues on the Executive in addressing the recommendations of the Bain Review. However, this process will inevitably take some time and you will understand that it was imperative for a number of reasons including service continuity and staff morale that the Department continued with its work, in line with current guidance, to determine the location of the new health and social care bodies from April 2009.

Northern Health and Social Services Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can give an assurance that none of the jobs in the Information Services Department of the Northern Health and Social Services Board will be relocated to Belfast. (AQW 6327/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On 4 February 2009 I wrote to Chairs and Chief Executives of Health and Social Care bodies, and trade unions, informing them that it is estimated that 80% of staff affected by these reforms will remain in their current location. From 1 April 2009 the Information Services Department of the Northern Health and Social Services Board will become part of the Health and Social Care Board. Decisions on location will take account of the need to minimise as far as possible the impact for the majority of staff. At this stage I cannot give any assurance for one particular group.

Regional Health and Social Care Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if department, heads in the new Regional Health and Social Care Board will have a direct say in where their staff will be located; or will there be set criteria or a policy that will dictate where jobs are located. (AQW 6328/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer the member to my answer to AQW 6302 on 30 March. The final location of staff will depend on the outcome of the current staff mapping exercise and the application of an agreed human resources framework.

Northern Ireland Hospice Care Centre

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what economic and medical assistance his Department gives to the Northern Ireland Hospice Care Centre. (AQW 6334/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department provides Northern Ireland Hospice Care (NIHC) with a core annual grant of £130k, together with £200k recurrent funding to develop outreach nursing services at the Children's Hospice. During 2008/09, I have also agreed to a £1k allocation for social work training and awarded a grant of £7k for the provision of siblings' weekends at the children's hospice.

Arrangements are also in place for Commissioners to provide 50% funding per adult patient cared for by NIHC. For the financial year 2008/09, funding for adults' and children's services is expected to amount to £2.543m.

Although my Department does not directly provide medical assistance to NIHC, junior medical staff at the hospice are funded by the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency and medications are funded by the Central Services Agency.

MacMillan Cancer Support

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what economic and medical assistance his Department gives to the MacMillan Cancer Support. (AQW 6335/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Firstly I would like to recognise the invaluable contribution Macmillan makes to the care of cancer patients. As one of the largest national charities Macmillan has used its considerable resources to good effect in improving wellbeing of those affected by cancer in Northern Ireland. In common with health departments in other UK jurisdictions, the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety does not supply economic or medical assistance to Macmillan Cancer Support. The services Macmillan provides are entirely independent of Government support.

Childhood Obesity

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to tackle childhood obesity. (AQW 6342/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Tackling childhood obesity in Northern Ireland is a top priority for my Department. To this end I have established a cross-sectoral Obesity Prevention Steering Group (OPSG) with responsibility for taking forward the recommendations contained in the Fit Futures Implementation Plan. This year we shall be developing a life course approach to improve participation in physical activity, increasing awareness of healthy eating and promoting healthy weight within an over-arching Obesity Strategic Framework.

Preventing the rise of childhood obesity will have a positive impact on the health of our communities in the future and whilst I acknowledge appropriate clinical interventions have a role to play, I believe we need to place particular emphasis on the early prevention of obesity which can help reduce related health issues such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

Outpatients Appointment Targets

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why some Health and Social Care Trusts have missed their outpatients appointment targets. (AQW 6356/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All Trusts have made satisfactory progress towards achieving the outpatients waiting list targets set for 2008/09. However, breaches of these target times can and will occur due to a range of unforeseen circumstances including capacity issues, recruitment issues and staff absenteeism.

My Department has established robust monitoring and performance management arrangements to ensure that all Trusts continue to make progress towards the achievement of the Priority for Action elective care targets.

Dementia

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have dementia. (AQW 6357/09)

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

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have Alzheimer's disease. (AQW 6358/09)

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

Epilepsy

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been referred to Great Ormond Street hospital for treatment for epilepsy in the last three years. (AQW 6359/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows the number of people that have been referred from Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland to Great Ormond Street hospital for treatment for epilepsy in each of the last three years.

	Year		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 ¹
Number of patients transferred from HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland to Great Ormond Street hospital for treatment for epilepsy	2	4	9

Source: Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Boards

¹ – Data for 2008/09 includes patients transferred up to 20th March 2009.

Family Support Workers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 5815/09, if there will be a reduction in the number of family support workers in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, from the eight currently in the post. (AQW 6365/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust currently has no plans to reduce the number of family support workers from the eight currently in post in the Armagh and Dungannon locality.

Ambulances

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions have taken place with private companies and charity representatives about the provision of an air ambulance. (AQW 6371/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Officials from my Department have met with representatives of the Ireland Air Ambulance charity, also known as Alpha 5 to discuss the charity's proposals for a helicopter emergency medical service. My Department has had no meetings with representatives of other private companies or charities regarding an air ambulance service.

In all contacts with Ireland Air Ambulance, officials have made clear that our policy priority for some years to come must be to invest in modernising ground ambulance services. This is essential to enable the ambulance service to improve its response to emergency life-threatening calls, to secure the best possible outcomes for patients and to deliver its performance targets.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what his Department is doing to tackle irresponsible drinking. (AQW 6380/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department takes the misuse of alcohol very seriously, particularly binge drinking and underage drinking. Through the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs, current actions to address this issue include:

- the establishment of a binge drinking advisory group;
- the continuation of the award winning binge drinking public information campaign;
- the provision of local treatment, support and information programmes; and
- positive engagement with the drinks industry.

Latest figures from the Adult Drinking Patterns Survey show that binge drinking levels have fallen from 43% of men and 33% of women in 2005 to 33% and 29% respectively in 2008. These levels are still too high and I intend to issue an integrated action plan to address young people's drinking in the near future.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the estimated annual cost of alcohol misuse. (AQW 6381/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A 1998 report undertaken by my Department concluded that alcohol misuse was costing Northern Ireland Society approximately £770 million per year, and of this the direct costs to the Health Service were in the region of £25 million per year. As the original costings are now likely to be an underestimate my Department intends to update these over the next financial year.

Northern Health and Social Services Board

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many workers in the Northern Health and Social Services Board have been informed that they, or their positions, are being moved out of the Northern Health and Social Services Board area. (AQW 6382/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I understand that no workers have been given formal notice that they, or their positions, are being moved out the Northern Health and Social Services Board area.

Mental Health Services

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what community groups and other organisations were consulted in relation to the new complaints system for mental health services. (AQW 6391/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A consultation paper, Complaints in the HPSS, was issued in November 2006. As a public consultation this was open to all individuals, groups and organisations. The consultation period closed in March 2007, by which time 91 responses had been received from a wide cross-section of interested parties including the HSC, community, voluntary, private and professional organisations.

Complaints in the HPSS and the subsequent Complaints in HSC: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning apply equally to all health and social care services. This includes, but is not specific to, mental health services.

A Summary of Responses to the consultation is available on http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc_complaints_consultation_summary_of_responses.pdf

New Health Service Dental Contract

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on the new health service dental contract. (AQW 6405/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Negotiations between my Department and the British Dental association on a new bespoke primary dental care contract for Northern Ireland are ongoing. Once the contract is agreed it is intended that it will be piloted across a number of sites by the end of this year.

The new contract will allow dental services to be targeted at the groups and areas which have the highest need, provide stable and sustainable dental services, fairly remunerate dentists for the services they provide and improve the oral health of the people of Northern Ireland.

Charges for Drugs

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the reasons why the transitional provisions contained in the Charges for Drugs and Appliances Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008,

whereby a reduction in the regulated charges for 2009 have been implemented, are without a pro-rata refund for those who hold a 12 month certificate of prepayment of charges valid from 2008 to 2009. (AQW 6445/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The reduced £3 charge for each prescription item dispensed, and reductions in the cost of 4- and 12-monthly Prescription Prepayment Certificates (PPCs) to £25 and £9 respectively, came into effect on 1 January 2009. It was decided not to issue pro rata refunds in respect of PPCs that had already been purchased, as for the great majority of people who purchase these, a PPC continues to represent a saving, since holders of a PPC receive unlimited, free prescriptions for the valid period.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that both Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service appliances in Portstewart are available for an immediate dispatch to an emergency fire or rescue callout. (AQW 6450/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As I have indicated previously, I am considering proposals about the future of the second appliance from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board. Pending my decision on those proposals, both appliances are available for immediate dispatch.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety who his Special Advisor is for questions regarding the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. (AQW 6452/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have no Special Adviser specifically for questions regarding the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. I take advice on operational matters from the Chief Fire Officer and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board.

Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the total number of (i) Directors; (ii) Assistant Directors; and (iii) support staff employed in each of the Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 6518/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is given in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF (I) DIRECTORS, (II) ASSISTANT DIRECTORS AND (III) SUPPORT STAFF EMPLOYED BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT MARCH 2009.

HSC Trust	Directors		Assistant Directors		Administrative Support Staff ²	
	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹
Belfast	9	9.0	38	38.0	3,511	2,990.3
Northern	6	6.0	30	29.7	2,082	1,740.7
South Eastern	8	8.0	39	39.0	1,495	1,256.9
Southern	8	8.0	33	32.0	1,768	1,521.2
Western	8	8.0	25	25.0	1,770	1,582.3
Total	39	39.0	165	163.7	10,626	9,091.4

Source: Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
2. Administrative Support Staff includes all Administration staff employed within HSC Trusts below Director / Assistant Director level.
3. Northern HSC Trust reported two vacancies at Director level, and there is currently one Director level vacancy at Belfast HSC Trust.

Senior Nursing Positions

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nurses in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, who took early retirement, are back in senior nursing positions.

(AQW 6522/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Trust management have advised there are no nurses that availed of early retirement, re-engaged in senior nursing positions.

