
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 29 May 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Quangos

Mr D McNarry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the total spent on salaries, allowances and expenses for Board members of QUANGO's in each of the last three years; and to confirm the number of individuals who were involved and the average cost per QUANGO board member.

(AQW 6482/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The total spent on salaries, allowance and expenses for board members of OFMDFM sponsored public bodies in each of the last three financial years (for which accounts are available), the number of individuals involved and the average cost per board member is as follows:

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
The total spent on salaries, allowances and expenses	£1,415,917	£1,494,788	£1,684,651
The number of individuals involved	78	77	76
The average cost per Board member	£18,152.78	£19,412.83	£22,166.46

11th July Bonfires

Dr S Farry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to report on its assessment of best practice in relation to 11th July bonfires and good relations programmes.

(AQW 6855/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: OFMDFM does not assess best practice in relation to 11th July bonfires and associated good relations programmes; however we are informed that some District Councils have established bonfire schemes which encourage local communities to adopt a different approach to the management of bonfire events. Some Councils operate bonfire initiatives/bonfire management programmes. These programmes aim to encourage local communities and groups to ensure bonfires are better managed community and family occasions. The programmes also address the need to manage health and safety risks to tackle environmental issues.

Other Councils are moving towards the use of beacons instead of bonfires, in projects which teach the history behind the bonfire tradition. In 2008 the Woodvale area in north Belfast used a beacon for the first time. There was a community/family festival for the area and the beacon was a secondary part of the event and not the main focus of activities and alcohol played a less prominent role than as seen in previous years.

The District Councils Good Relations Programme received funding of £2.536m in 2008/2009 for a range of local good relations activities all of which have been predicated on the findings of good relations audits/research which identify and prioritise the local needs for those activities/initiatives within the respective Council areas.

Child Poverty

Mr J Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions it has had with bodies who made representations to the Assembly Committee's Inquiry on Child Poverty, in light of the current economic difficulties. (AQW 7571/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Since last year the Executive has been committed to doing everything in its power to ensure that people here are protected and sheltered in every way possible from the worst effects of the current economic downturn.

In recent months we have listened, through both formal and informal discussions, to the concerns of stakeholders across all sectors of the economy, including the voluntary and community sector.

Building on these discussions we have now established a Cross Sector Advisory Forum which we chair; this is an informal and ad hoc advisory group that meets and reviews the impact of the current economic downturn on local people and businesses. The purpose of the Cross Sector Advisory Forum is to make recommendations for addressing problems arising from the economic crisis.

The Forum has 35 members including Ministers and representatives from the banking, construction, energy and voluntary and community sectors. Some Forum members representing the voluntary and community sector, such as the Consumer Council and the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, made representations to the OFMDFM Committee during its Inquiry into Child Poverty.

The inaugural meeting of the Forum was held on 6 April 2009. During this meeting initial views were gathered on the enduring problems of the economic downturn and how these might be addressed. We plan to convene a second meeting of the Forum before the summer recess.

You will also be aware that on 20 November 2008 the Executive agreed to adopt formally the broad architecture and principles of Lifetime Opportunities as the basis of its strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on social need; and that the Executive agreed also to the re-establishment of the Ministerial-led Poverty and Social Inclusion Stakeholder Forum.

The Stakeholder Forum, which we hope to re-establish soon, also affords its members the opportunity to raise areas of concern directly with Ministers.

The Stakeholder Forum is made up of representatives from Government Departments and from the major voluntary and community sector organisations; a number of these organisations including, for example, the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, Save the Children and the Rural Community Network, had made representations to the OFMDFM Committee's Inquiry into Child Poverty.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the promotion of the cohesion, sharing and integration strategy is still a priority given the current economic difficulties. (AQW 7607/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Improving relationships between and within all communities and building a shared and better future remains a high priority for our Department and the Executive. We are continuing to develop and refine the programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration to examine how we can build on the achievements of previous initiatives and programmes. As Junior Minister Donaldson stated in the recent debate [5th May] in the Assembly on the costs of division, economic growth and prosperity are important and they are underpinned by stability in society. He also stated that sharing in that economic growth will further promote that stability. There can be no place in our society for inequality, racism, sectarianism or prejudice.