Midwife-Led Maternity Unit in Omagh

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the estimated number of women expected to have 'no risk' labours (i) if his Department will establish a community midwifery led unit in Omagh; and (ii) to detail the outcome of the recent consultation exercise on this matter. (AQW 6541/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- i) I want to give my fullest consideration and to take the necessary professional advice on all of the issues raised in the Western Board's feasibility report on the provision of a midwife-led maternity unit in Omagh. I will make an appropriate announcement when I have done so.
- ii) The key issues which emerged from the Western Board's study were:
 - Mother and baby safety;
 - The need for an effective transfer system in the case of an emergency;
 - Eligibility criteria;
 - The availability of skilled midwives;
 - Impact on plans for the new south west acute hospital;
 - The long-term sustainability of a midwife led unit;
 - Impact on existing obstetric units at Altnagelvin and Erne hospitals; and
 - Costs and value for money.

Replacing Light Bulbs in Hospitals

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the protocol is for replacing light bulbs in hospitals in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area; and the associated costs of each replacement.

(AQW 6562/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Health and Social Care Trust replace lamps as soon as reasonably practical after a lamp failure is notified to the Trust's Estates Department. The average cost of routine lamp replacement is £5.40. This covers all lamps used in WHSCT facilities such as compact fluorescent, fluorescent, low voltage, filament lamps, tungsten halogen and other discharge lighting.

Nursing Staff

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what opportunities are available in the Western Health and Social Care area for young nursing staff to gain experience. (AQW 6563/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Newly qualified nurses are recruited at Band 5, and following induction, are provided with a preceptor during the first 6-12 months of their experience to provide them with support and enable them build their confidence within a safe environment. A wide range of skills training is funded by my Department and available through the In-service Education and Development Consortium.

Opportunities are also provided for nursing staff to transfer between different specialties within the service area that they are qualified to work. This can be either to meet individual requests or service needs. This helps broaden their overall experience and opens up new career and promotion opportunities.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to confirm his commitment to Health and Social Services Boards, following its reorganisation on 1 April 2009, that 80% of public sector jobs will remain in local areas and that senior positions will not be centralised in Belfast; and (ii) if he will act in accordance with the recommendations of the Bain Report in relation to the location and decentralisation of public sector jobs. (AQW 6595/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) In my 4 February 2009 announcement on the location of the headquarters of the new organisations, it was estimated that over 80% of staff would remain in their current location and over one third of the Tier 3 posts would not be in headquarters. Exact numbers and the final location of staff will depend on the outcome of current staff mapping and the application of an agreed human resources framework.
- (ii) I will engage with colleagues on the Executive in addressing the recommendations of the Bain Review. However, this process will inevitably take some time and you will understand that it was imperative for a number of reasons including service continuity and staff morale that the Department continued with its work, in line with current guidance, to determine the location of the new health and social care bodies from April 2009.

Ambulances

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many ambulances service the Mid Ulster area. (AQW 6621/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are two ambulance stations in Mid-Ulster at Magherafelt and Cookstown. The ambulance resources based at these stations are shown in the table below.

Ambulance Station	A&E ambulances	Intermediate Care Vehicles	Patient Care Service vehicles
Magherafelt	5	4	-
Cookstown	1	-	2

It is important to recognise that, as the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service dynamically deploys its emergency response fleet and will send the nearest available appropriate resource to 999 calls, it is possible that responses to 999 calls from the Mid-Ulster area will not originate from Magherafelt or Cookstown ambulance stations.

Ambulances

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the average waiting time is for patients requiring ambulance transport to the Royal Victoria Hospital from the (i) Mid-Ulster Hospital; and (ii) Antrim Area Hospital. (AQW 6622/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The arrangements for the inter-hospital transfer of patients apply uniformly across all hospitals in Northern Ireland. The hospital where the patient is resident makes a booking for transport with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) clinically categorising the patient transfer as either “emergency” or “routine”.

NIAS has advised that the average waiting time for inter-hospital transfers is not routinely collected and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Ambulances

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the transfer arrangements are for patients travelling from the (i) Mid-Ulster Hospital; and (ii) Antrim Area Hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital. (AQW 6623/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The arrangements for the inter-hospital transfer of patients apply uniformly across all hospitals in Northern Ireland. The hospital where the patient is resident makes a booking for transport with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) clinically categorising the patient transfer as either “emergency” or “routine”.

Emergency transports receive an immediate response from the nearest appropriate emergency ambulance. Non-emergency transfers receive a planned response in line with timeframes outlined by the clinician.

These procedures are well established and have served patients well for many years.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many employees are in his Department in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area. (AQW 6644/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The DHSSPS has 35 employees working in Waterside House, Londonderry at 26 March 2009.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many employees in his Department travel from Londonderry/Derry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6668/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The DHSSPS currently has 6 employees with an address in Londonderry/Derry who work in the Belfast area.

The 6 officers currently have an address with a postcode of BT47 and BT48.

Scottish Medicines Consortium

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the Scottish Medicines Consortium’s legal standing in Northern Ireland. (AQW 6724/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) assesses and makes recommendations on all new drugs to NHS Boards and their Area Drug and Therapeutics Committees across Scotland. SMC has no legal standing in Northern Ireland. SMC guidance is not currently reviewed or assessed as applicable in Northern Ireland.

Forum For Action On Substance Abuse

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what financial assistance he will give the Forum For Action On Substance Abuse in North Down as its funding will end in two months. (AQW 6789/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The allocation of local funding, as well as the identification of local needs and local priorities, is the responsibility of the local Health and Social Care organisations. In the case of the FASA initiative in North Down neither the Department nor the local Drug and Alcohol Team provided funding for its establishment.

I do want to ensure the provision of an appropriate range of services across Northern Ireland to support those individuals and families affected by substance misuse. The new Public Health Agency, established on 1 April 2009, will therefore consider how best to provide resources for initiatives that help reduce the harm related to alcohol and drug misuse across Northern Ireland to organisations such as FASA and others.

Young People with Drugs and Alcohol Problems

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to assist young people with drugs and alcohol problems. (AQW 6792/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care (HSC) commissions and funds a number of specialist services at a local level that provide treatment through HSC facilities for young people with drug and alcohol dependencies. These include:

Substance Misuse services for young people aged 17 and under based on a 4-tier model;

Tier 2/3 Counselling, Support & Mentoring Services for young people under 18; and

Tier 3/4 specialist treatment services for young people under 18

In addition, a number of education, awareness raising and training initiatives have been put in place, and all residents (including young people) also have access to generic primary/secondary care services who will meet other physical/mental health needs that may arise because of dependency to drugs and/or alcohol.

Children in Need

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's guidance in relation to those children categorised as 'children in need'. (AQW 6817/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Article 17 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 sets out the circumstances in which a child is to be considered 'in need'. Part IV of, and Schedule 2 to, the Order set out the main responsibilities of Health and Social Care Trusts for children in their areas who are in need and their families; and children in need whom they look after. Guidance on the statutory framework and its underlying principles is contained in eight volumes of Children (NI) Order 1995 Guidance and Regulations.

A single assessment framework, Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland, (UNOCINI) has been developed for use by those involved in assessing the needs of children in need in Northern Ireland. Guidance has also been issued to support those using the new framework.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what recognition his Department gives to fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome/M.E. (AQW 6836/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In January 2008, my Department endorsed the NICE clinical guidelines on the diagnosis and management of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) in adults and children in Northern Ireland. These guidelines are endorsed as developmental standards, and the Department expects Trusts to take account of them in planning and delivering their services.

In relation to Fibromyalgia, the cause of this condition remains unknown. The variability of symptoms in potential sufferers means that there is difficulty in diagnosis. At present there is no dedicated fibromyalgia service and no diagnostic test or cure for the illness.

The majority of care for both conditions is provided by general practitioners. Patients also have full access to a wide range of treatment and support services in secondary, primary and community care settings, including neurology services and mental health services.

Hip Arthroscopy Surgery

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of hip arthroscopy surgery provision. (AQO 2411/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised that hip arthroscopy is a relatively new procedure for the treatment of some hip conditions and the Health Boards have not yet agreed to commission it on a routine basis. The Health Boards have however asked clinicians to submit an evidence based business case for the development of a hip arthroscopy service and the Boards will wish to consider this in full before making decisions on the recurrent funding of a hip arthroscopy service in Northern Ireland. In the interim, where this procedure is recommended on clinical grounds, the Health Boards will consider funding the treatment of individual patients through their standard procedures for extra-contractual referral. The alternative treatment is physiotherapy and medical therapy and this may be offered where it is considered clinically appropriate.

Action Cancer Big Bus

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have had cancer detected through the Action Cancer Big Bus and what financial assistance is provided by his Department for this service. (AQO 2412/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety does not hold any data on how many people have had cancer detected through the Action Cancer Big Bus. The Department does not provide any financial assistance for this service.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what liaison he has had with the Minister for Social Development in relation to the future for neighbourhood renewal. (AQO 2413/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On my behalf officials of this Department have had significant and ongoing contact with DSD. This clearly reflects that tackling health inequalities is one of my key priorities and in this respect there is a strong correlation with the work of Neighbourhood Renewal.

Midwives

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to increase the number of qualified midwives to meet the long term need. (AQO 2414/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A review of the Nursing and Midwifery workforce is currently underway. The review is examining current and future recruitment and retention issues impacting on the workforce, and will provide a prediction of future supply and demand for midwives over the next five years.

I have increased midwifery training commissions for academic year 07/08 and 08/09. Over the last 3 years I have increased midwifery training commissions by 40%, from 44 to 62 places. Further decisions will be taken once I have considered the recommendations of the workforce review. However there are no plans to reduce the midwifery training numbers.

Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-Being

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his priorities for the new Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-Being. (AQO 2415/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Public Health Agency, once established on 1 April, will be asked to develop plans and actions to improve the health of the population, to protect the health of the population and to tackle the particular challenge of reducing health inequalities. There are already clear priorities addressing these issues in the form of Public Service Agreements which cover issues such as life expectancy, smoking, sexual health, obesity, alcohol misuse promoting mental health and suicide.

On the health protection side, the Agency will take forward plans in regard to reducing healthcare associated infections, preparing for pandemic flu and screening programmes.

Following its establishment on 1 April, the new Public Health Agency will be requested to submit its plans to address these priorities, for my approval.

Efficiency Targets

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of his Department achieving 3% efficiency targets. (AQO 2416/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Targets were imposed on all Departments at the same rate and there was no special dispensation made for health - despite inherent underfunding of £600m. The efficiencies are a major challenge for my Department but must be achieved if I am to deliver my service

developments and maintain existing services. We are on course to deliver the full complement of efficiencies for 2008/09.

Resettlement Programme

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans there are to increase day care under the Resettlement Programme. (AQO 2417/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The whole ethos behind the Resettlement Programme is about ensuring the betterment of the lives of people who currently live in learning disability hospitals. It necessarily includes further investment in the community infrastructure to enable those people being resettled to remain in the community and to support them to live independently. Day care services are part of that additional investment. The additional resources of £33m (£17m recurrent) for learning disability services which I secured under the Comprehensive Spending Review for the period 2008-2011 are being used to provide a range of additional services including day care.

My officials are currently in the process of gathering comprehensive information in order to support robust future bidding processes. Any new resources secured for the Resettlement Programme beyond 2011 will also include an element to be invested in the community infrastructure which will include day care.

Home Births

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's policy in relation to women who want to give birth at home. (AQO 2418/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's maternity policies recognise that, for the majority of women, pregnancy and childbirth are normal life events and that promoting women's experience of having choice and control in childbirth can have a significant effect on children's healthy development.

A home birth is therefore an option open to women experiencing a low risk pregnancy and who wish to have their baby delivered at home. Each Trust will have its own arrangements and guidelines for the facilitation and support of home births within their maternity services.

Children's Development and Life Chances

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to help parents in poverty to improve the development and life chances of their children. (AQO 2419/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's family and parenting strategy, Families Matter: Supporting Families in Northern Ireland, gives a commitment to work towards the elimination of poverty, particularly child poverty, through supporting parents who experience poverty. It seeks to increase the range of services available to support families and parents; to ensure that those services are accessible to all families and parents; to improve the range of information available to families and parents to enable them fulfill their duties in bringing up children and to promote multi-agency working. In addition, the public health strategy Investing for Health recognised poverty as a major determinant of health and well-being and as a result many actions are underway at regional and local level in partnership with others.

A&E Patient Priority

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the accepted criteria for determining the priority of patients to be seen at A&E departments. (AQO 2420/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Patients attending A&E, other than emergency or cases such as blue-light ambulances or cardiac cases, are assessed initially by a skilled triage nurse and then treated on the basis of clinical priority.

In addition, the current waiting time target requires Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure that from April 2008, 95% of patients attending A&E are either treated and discharged home, or admitted within four hours of their arrival in the department; no patient should wait longer than 12 hours.

Southern Trust: Agency Staff Spend

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline why £5 million was spent on agency staff in one year, in the Southern Trust area, and what action is being taken in relation to staff recruitment to avoid further expense of this nature. (AQO 2421/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are many reasons why Health and Social Care Trusts may appoint agency staff, for example, during periods of temporary staff shortage it may be necessary to use agency staff to provide short-term cover for essential services, when there is no viable alternative.

The Southern Trust has advised me that they are actively reviewing their agency usage and an Agency Protocol has recently been introduced to facilitate robust monitoring of agency usage.

The Trust has an on-going campaign of recruitment to minimise the need for agency staff and is actively seeking to recruit banks of staff, which can be utilised as required to reduce the need for agency usage. In addition the Trust reports that it continues to complete its restructuring process which will stabilise its staffing compliment.

The Southern Trust assures me that it is committed to providing an excellent service to all patients and clients within its catchment area and recognises the need to balance the provision of high quality services within tight financial constraints.

Extended Schools Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Minister of Education in relation to future funding for Extended Schools Programmes. (AQO 2422/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Extended Schools Programme is an initiative of the Department of Education and as such the future funding of the programme is an issue for that department. Therefore, I have not had discussions with the Minister for Education regarding the funding of this initiative.

Maternity Services

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the pressures facing maternity services. (AQO 2423/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Maternity services in Northern Ireland are of a very high standard, professionally delivered and safe.

The service is currently facing a number of pressures due to increasing numbers of births and the need to reconfigure services to meet modern standards. These pressures are constantly monitored and in response I have recently announced significant investments in the maternity units at both Craigavon and Daisy Hill along with the establishment of a Community Midwife Unit at Lagan Valley Hospital. In addition the EHSSB has recently completed a review of maternity provision in their area aimed at ensuring that there is sufficient capacity moving forward to meet demand.

I am committed to providing high quality, accessible services for all parents and babies.

Efficiency Savings

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the efficiency savings proposals outlined by Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQO 2425/09)

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

	NI £m
(1) RPA	40
(2) Pharmacy and regional procurement	23
(3) Income generation	2
(4) Productivity and general efficiency	120
(5) Service redesign	59
Total 2010/11	244

Final decisions about proposals under consultation may change the split shown between the different categories.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Road Maintenance

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Regional Development to give an assessment of the cost of providing lighting along the full length of the A1 between Newry and Lisburn. (AQW 6308/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that the A1 between Lisburn and Newry is approximately 47 km long, with approximately 5 km currently having lighting, or in the process of being lighted. This is mainly made up of lighting at roundabouts and other intersections, together with the approaches to these features.

The cost of lighting the remaining 42 km of the A1 is estimated to be around £357,000 per km with a total estimated cost of around £15,000,000.

It should also be noted that this estimate does not include the cost for the following:-

Establishing around 80-100 electrical supply points. These supply points would have to be served from the NIE network. Given the isolated rural nature of the terrain and the remoteness of these networks from the A1, the costs involved are likely to be very substantial.

Excavating in adverse ground conditions, as much of the route of the A1 passes through a rock sub-base.

Upgrading older existing lighting systems on the A1 to match the standard of the new lighting.

No estimate has been made in respect of future electricity and maintenance costs.

Roads Service

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Regional Development to breakdown the levels of funding allocated to each section office in his Department's (i) Eastern; and (ii) Southern Divisions. (AQW 6309/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service budget is allocated to its Divisions and the Section Offices on a basis of need.

In relation to roads maintenance, the resources available are allocated to the four Roads Service Divisions using a range of weighted indicators, which are tailored to each maintenance activity, including resurfacing, patching, gully emptying and grass cutting. Divisions use these indicators when apportioning resources across Sections, to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds across the whole of the North. The level of funding allocated to each section office in Eastern and Southern Divisions for maintenance operations, as at 23 March 2009, is provided in the tables below.

ROADS SERVICE EASTERN DIVISION

Section Office	Funding Allocated
Belfast North	£3,779,000
Belfast South	£3,302,000
Castlereagh	£1,928,000
Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus	£3,718,000
North Down	£1,979,000
Lisburn	£5,495,000

ROADS SERVICE SOUTHERN DIVISION

Section Office	Funding Allocated
Ards	£2,326,000
Armagh	£4,650,000
Banbridge	£2,817,000
Craigavon	£3,560,000
Down	£3,828,000
Newry	£4,278,000

In relation to the Roads Service budget for major works, improvements are prioritised across the whole of the North, after considering a wide range of criteria, which includes strategic planning policy, traffic flow, number of accidents, potential savings in travel times, impact on the environment and value for money. While the actual spend on a major work scheme may be within one Roads Service Division, the benefits of such schemes are not confined to the area covered by a Division, Section, constituency or county, in which it is located.

With regard to Roads Service expenditure on minor road improvements, which includes minor works, accident remedial schemes, transportation measures and minor bridge strengthening, the resources available for such works are allocated to the four Roads Service Divisions, on the basis of need. This approach uses indicators such as population, weighted road lengths and the number of accidents. It also prioritises work to our bridge structures, using criteria such as loading restrictions due to bridge failures and/or defects and parapet repairs as a result of changes to current legislation. The Divisional budget is then split across the Sections in the Division using the same criteria. This approach ensures, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds across the North.

Portstewart to Coleraine, Cromore Road

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans there are to upgrade the Portstewart to Coleraine, Cromore Road, in the next two years. (AQW 6333/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is considering a proposal to provide right turning facilities at the Cromore Road / Islandtasserty Road / Agherton Road, staggered junction. However, progress of this scheme would be dependant on the successful acquisition of land and the availability of funding over the next two years.

Road Maintenance

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the expenditure for road maintenance in the (i) Western Region; (ii) Dungannon; (iii) Cookstown; and (iv) Magherafelt for (a) 2004/05; (b) 2005/06; (c) 2006/07; (d) 2007/08; and (e) 2008 to present. (AQW 6336/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service spend on roads maintenance, in Western Division, Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt District Councils, in each financial year from 2004/2005 to 28 February 2009, is set out in the table below.

ROADS SERVICE MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURE

Financial Year	Western Division	Dungannon District Council	Cookstown District Council	Magherafelt District Council
2004/2005	£24,065,000	£4,559,000	£2,615,000	£2,308,000
2005/2006	£23,218,000	£4,252,000	£2,227,000	£2,344,000
2006/2007	£23,267,000	£4,481,000	£2,319,000	£2,242,000
2007/2008	£25,383,000	£4,818,000	£2,367,000	£2,818,000
2008 to 28 February 2009	£22,419,000	£4,116,000	£2,022,000	£2,508,000

Footpath Resurfacing Schemes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what footpath resurfacing schemes are planned for the Donaghadee and Millisle areas, in the next financial year. (AQW 6360/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are no plans to carry out any footway resurfacing schemes in Donaghadee and Millisle during the next financial year.

Steria/Crystal Alliance

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how much of the £70 million paid to Steria/Crystal Alliance has been recouped following termination of the contract between them and NI Water. (AQW 6397/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the contract with Steria was awarded in 2006 and was expected to last seven years at a total cost of £70 million. At the end of December 2008 NIW had paid approximately £27 million under the contract. While the termination of the contract with Steria was announced on 16 December 2008 it only comes into effect on 15 December 2009 and NIW is currently negotiating with Steria on the commercial terms of the termination.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how much NI Water have spent on bottled water since 1 April 2007. (AQW 6398/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it holds a limited stock of bottled water to provide an emergency supply to customers during prolonged interruptions to the public water supply. NIW does not provide bottled water for use by staff except in the Duncrue Street Incinerator control room where welfare and health and safety considerations require the availability of drinking water but restrict the introduction of mains water in close proximity to sensitive electronic equipment. Since 1 April 2007, a total of £25,718 has been spent on bottled water, including £757 on the water used in the control room.

Public Transport

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development which disability groups he has met in relation to public transport issues facing people with disabilities. (AQW 6411/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Since taking up post I have met regularly with the chairman and representatives of the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac). Imtac is the main source of independent advice to Government and others in the North on all transport issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people. My most recent meeting with Imtac, on 19 March 2009, included representatives from Age Sector Platform, Disability Action, East Belfast Trust Sight Support Team, Guide Dogs, Mobilise, the Omnibus Partnership and Shopmobility.

On 17 February I met a delegation from the All Party Assembly Group on Disability. It included representatives from Disability Action, Guide Dogs, the Omnibus Partnership and the Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

In addition, as part of other meetings with MLAs and others, I meet people who represent the age and disability sectors.

Travelwise Safer Routes to School Initiative

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1968/09, the expected timescale for the implementation of the Travelwise Safer Routes to School Initiative. (AQW 6413/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that since the Travelwise Safer Routes to School Initiative was launched in 2004, it has worked in 151 schools in the North, involving over 45,000 pupils and has committed over £2.3 million to this initiative.

Given the impact of the initiative to date, and the further potential benefits to be realised, at the present time Roads Service intends, within available resources, to roll out the Safer Routes to School programme.

On average, there are 30 places available each year, and schools are encouraged to self-nominate for inclusion on the programme.

New A1 Dual Carriageway

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions are being taken to control dust pollution during the building of the new A1 dual carriageway from Cloughogue to Beechill, and the frequency of actions taken. (AQW 6419/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the possibility, that local air quality may be temporarily reduced, as a result of the construction of the A1 Beech Hill to Cloughogue strategic road improvement, was considered in the Environmental Statement (ES) for the scheme. The ES, which was published in 2004, was also the subject of a Public Inquiry in 2005. The ES recognised that the scheme required substantial earthworks, due to the undulating topography and that during prolonged dry periods, higher than normal airborne dust levels may pose a problem, with properties within about a 50 metre radius of the works, being most affected.

The ES requires Lagan Ferrovia, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project (the contractor), to take measures to minimise the amount of dust created by the works. In this respect Roads Service expects the contractor to exercise current good practice, to control dust emanating from the works.

While there have been concerns about dust generated by the works, these have been addressed through direct contact with the contractor's Community Liaison Officer. An example of the type of contact is the ongoing Community Liaison Panel Meetings, which are facilitated by the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council.

I have been informed, that in response to a particular complaint about dust arising from the ongoing processing of rock material, being undertaken north of Cloughogue, the contractor advised you of the minor operational changes, which were implemented following a visit to the site, by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Pollution Control Department and the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council.

These works are also subject to a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit, issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Pollution Control Department.

I am further advised that, in consultation with the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council, the contractor has engaged the services of the School of Chemistry at the Queen's University of Belfast, to set up and monitor dust at 3 strategic locations near the works. Results for the period, 20 October 2008 to 29 January 2009, were presented at the recent meeting of the Community Liaison Panel, held on 13 March 2009, and I understand all councillors were invited to this meeting.

While an interpretative report from Dr Patricks, of Queen's University is awaited, the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council, referring to a German standard in the absence of a

corresponding UK standard, indicate that at present, there does not appear to be a dust nuisance, at the locations being monitored.

The measures, which the contractor is implementing to control dust, are therefore continuing as is the monitoring, which the contractor and other agencies are undertaking to assess their effectiveness.

New A1 Dual Carriageway

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions are being taken to keep existing nearby roads and pavements clean during the building of the new A1 dual carriageway from Cloughogue to Beechill, and the frequency of actions taken. (AQW 6420/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Environmental Statement (ES) for the new A1 dual carriageway, from Cloughogue to Beechill, recognises that wet weather creates problems of mud being dispersed onto the public road network, by vehicles leaving the works site.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that recommendations for controlling this problem include, access being limited to designated points and the washing of mud from construction vehicles. In this respect, Lagan Ferrovial, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project (the contractor) has two water bowsers and two road sweepers, available on the new dual carriageway site, to clear debris from the carriageway. Additional sweepers are available should conditions deteriorate. The contractor also has three foremen and twelve supervisors on the ground, at any one time, who can respond, should this problem arise.

I understand that construction works have now reached a stage where access to the site is limited to three locations, and Roads Service's site representatives have asked the contractor to consider improving facilities, to prevent mud being carried onto the carriageway. Roads Service staff and their site representatives will continue to monitor the conditions of the roads adjacent to accesses to the site, to identify problems of mud on the carriageway and to inform the contractor where action is required if this is observed.

New A1 Dual Carriageway

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development how the amenity of housing developments along the route of the new A1 dual carriageway will be protected when the road is built. (AQW 6421/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that even before publication of the Environmental Statement (ES), when the specimen design for this strategic road improvement was being developed, Roads Service and their technical advisors met, on several occasions, with the Confederation of Community Groups in Newry. The purpose of this was to describe and explain the developing project and to listen to the Group's concerns.

The discussions which took place at that time, resulted in the provision of the Martin's Lane Link, which will cross the new dual carriageway at the location of the former footbridge. This short link road addressed several of the community's concerns, including those about traffic, particularly commercial vehicles, rerouting through the residential areas and passing the several schools in the vicinity, following the closure of the Martin's lane access onto the bypass. This link also provides access, particularly for children from the residential areas on the east side of the new road, to the Corrinshogo playing fields. Requests for a secure boundary between the residential area and the new road were also noted at that time.

The Confederation of Community Groups also submitted comments, following publication of the ES and participated effectively in the subsequent Public Inquiry. For example, in response to the Groups representations and the Inspectors' recommendation, substantial lengths of footway are being provided on the new minor road network, which is being constructed on the west side of the new dual carriageway, in the vicinity of Chancellors Road. This will provide links from the residential areas into the countryside, particularly towards the Bernish view point. Roads Service has also agreed that mature planting would be provided to offset the visual impact at the areas most affected by the scheme. In this respect, the landscape designers from Lagan Ferrovial, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project (the contractor) have already provided proposals to the Parkhead Crescent representative, who, at a meeting with Roads Service on 20 March 2009, requested further consultation with the contractor's designers.

The scheme design aims to meet the “Relevant Air Quality Standards” and maintain road traffic noise below proscribed levels. For example, a low noise surfacing material is proposed for the main carriageway, throughout the scheme. Safety barriers will also be provided, as indicated by the normal risk assessment for the entire route.

While the alignment and main characteristics of the scheme have been confirmed through the Statutory Procedures, which included Public Inquiries, the contractor has appointed a Community Liaison Officer, and a Community Liaison Panel has been formed. Regular meetings with the Community Liaison Panel, which are being facilitated by the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council, are formally reported to the council. These provide an ongoing opportunity for those in the community, who have concerns about the scheme, particularly during this construction stage, to have these matters addressed.

New A1 Dual Carriageway

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment he has made of whether the building of the new A1 dual carriageway will block out light, be overbearing, and present a potential health and safety hazard to the residents of Parkhead Crescent, Newry. (AQW 6422/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Environmental Statement (ES) includes specific reference to the “Visual Impact on dwellings at Parkhead and Carnagat closest to the A1 (approx.65 No)”. It describes this impact as “Adverse to Substantial” particularly since the “first line of houses [Parkhead Crescent] would be approximately 20 metres from the toe of the 8-10 metre high embankment. Views of distant hill tops above the railway embankment would be partially obscured or lost.” My Department’s Roads Service has advised that the primary measures for mitigating this visual and landscape impact, is the provision of appropriate planting, which was the subject of discussion at the ES Public Inquiry and included in the Inspectors’ recommendation.

Therefore, while the ES for the scheme does not specifically indicate that the new road embankment, immediately adjacent to Parkhead Crescent, would block out light, be overbearing, or present a potential health and safety hazard, it does recognise the substantial adverse visual impact which this new road feature will have on the adjacent houses. In this respect, the ES includes recommendations, by way of planting, to mitigate the impact, which were in due course reinforced through the Public Inquiry procedure. I understand that consultation is currently continuing between Roads Service, the landscape designers from Lagan Ferrovia, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project and the representatives of Parkhead Crescent, in relation to the planting of this embankment.

It should be noted that the Independent Inspectors, in commenting on the ES for the A1 Beech Hill to Cloghogue dual carriageway scheme, described it as “an exhaustive examination of the impact of this scheme on the local environment and that it attempted to balance the conflicting interests in accordance with standard procedures.”

Water Resources Management Plan

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has any plans to introduce a water resources management plan, and if so, when this will occur. (AQW 6426/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it has a Water Resource Strategy for the period up to 2030 which was prepared in 2002 and reviewed in 2007. The strategy is used for asset management and operational planning purposes and NIW is currently planning a further update. It intends to award a commission for a new Water Resource Management Plan during April 2009 and expects the Plan to be completed by mid 2010 when any recommendations will be incorporated into the planning process for the price control review in 2013.

Land and Property Services

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development how many water bills for commercial customers are based on information received from Land and Property Services; and how many of these bills have been amended due to inaccurate information provided by Land and Property Services. (AQW 6432/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that from April 2008 over 26,000 unmeasured bills have been issued based on a Net Annual Value provided by Land and Property Services.

NIW does not keep records that identify amended water bills resulting from incorrect data supplied by Land and Property Services, and is therefore unable to provide the details sought.

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department prioritises the repaving of footpaths. (AQW 6460/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has a statutory duty to maintain the public footways in a safe and serviceable condition. Roads Service operates a system of regular safety inspections to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed, as necessary.

These safety inspections help identify the condition of the public footways, and this information is then used in the preparation and prioritisation of Roads Service's annual footway reconstruction and resurfacing programme.

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department prioritises the resurfacing of footpaths. (AQW 6461/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service undertakes an annual programme of footway reconstruction and resurfacing works, subject to the availability of financial resource.

This programme is prepared on the basis of a number of factors encompassing the footway usage, general surface condition, structural deformation, public enquiries and public liability claims.

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the budget for repairing footpaths in South Belfast. (AQW 6462/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that its budgets for particular areas of work are not allocated on a Parliamentary Constituency, or Council ward basis.

However, I have been advised by Roads Service that, in the 2008/09 financial year, the budget for repairing the public footways in the Belfast South Section Office area, was £228,000. Belfast South Section Office's area of responsibility covers parts of East, South and West Belfast.

The budget allocations for the 2009/10 financial year are presently being finalised, and it is anticipated that the financial allocation for this function will be similar.

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the budget for resurfacing footpaths in South Belfast. (AQW 6463/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads service has advised that its budgets for particular areas of work are not allocated on a Parliamentary Constituency or Council ward basis.

However, I have been advised by Roads Service that in the 2008/09 financial year, the budget for footway reconstruction and resurfacing in the Belfast South Section Office area was £352,000. Belfast South Section Office's area of responsibility covers parts of East, South and West Belfast.

The budget allocations for the 2009/10 financial year are presently being finalised, and it is anticipated that the financial allocation for this function will be similar.

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development what (i) remedial repairs have been carried out; and (ii) resurfacing undertaken, on footpaths in South Belfast; and to detail the cost of the work. (AQW 6466/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has a statutory duty to maintain the public footways in a safe and serviceable condition. Roads Service operates a system of regular safety inspections to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed, as necessary.

It should be noted that budgets for particular areas of work, are not allocated by my Department's Roads Service on a Parliamentary Constituency or Council ward basis.

However, I have been advised by Roads Service that, in 2008/09, footway repairs, comprising of over 2900m² of patching, 300m² of flagged footways repairs and 650m of replacement kerbs and drainage channels were carried out in the Belfast South Section Office area. Belfast South Section Office's area of responsibility covers parts of East, South and West Belfast. The patching budget for this work was £228,000.

In 2008/09, the footway resurfacing programme completed in the South Belfast Section Office area, included Deramore Park, Rosetta Park, Benmore Drive, Strathallen Park, Strathyre Park, Aberfoyle Park, Aberfoyle Gardens and Old Forge Manor, at a cost of £352,000.

Double Yellow Lines at Junctions

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to double yellow lines extending around junctions, (i) what his Department's policy is; and (ii) what distance can they be. (AQW 6509/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Member will be aware that double yellow lines indicate where you cannot wait in a vehicle at any time during the day. They are used to signify where a waiting restriction/prohibition is in force.

The extent of double yellow lines at junctions will depend on the length/nature of the restriction/prohibition in force, considered necessary at a particular location.

Road Safety on the A26 Dual Carriageway

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development what his Department's plans are to improve road safety on the A26 dual carriageway from Dunsilly to Ballee roundabouts. (AQW 6539/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service, in conjunction with the PSNI, monitors the safety performance of all roads across the North.

Roads Service has advised that the A26 Lisnevenagh dual carriageway, between Dunsilly and Ballee, was constructed to a high standard, in line with the standards applicable at the time. An analysis of the collision history, carried out in December 2008, concluded that it was not possible to establish a common pattern that could be addressed by road safety engineering measures.

Street lighting has been provided at two of the busiest junctions along the A26, to address night time collision problems that were identified. In addition, Roads Service has also recently erected a number of new junction warning signs at the busier junctions along the A26. New 'School' warning signs have also been provided on the approaches to the Valley Road junction for Carnaghts Primary School.

Although Roads Service has recently agreed to monitor traffic speeds in the vicinity of the Carnaghts Primary School, there are no plans to introduce any further measures on the A26 Lisnevenagh dual carriageway, at present. However, Roads Service will continue to monitor the road safety of the route in conjunction with the PSNI.

Road Safety on the A26 Dual Carriageway

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development, in view of the large number of accidents, if he will consider implementing a 50 mph speed limit from Woodgreen Junction to Cronkill Junction. (AQW 6540/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the A26 Lisnevenagh Road dual carriageway, between Dunsilly and Ballee, including the stretch of road from Woodgreen to Cromkill, is subject to the national speed limit of 70 mph.

Although Roads Service has recently agreed to monitor traffic speeds in the vicinity of the Carnaghts Primary School, there are no current proposals to reduce the speed limit on any section of this road.

Park and Ride Facilities

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to increase park and ride facilities in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) North Down. (AQW 6542/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department aims to encourage people to consider using more sustainable forms of travel. With this aim in mind, Roads Service's Divisions, in association with Translink, who provide the formal bus service, are implementing a number of additional Park and Ride facilities across the North:-

- **Northern Division** are progressing two additional schemes in Dungiven and Drumahoe, having already extended the existing facility at Ballee in Ballymena, and are looking at further sites on the proposed new realignment of the A6.
- **Southern Division** are currently progressing several schemes in the Armagh City area.
- **Western Division** are intending to provide schemes at:-
 - A5 Ballygawley Roundabout, at the junction between A5 and A4;
 - Crevenagh Road, Omagh - trial park and ride, using the existing Park and Share facility.
 - Wellington Road, Enniskillen - provide park and ride spaces in a free car park, adjacent to the existing bus station in Enniskillen; and
 - Park and Share facilities are also planned at Stangmore and Tamnamore roundabouts on the M1. While these are initially planned as park and share, they have been planned with Park and Ride in mind should the demand be appropriate.
- **Eastern Division** - Within the Belfast Metropolitan Area the plans for introducing park and ride facilities are contained in the Belfast Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2015). There are proposals for local park and ride sites, using bus-based services for each of the six main transport corridors into Belfast, totalling 4000 spaces for the greater Belfast area, by 2015. In North Down specifically, the Plan proposes a new bus-based park and ride facility with 400 spaces at Tillysburn, adjacent to the A2/A55 junction, to provide a further public transport option for travel to Belfast from the North Down area.

Park and Ride facilities at NIR stations and halts across the North are planned to increase by 1,811 spaces between 2009 and 2015. These plans are subject to agreement of Translink's Corporate and Business Plan, which takes account of the availability of funding over the remainder of the budget period. The figure quoted includes an increase of 143 spaces on the Bangor Line in North Down between 2011 and 2015.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 6268/09, to provide a breakdown of (i) how NI Water will spend £667 million; (ii) the services provided; (iii) the companies involved; and (iv) how much they will be paid. (AQW 6543/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it spent £424 million on capital works projects between 1 April 2007 and the end of February 2009 and plans to invest a further £243 million to the end of 2009/10, subject to the completion of statutory and other processes. This spend can be broken down into four main asset categories as detailed in the table below.

Asset Category	Apr 07 To Feb 09 (£Million)	Mar 09 To Mar 10 (£Million)
Water distribution system	96	56
Water treatment works	25	29

Asset Category	Apr 07 To Feb 09 (£Million)	Mar 09 To Mar 10 (£Million)
Wastewater network	144	51
Wastewater treatment works	159	107

This major investment is aimed at improving the water and sewerage infrastructure to achieve compliance with European Union water quality and environmental standards and will provide maximum benefit for customers including enhanced drinking water quality, improved delivery of services, greater protection of the environment and public health.

The list below shows the companies employed on capital works projects since 1 April 2007. The value of individual contracts is deemed to be commercially sensitive information which NIW is unable to release.

Company Name	Company Name
Aquatech Publications	Southern Health & Social Care Trust
Benny ONeill Contracts	T. D. McKane & Son
Biwater Graham	T. G. Eakin
Black & Veatch	T. O Connell & Sons
Bradley and Co.	Tes NI Ltd
BSG Civil Engineering Ltd	Time and Data Systems International Ltd
Campbell Contracts	W. J. McLaughlin
Campbell Quinn JV Ltd	W. O Kane
Charles Brand - Holleran JV	Ward Contracts
Charles Brand Ltd	Waste Water Controls LTD
Cityside development Ltd.	William Doherty Construction
Conwell Contracts Ltd	William Dowling Ltd
COPA Ltd	Williams Industrial Services
Copa Meica	WIS/Gillen JV
COPA WASTE WATER CONTROLS	AJ McCann Consultants Ltd
Dawson WAM Ltd	Aquatech Publications
Deane Public Works	Atkins Power
Earney Contracts Ltd	BDO Stoy Hayward
Earth Tech Engineering Ltd	Biwater Graham JV
Electrical and Pump Services LTD	Biwater Ltd
Engineering Services (Terence McGeary)	Black & Veatch
Enterprise/Farrans	BSG Civil Engineering Ltd
EPS Environmental Ltd	Building Design Partnership Ltd
ETECH/Farrans	Bullen Consultants
Euro Services (NI)	Capita Symonds Ltd
Farrans	Chandler KBS
Farrans Construction Ltd	Construction Consultancy Services
FM Environmental Ltd	Construction Supervisory Services Ltd
Fox Contracts	Contract Audit Line
GEDA Construction Co LTD	Dawson WAM Ltd
Gerard Ward	Doran Consulting

Company Name	Company Name
GF Loughran	EC Harris (Ireland) Ltd
Glen Construction	Entec UK Limited
Glen Contracts	ETEL/Farrans
Graham Construction	Ewan Associates Ltd
Graham Structural Repairs	Faber Maunsell Ltd
GRAHAM Hyder	Ferguson McILveen
Indepth Surveys	GEDA Construction Co LTD
James Oliver Hearty & Son	Glover Site Investigations
JJ MCCROSSAN	Halcrow Faber Maunsell
John Graham (Dromore) Ltd	Halcrow RPM
John Rainey and Company	Halcrow RPM Mulholland & Doherty JV
L McGuckin	Hyder Consulting Ltd
Lagan Construction Ltd	Intra Consulting Ltd
Lowry Bros Ltd	Jacobs Babbie
Maker Freyssinet	JCP Consultanting
Makers UK LTD	Jet PR
MCC Civil Engineering Ltd	John Graham (Dromore) Ltd
McFadden Ltd	McAdam Design
McNicholas Construction	McAuley & Browne
Milligan Bros Ltd	McNicholas Construction
Mills Contracts	MMC Associates
Morgan Farrans JV	MouchelParkman
Morrow Group	Mulholland & Doherty
Murphy Charles Brand Joint Venture	MWH - RPS Consulting Engineers JV
NIE Connect	Nicholas O Dwyer
OConnell - Mills JV	Northern Archaeological Consultancy
ONEILL Contracts	Purac Brand
P. Clarke & Sons Ltd	R Robinson and Sons
P. F. Murphy	Rivers Agency
Purac Brand	RPS Kirk Mclure + Morton
Quinns Automation Ltd	Scott Wilson
Rivers Agency	Stratex
Rodgers Contracts Ltd	WDR & RT Taggart
Scott Electromech Ltd	White Young Green
Scotts Electrical Services	WJ McDowell & Partners
Shearwater Consortium	WS Atkins
SKE Solutions	

Resurfacing Footpaths

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what the budget is for (i) repairing; and (ii) resurfacing footpaths in North Down. (AQW 6548/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that in the 2008/09 financial year, the North Down area had a budget of:-

- (i) £102,000 for carrying out repairs to the public footway network; and
- (ii) £150,000 for resurfacing the public footway network.

Although budget allocations for the 2009/10 financial year are not yet finalised, it is anticipated that the apportionment of expenditure in each function, is likely to be similar.

Movilla Road, Newtownards

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to extend the 30 mph speed limit on Movilla Road, Newtownards to beyond Abbey Primary School, considering the area's poor road safety record. (AQW 6607/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service considers the Movilla Road, Newtownards to have a reasonably good safety record and therefore, there are no proposals, at present, to extend the speed limit on this road.

Belfast International Airport

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers have used Belfast International Airport in each of the last ten years. (AQW 6619/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department does not maintain such statistics on a regular basis. Data on passenger numbers at airports are collected by the Civil Aviation Authority and published on its website. That source shows that the number of terminal and transit passengers using Belfast International Airport was as follows.

1999	3,035,907
2000	3,147,670
2001	3,618,671
2002	3,576,785
2003	3,976,703
2004	4,407,413
2005	4,824,271
2006	5,038,692
2007	5,272,864
2008	5,262,354

Antrim Train Station

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers have used Antrim train station in each of the last ten years. (AQW 6620/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have informed me that passenger journey figures record each time a passenger either departs from the station or arrives at the station and have provided the following figures for Antrim train station:

2007/08	201,057
2006/07	159,144
2005/06	142,121
2004/05	126,718
2003/04	110,476
2002/03	93,089
2001/02	73,398
2000/01	80,234
1999/00	84,548
1998/99	101,656

Northern Ireland Water

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if Northern Ireland Water has plans to develop a new headquarters or other significant capital projects; (ii) if any geographical restrictions or preferences apply to these works; (iii) to provide an update on those plans. (AQW 6655/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it plans to lease accommodation for a new Head Office but to date no decision has yet been taken on the most appropriate location. There are no geographical restrictions or preferences for the site of a new Head Office. The decision will be based on sound business needs and best value for money. When NIW identifies a suitable location it will submit a Full Business Case to me for consideration.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development how many employees are in his Department in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area. (AQW 6669/09)

Minister for Regional Development: At present, 74 of the Department for Regional Development's staff work at locations within the Londonderry/Derry City Council area.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development how many employees in his Department travel from Londonderry/Derry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6670/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The travel arrangements of individual members of staff are not recorded. There are, however, 5 staff within the Department for Regional Development who have home addresses within the Londonderry/Derry City Council area and who currently work at locations in Belfast.

Improvement Works on A57

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail what action Roads Service is taking to restore the surface of the A57 between Templepatrick and the International Airport, and (ii) to list the improvement works which have been undertaken on this road, in each of the last five years. (AQW 6701/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a tender to carry out resurfacing works on the A57, from its junction with the north eastern end of the Old Ballyrobin Road, for a distance of 1.9 km towards the International Airport, will be advertised on 2 April 2009. Following the award of the successful tender, it is hoped that resurfacing works will be complete by early July 2009.

With regard to improvement works carried out on this stretch of road, I am further advised that there have been no other improvements undertaken within the last five years.

Northern Ireland Railways

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development who is responsible for the provision of wheelchair access to the platform of Northern Ireland Railways halt at Bellarena. (AQW 6766/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Northern Ireland Railways are responsible for the provision of wheelchair access from the public footpath at Bellarena halt.

Work to bring the halt in line with the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) will be undertaken during the re-lay of the track between Coleraine and Derry, which is scheduled to commence in 2011.

Removal of Emblems

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development if he plans to remove emblems depicting Republican Sinn Fein on lamp standards. (AQW 6780/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has signed up to the Multi Agency Protocol on the Display of Flags in Public Areas. The protocol indicates that the PSNI will take the lead where the display of flags or emblems is causing tension, or is having a detrimental affect on the quality of life in a community.

The PSNI would therefore be the appropriate lead agency to contact regarding this matter.

A57 Improvement Works

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 6701/09, to detail any repairs or improvement works which have been carried out on the A57 between Templepatrick and the International Airport, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 6870/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In my response to your previous query, regarding the planned resurfacing works on the A57 (AQW 6701/09), I advised that there had been no other improvements undertaken on this road within the last five years.

My Department's Roads Service has further advised that it no longer holds records of works carried out, on this stretch of road, prior to the five year period, and is therefore unable to provide any details of the information requested.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Projects Planned for North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) projects; and (ii) amount of capital investment planned for the North Down constituency for (a) 2009/10; and (b) 2010/11. (AQW 6265/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The available information on capital investment projects in my Department relevant to the Member's North Down constituency is set out below.

The Bangor Jobs & Benefits Office Project will see a combined welfare and employment service delivered to customers. The costs of the project – which will fall in the 2010-11 financial year, are not currently available as these will depend on whether front or back office processing is the option chosen for benefit delivery in the new Bangor Office. This decision will be made following the outcome of public consultation on the Social Security Agency's Strategic Business Review, expected in April/ May 2009.

The information on capital investment projects relating to housing is not yet available. The 5 year Social Housing Development programme (for New Build Housing) for 2009/10 onwards has not yet been approved and published. Similarly, the Housing Executive's budget for capital improvement works for housing for 2009/10 is not yet finalised. Once approved, the Social Housing Development Programme will be published on the Housing Executive's website. However, it should be noted that, for reasons of commercial sensitivity the Housing Executive does not release individual scheme values with regard to the Programme.

Social Housing

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the progress of the social housing provision at the Skeoge lands in Londonderry/Derry. (AQW 6272/09)

Minister for Social Development: Fold Housing Association has submitted detailed plans to develop social housing at the Skeoge lands in Derry.

This scheme has not yet been approved as there are some outstanding EU Procurement issues that need to be resolved. Legal advice has been sought and a decision will be made following consideration of that advice.

I am determined to meet the increasing housing demand in Derry and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who manage the Social Housing Development Programme on my behalf have already identified a number of new sites and opportunities that will ensure Derry gets its full allocation of new homes irrespective of the application for Skeoge which is still under consideration.

Housing Executive

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the waiting list for Housing Executive homes in (i) Lurgan; (ii) Craigavon; (iii) Portadown; and (iv) Banbridge. (AQW 6301/09)

Minister for Social Development: The following table details the number of applicants on the waiting list for Housing Executive homes in (i) Lurgan; (ii) Craigavon; (iii) Portadown; and (iv) Banbridge, at December 2008.

	Applicants
Lurgan	881
Craigavon	254
Portadown	738
Banbridge	430

Housing Officers

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many complaints have been received by the housing officers in Newtownards, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 6367/09)

Minister for Social Development: Informal complaints can be regularly received and resolved quickly without the requirement to process them through the formal complaints system. Formal complaints dealt with by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's District Office at Newtownards are as follows:-

February 2006 – February 2007	21
February 2007 – February 2008	40
February 2008 – February 2009	28

Housing Executive

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the status of the contract between Red Sky and the Housing Executive's West Belfast district; and to outline any issues that have arisen. (AQW 6377/09)

Minister for Social Development: Red Sky currently has a maintenance contract with the Housing Executive for the West Belfast area. The Assembly's Public Accounts Committee Office received a letter from the West Belfast Housing Community Network complaining about the lack of cleaning services provided by Red Sky at several flat complexes in the Housing Executive's Belfast District's 1 and 3 estates.

Because of the 'whistleblower' nature of this letter the Public Accounts Office referred the letter to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for investigation. The Housing Executive had commissioned Cooke & Kettle, a local consultancy firm, to inspect a sample of communal halls and galleries of various flat complexes within the Housing Executive District of West Belfast.

The consultants assessed whether the periodic cleaning schedule was in fact being complied with and whether any work was carried out in accordance with the specification set out in the contract with Red Sky. A number of concerns are raised in the Consultants report which I intend to see are fully dealt with. However, as the Northern Ireland Audit Office is investigating this matter I am unwilling to comment further until I receive their report.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many economic projects have been funded under neighbourhood renewal in North Down, in each of the last three years. (AQW 6384/09)

Minister for Social Development: Whilst no specific economic projects have been funded under neighbourhood renewal in North Down during this period, funding has been provided for two projects which include an element aimed at improving employment opportunities in the Kilcooley area.

Housing Executive

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what is the current average length of time for repairs to be carried out to Housing Executive properties from the time the problem is reported. (AQW 6387/09)

Minister for Social Development: All repairs reported to the Housing Executive are prioritised into emergency, urgent or routine repair categories in accordance with the current tenancy agreement.

During the period April 2008 to February 2009 repairs were completed from the time the problem was reported as follows:

- 98.5% of all emergency repairs within 24 hours
- 94.25% of all urgent repairs within 4 days
- 80% of all routine repairs within 4 weeks

Autism Initiatives

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the availability of floating services by Autism Initiatives. (AQO 2424/09)

Minister for Social Development: Autism Initiatives Northern Ireland is an accredited Supporting People provider funded through the Supporting People programme to deliver housing support services. The Supporting People programme provides funding for 9 accommodation based schemes and 2 floating support services.

The total annual contract value for these services for 08/09 is £740,000. The accommodation based services are located in Antrim, Armagh, Bangor, Belfast, Castlereagh, Downpatrick, and Lisburn. Supporting People funds over 50 providers to provide over 75 floating support services across Northern Ireland.

Autism Initiatives are one of these and the operating scope of their two floating support services is the Northern Trust area and former South and East Belfast Trust (now Belfast Trust) area. Whilst the Supporting

People budget has been baselined the Area Supporting People Partnerships continue to prioritise proposals for developing new and expanding existing services for this client group.

Benefit Overpayments

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail for each of the past 10 years (i) the total number of benefit overpayments; (ii) the total sum of benefit overpayments; (iii) the type of benefits where overpayments were paid to deceased persons; and (iv) the total amount that has been successfully reclaimed from overpayments made. (AQW 6406/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information relating to social security benefits is only available from November 2006.

The table below sets out the number and sum of social security benefit overpayments paid to deceased persons and the amount successfully reclaimed during the period November 2006 to 20 March 2009. The type of social security benefits where overpayments were paid to deceased persons includes Income Support, State Pension, State Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

Period	Total number of overpayments	Total sum of overpayments	Total amount reclaimed
November 2006 to March 2007	2,590	£905,890	£371
April 2007 to March 2008	8,528	£2,106,607	£276,416
April 2008 to 20 March 2009	20,047	£3,455,471	£1,072,405

While some overpayments of Housing Benefit to deceased persons would undoubtedly have been made over the period in question, these are not separately categorised and therefore the Housing Executive is not able to provide the information requested. Recovery of such overpayments would normally be sought from the estate of the deceased person.

Private Landlords

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development if she has any plans to bring forward new legislation to give more protection for private landlords. (AQW 6427/09)

Minister for Social Development: I will shortly be launching a consultation document on a Strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Northern Ireland. The proposals in this strategy will reflect the outcomes of an evaluation of the 2006 Private Tenancies Order which currently governs the operation of the private rented sector including landlord and tenant obligations. Proposals reflecting the need for any new or amending legislation emerging from the strategy will be brought before the Assembly during 2010.

Housing Executive

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties in the East Antrim constituency are currently awaiting maintenance work, and how long on average they have been waiting. (AQW 6429/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available by Parliamentary Constituency, nor is it available in the format requested. The Housing Executive's Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey 2 District Offices include the areas which comprise the East Antrim constituency areas.

At 27 March 2009:

- Carrickfergus District Office had 158 routine repairs outstanding, with an average waiting time of 8 weeks.
- Larne District Office had 83 routine repairs outstanding, with an average waiting time of 8 weeks.
- Newtownabbey 2 District Office had 139 routine repairs outstanding, with an average waiting time of 8 weeks.

Housing Executive

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many vacant Housing Executive properties there are currently in (i) Larne; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey. (AQW 6430/09)

Minister for Social Development: The number of vacant properties within the administrative areas covered by the Housing Executive's Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey 1 and 2 District Offices are as follows:-

Larne	118
Carrickfergus	57
Newtownabbey	242

Housing Executive

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development would she consider changing the criteria for heating in extensions in homes of people with disabilities to ensure that sufficient radiators are put into bedrooms. (AQW 6486/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive's current heating policy makes appropriate provision for a radiator within each bedroom of a property of an appropriate size to adequately heat the room. Where an extension has been provided for a person with a disability, the Housing Executive will ensure that the property complies with this standard.

Charities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how the new legislation will protect legitimate charities; and (ii) what action will be taken against non-legitimate charities. (AQW 6515/09)

Minister for Social Development: The main aims of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 are to protect and support local charities, encourage good governance arrangements and provide greater public confidence in charitable giving. All charities will be required to register with the new Charity Commission and submit annual returns on their activities and financial performance. This information will be open to public scrutiny and will allow charities to be more accountable and to demonstrate their public benefit.

Whilst there is limited evidence of fraudulent charities operating in Northern Ireland, the Act provides the Commission with wide ranging powers to identify and investigate apparent misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of charities and to take remedial or protective action. It will liaise closely with the PSNI, HM Revenue and Customs and other charity regulators in the UK and Ireland to ensure that information is shared and action taken where appropriate.

Charities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development in relation to charities legislation, whether trustees and committee members of charities will be required to declare an interest if they are to gain financially from fund raising activities, and to clarify the sanctions for not declaring such interests. (AQW 6517/09)

Minister for Social Development: Part 9 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 contains provisions relating to charity trustees. This includes regulations on the remuneration of trustees providing services to a charity. The new Charity Commission for Northern Ireland will be required to issue detailed advice and guidance to charities on this issue. This is likely to follow best practice adopted by other charity regulators in the UK which only permits such payments in limited circumstances where the service is required by a charity in pursuit of its charitable purposes, where it is in the charity's best interests and where there is a written agreement between the charity and the trustee.

Part 13 of the Act contains provisions relating to the control of fundraising and public collections. This details the circumstances in which an officer, employee or trustee of a charity can engage in fundraising activity and

includes a requirement to produce a written statement if any remuneration is to be received in connection with such activity.

The Charity Commission will have wide ranging powers to investigate any evidence of non compliance with the regulations. These include powers to suspend or remove a charity trustee where the Commission is satisfied that there has been misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of a charity.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has to bring eligibility for financial assistance for insulation through the Warm Homes Scheme, in line with other parts of the UK, by giving assistance to people over the age of 70 regardless of their financial circumstance. (AQW 6538/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Warm Homes Scheme is broadly similar to the Warm Front Scheme in England but it takes account of the unique circumstances which face householders in Northern Ireland. The free insulation project operating in others parts of the UK is funded through Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT). CERT funding is not available in Northern Ireland and cannot be replicated here. It is my intention to use all available resources to fund the Warm Homes Scheme which will target those people in greatest need with help to insulate and heat their homes.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many economic projects have been funded under Neighbourhood Renewal in East Antrim, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 6599/09)

Minister for Social Development: Part of Rathcoole estate in East Antrim falls within a Neighbourhood Renewal Area. Funding of £12,820 was provided to the area in 2006/07, £32,220 in 2007/08 and £39,695 in 2008/09 for two economic projects.

Carer's Allowance

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many people received Carer's Allowance, per constituency, in each of the last 3 years; and (ii) if she can provide statistics on the number of family members who provide care without pay. (AQW 6660/09)

Minister for Social Development: The table below sets out the information requested for part (i). The number shown reflects the number of customers where an amount of Carer's Allowance is in payment. Information is not available for part (ii) as my Department does not collect or hold statistics on the number of family members who provide care without pay.

Parliamentary Constituency	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2007	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2008	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2009
Belfast East	1,209	1,177	1,166
Belfast North	2,110	2,139	2,194
Belfast South	1,012	994	1,043
Belfast West	3,302	3,241	3,251
East Antrim	1,043	1,044	1,055
East Londonderry	1,520	1,522	1,571
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1,594	1,525	1,611
Foyle	2,732	2,720	2,769
Lagan Valley	1,265	1,264	1,309
Mid Ulster	1,932	1,883	1,945

Parliamentary Constituency	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2007	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2008	Carer's Allowance Recipients at February 2009
Newry and Armagh	2,329	2,298	2,315
North Antrim	1,460	1,464	1,517
North Down	874	863	864
South Antrim	1,215	1,221	1,238
South Down	1,948	1,917	2,024
Strangford	1,338	1,307	1,343
Upper Bann	1,981	1,976	2,050
West Tyrone	2,051	1,992	2,077
Unallocated Postcode*	202	260	260
Total	31,117	30,807	31,602

* In producing this analysis, individual records were attributed to Parliamentary Constituency on the basis of their postcode. Not all records can be correctly allocated using this method, and some cannot be allocated at all.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked Minister for Social Development how many employees are in her Department in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area. (AQW 6671/09)

Minister for Social Development: In the Department for Social Development there are 815 employees in the Londonderry/Derry City Council area.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development how many employees in her Department travel from Londonderry/Derry to work in Belfast. (AQW 6672/09)

Minister for Social Development: There are 65 employees in Department for Social Development who have addresses in Londonderry/Derry and work in Belfast.

Departmental Budget

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development when she plans to reveal her Department's budget for the next financial year, for the North Down area. (AQW 6696/09)

Minister for Social Development: The initial budget allocations for the 3 years 2008-09 to 2010-11 for all Departments – including Social Development, were revealed in the Budget 2008-11 document, published by the Executive in January 2008.

The overall allocation for my Department, at £754.4m in total, covers the whole of Northern Ireland and is not broken down on a Constituency basis. In addition, the Department's Annually Managed Expenditure budget for 2009-10 – covering mostly social security benefit expenditure and the financial assistance scheme, amounts to some £4.86 billion.

Social Housing/Homelessness

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact that the current waiting lists for social housing will have on homelessness this year. (AQO 2451/09)

Minister for Social Development: Waiting lists and homelessness are clearly connected, but they are also impacted by a range of other factors.

Homelessness applications rose between 2003/04 and 2006/07 before falling in 2007/08. Current indications are that a further decrease in homelessness applications will follow in 2008/09. The number of applications on the Social Housing Waiting List has increased year on year between 2003/04 and 2008/09.

Demography is the key driver in terms of housing need and has a direct effect on both the profile and size of the waiting list. Between 2006 and 2021 there is a projected 10% growth in the population with a consequent growth in household formation of 19% over the same period. The population profile is also aging and when this is combined with the move towards Independent Living the pressure on future housing requirements is clear to see.

Citizens Advice: Funding

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister for Social Development whether she will consider increasing funding to Citizens Advice Bureaux to assist those affected by the economic downturn. (AQO 2452/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department already provides significant support to the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) for the valuable service they provide and to others who provide much needed advice services and I am happy to continue to do so.

My Department directly core funds voluntary advice services up to £1.5 million per annum through the Regional Infrastructure Programme. For the 2009/10 year Citizens Advice Regional Office will be able to claim up to £665k, Advice NI £246k and the Law Centre £680k.

My Department's contribution towards the provision of local voluntary advice services for 2009/10 totals £1.9m through the Community Support Programme. This funding is matched by local councils who contribute a further £1.9m. Local Citizens Advice Bureaux and other local voluntary advice providers can apply to councils for financial support.

Furthermore subject to appraisal, Neighbourhood Renewal in the North West will provide £124k to the Derry CAB.

In January I also announced plans to recruit 150 new staff to the Social Security Agency frontline. This is a proactive response to the current difficult economic situation.

In addition Citizen's Advice has been involved in the delivery of the Social Security Agency's Benefit Uptake Programme since 2006. Up to 31 March 2008, this has generated an additional £15 million in benefit. To date £554k has been paid to Citizen's Advice Regional Headquarters with further payments likely to be made in May 2009.

Through the Regional Infrastructure Programme the Housing Rights Service will receive £672k core funding. Additionally from April 2009 I hope to provide approximately £100k to increase the level of advice for people who are experiencing difficulty making mortgage payments.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions: Discussions

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister for Social Development what recent discussions she has held with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. (AQO 2453/09)

Minister for Social Development: I met with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, James Purnell, in November 2008. We discussed a range of issues relevant to our responsibilities for social security, child support and pensions including welfare reform and the reform of the social fund. I pressed Mr Purnell on a number of issues including the eligibility for winter fuel payments, greater assistance for carers and the availability of disability living allowance, in particular, for the sight impaired. On that last issue, I am pleased to say that Mr Purnell has subsequently accepted an amendment to the Welfare Reform Bill currently before Parliament which will allow those with a severe sight impairment to have access to the higher rate mobility component. Subject to Executive approval, I intend to bring corresponding legislation before the Assembly.

We agreed to meet on a regular basis and a further meeting is currently being arranged.

Red Sky

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Social Development how the Housing Executive monitors the progress of work carried out on its behalf by Red Sky. (AQO 2454/09)

Minister for Social Development: I understand, that Red Sky has a maintenance contract with the Housing Executive for the West Belfast area. This Assembly's Public Accounts Committee Office received a letter from the West Belfast Housing Community Network complaining about the lack of cleaning services provided by the contractor, Red Sky, at several flat complexes in the Housing Executive's Belfast District's 1 and 3 estates. Because of the 'whistleblower' content of this letter the Public Accounts Office referred the letter to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for investigation. The Housing Executive has commissioned Cooke & Kettle, a local consultancy firm, to inspect a sample of communal halls and galleries of various flat complexes within the NIHE District of West Belfast. The consultants assessed whether the periodic cleaning schedule was in fact being complied with and whether any work was carried out in accordance with the specification set out in the contract with Red Sky. A number of concerns are raised in the Consultants report which I intend to see are fully dealt with. However, as the Northern Ireland Audit Office is investigating this matter I am unwilling to comment much further until I receive their report.

Budgetary Position

Mr L Cree asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on her Department's budgetary position. (AQO 2455/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department's budgetary position for 2008-09 can be summarised as follows:

The Final Plan Departmental Expenditure Limits for Social Security and Urban Regeneration/Community Development are £224.5m and £101.8m respectively and it is expected that overall spending will be within budget and acceptable tolerance levels at the year end.

The lack of capital receipts throughout the year due to the economic downturn, has impacted on the overall financial provision available for Housing and unmet bids of £30.6m at February monitoring typifies the difficulty of the situation. As a result, spending on both capital and revenue Housing programmes has had to be curtailed in order to live within the net overall £432.4m available.

The Department's overall Final Plan budget of £758.7m, includes the initial £15m recently allocated by the Executive to fund Fuel Poverty payments. The opening allocation for next year is some £4m less than this at £754.4m, illustrating that 2009-10 is likely to be another difficult year for funding. However, as always my priority will be to protect the most vulnerable in our society, in particular through the key social security and housing programmes.

Co-Ownership: East Londonderry

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the number of co-ownership applications in East Londonderry in the last year; and how many were successful. (AQO 2456/09)

Minister for Social Development: Co-Ownership Housing has advised me that it records statistics according to local council area, rather than by parliamentary constituency. During the fiscal year 2008/09, a total of fourteen applications were received by people seeking to purchase a home in the Limavady and Coleraine Borough Council areas, which form the East Derry/Londonderry constituency. Of these, five were successful, six have still to be decided and three were unsuccessful.

Off-the-Shelf Houses

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development how many off-the-shelf houses the Department has purchased from developers since May 2007. (AQO 2457/09)

Minister for Social Development: In the 2007/08 programme year, 270 Off-the-Shelf units of accommodation were purchased. During the period 1 April 2008 to 19 March 2009, 214 Off-the-Shelf units of accommodation have been purchased.

Housing Budget: Shortfall

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development for an assessment of how the £100 million shortfall in the housing budget will impact on spending programmes. (AQO 2458/09)

Minister for Social Development: The £100m shortfall in the housing budget will lead to reduced expenditure on a range of capital works across the housing programme. Available funding will have to be directed to priority programmes and to where commitments already exist. It is also a priority to protect the vulnerable.

I will continue to make bids for additional funding in future monitoring rounds in 2009/10.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development when the next inter Departmental meeting in relation to neighbourhood renewal will take place. (AQO 2459/09)

Minister for Social Development: The next meeting of the inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Neighbourhood Renewal will be on the 13th of May 2009.

Social Mobility

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions she has held with the Minister of Education in relation to social mobility. (AQO 2460/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have held no specific discussions with the Minister of Education in relation to social mobility.

Shared Future

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of how society is moving towards a shared future particularly in housing. (AQO 2461/09)

Minister for Social Development: When I launched the New Housing Agenda in February 2008 I made a Shared Future a central theme. A twin track approach has been adopted to developing and supporting shared neighbourhoods through the Social Housing Development Programme and in existing housing areas. The most recent published Northern Ireland Life & Times survey (2007) found that 80% of people in Northern Ireland would prefer to live in a mixed neighbourhood. The sad events of recent weeks have also clearly demonstrated that the people of Northern Ireland want to leave behind the baggage of the past and build a new future together. I am, therefore, more convinced than ever that Northern Ireland society wants, and is relentlessly moving towards, a Shared Future where diversity is welcomed and embraced.

'Shared' Housing Developments

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the conversion of current locations to 'Shared Housing' developments. (AQO 2462/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Shared Neighbourhood Programme adopts a community based approach to supporting local communities to designate existing social housing areas as Shared Neighbourhoods. The Programme is designed to build on existing relationships and structures within current housing areas and to develop a good relations plan and neighbourhood charter that offers the opportunity for people to live in a shared neighbourhood where diversity is welcomed. A total of 30 neighbourhoods will be identified over the pilot three year period, through a selection process and community consultation, to participate in the Shared Neighbourhood Programme. In conjunction with the International Fund for Ireland, I launched the first five estates in August 2008 with details of the next ten neighbourhoods to be announced over the coming year.

Alcohol Legislation

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the reasons for not bringing legislation forward to ensure that off-sales display their shop names on carrier bags and what action she is taking to reduce under-age drinking. (AQO 2463/09)

Minister for Social Development: In the South of Ireland, where legislative provision to brand containers for drinks for consumption off licensed premises was introduced in 2003 but never used, experience demonstrated that seeking to compel retailers to adopt this approach raises difficult issues to do with European human rights and competition rules. There are also major issues around rules of evidence in courts.

In my Statement to the Assembly on 17 November 2008 I set out my plans for a 2-stage programme of legislative reform which will include a number of measures aimed at reducing underage drinking. I am committed to working with Executive colleagues to ensure that liquor licensing legislation contributes positively to combating the harm caused to our young people by alcohol abuse.

Social Housing

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the social and economic benefits that flow from accelerated investment in social housing provision. (AQO 2464/09)

Minister for Social Development: On 27 November 2008 I submitted a paper to my Executive colleagues entitled 'Social Housing – An effective way to address the Downturn in the NI Economy.' In this paper I outlined how an increased investment in social housing could have a profoundly beneficial effect on the economy in a relatively short period of time.

In addition to the economic benefits of increased investment in social housing, delivery against important social policy objectives, particularly those identified in the Programme for Government could be more quickly achieved with this investment.

My paper contained specific and costed proposals for increases in the Social Housing Development Programme, social housing maintenance and repairs and the Warm Homes Scheme. Unfortunately the Executive was not able to support my proposals at that time. However, I remain convinced that the current market conditions are more suited now than ever before to increase our investment in social housing to stimulate the economy, protect jobs and help those in housing stress.

I will continue to lobby my Executive colleagues for their support of my proposals.

Construction Industry

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has to support the construction industry and to confirm whether any new housing developments will be tendered to local firms. (AQO 2465/09)

Minister for Social Development: On 27 November I submitted a paper to my Executive colleagues entitled 'Social Housing - An Effective way to address the downturn in the NI economy'.

In this paper I outlined how an increased investment in social housing could have a profoundly beneficial effect on the economy in a relatively short period of time. The Construction industry which has suffered so much in recent months would obviously have benefitted heavily from this increased investment.

Unfortunately the Executive was not able to support my proposals at that time but I remain convinced that this increased investment would help stimulate the economy, boost the construction industry as well of course as helping those in housing need and I will continue to make this case.

I will continue to seek support from my Executive colleagues for such proposals.

In respect of restricting new developments for local firms, it is not possible or legal to guarantee work for local developers or contractors in this manner. I would of course encourage as many local firms to bid for this work as possible, particularly given the real problems I know many are facing in these challenging times.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Assembly IT System

Mr D Bradley asked the Assembly Commission why the Assembly IT system cannot receive e-mails from all e-mail providers; and what action is being taken to remedy this situation. (AQW 6282/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): The Assembly Commission provides a centrally managed email system for use by Members and Secretariat staff, on Assembly business. The system is designed to accept all correctly addressed email, from whatever source and deliver it directly to the recipient. Industry standard security systems examine all incoming emails for any signs of malicious threats and procedures are in place within the IS Office to deal with any quarantined email or any incorrectly addressed email with the minimum delay.

There have been instances when Members and Secretariat staff have reported that email they were expecting had not arrived. However upon investigation there was no record of either the message reaching the NI Assembly systems or of any message being rejected outright. As the originating systems were outside the direct control of the Commission it was not possible to determine the exact cause of the problem. The IS Office will continue to monitor the NI Assembly email system for any problems.

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