Our work at Ministerial level in OFMDFM as well as throughout the Department at all levels, has demonstrated our commitment to building cohesive, inclusive communities. The fact that we have been delivering substantial additional funding secured in the Executive's budget is just one of our achievements. We have increased funding by a third for the period 2008-2011, from £21 million in the previous CSR period to almost £30 million in the current one. That means that vital work on the ground and with both existing and new communities is better resourced than ever. We also want to ensure that these resources are used in an effective

way, so we have been assessing existing programmes and considering new approaches to ensure tangible outcomes from our funding and actions.

We have increased funding to minority ethnic groups by two-thirds and increased funding for youth and interface workers by one-quarter. Statistics show that the work that we fund and resource, is delivering real and meaningful outcomes. There has been a 13.2% reduction in sectarian motivated crimes and three out of five young people in 2007 reported that relationships between Protestants and Catholics were getting better.

However, we are not complacent – we are leading and driving change in our society and in our work – through the Department and the Executive to deliver a shared and better future for all our people.

We are still determined to bring the programme forward as soon as possible.

Victim and Survivors Service

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Victims Commission will complete its assessment of the needs of victims and survivors. (AQW 7823/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Commissioners have indicated that the Comprehensive Needs Assessment will take a minimum of 6 months to complete.

Victim and Survivors Service

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how it will ensure that there will be no duplication of an individual victim/survivors' needs assessment by their service proposed in the draft Victims and Survivors Strategy and that provided by the Health Service. (AQW 7824/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Draft proposals for the Victims and Survivors Service will be issued for public consultation in the very near future. We will engage with all key stakeholders to ensure the best outcome for victims and survivors. Ensuring there is no duplication in the provision of services has been a key consideration throughout the process.

Victim and Survivors Service

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the criteria used to ensure that expenditure by the Victims and Survivors Services is on a fair and equitable basis. (AQW 7825/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Draft proposals for a Victims and Survivors Service will be issued for public consultation in the very near future. The service will be needs based and funding will be delivered in accordance with clear, published criteria in a transparent way. The need will be identified by the comprehensive needs assessment being taken forward by the Commission for Victims and Survivors.

The Victims Service will be subject to an equality screening exercise, the outcome of which will determine if a full EQIA is required.

Victim and Survivors Service

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the timetable for producing legislation on the establishment of the non-departmental public body for the Victim and Survivors Service. (AQW 7826/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We anticipate that the legislative process in relation to the Victims and Survivors service could take up to 12 months to complete. However, it may be possible to reduce this timeframe, with the agreement of the OFMDFM Committee. We are keen to ensure that the new service is operative as soon as possible.

School Age Childcare

Mrs N Long asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action has been taken to date by the Department to clarify departmental responsibility for school age childcare. (AQW 7867/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The provision of childcare has long been a fragmented and complex issue with no clear departmental lead. This has ultimately resulted in the position we now find ourselves in. However, Executive commitment to reviewing and improving the provision here is clearly demonstrated by the work being taken forward through the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People.

The Ministerial Sub-Committee identified childcare as an urgent priority and members of the child poverty sub-group have expressed the need to look at the issue of departmental responsibility for childcare as part of their work. That sub-group has undertaken an exercise to produce a report considering the potential for increasing childcare provision.

The report includes a chapter on strategic options, which identifies a number of strategic options for delivering childcare policy. A special meeting involving relevant Ministers will shortly be convened to consider the recommendations in the report.

Young People's Action Plan

Mrs N Long asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the adoption of the young people's action plan. (AQW 7868/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The children and young people's strategy action plan has been signed off by the cross-sectoral Strategy, Planning and Review Group (SPRG), which was established as one of the implementation structures for the 10 Year Strategy.

It was agreed that the action plan will be a 'living document' open to review and amendment and that direct engagement with young people will form an integral part of this review.

We also intend to work with Executive colleagues to identify whether any further actions can be included specifically on the issues raised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in their concluding observations of October 2008.

The action plan has been sent to the OFMDFM Committee for consideration and we intend to seek Executive approval when the views of the Committee have been received.

Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion

Mrs N Long asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the work of the Executive Sub committee on poverty and social inclusion and its forward work plan. (AQW 7870/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: In agreeing, on 20th November 2008, to formally adopt the broad architecture and principles of Lifetime Opportunities as the basis of its strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on social need, the Executive further agreed to the establishment of an Executive Sub-Committee on poverty and social inclusion.

This Executive Sub-Committee is responsible for agreeing, the priorities and key Executive actions for tackling poverty and social inclusion here and also agreeing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms associated with the 'Lifetime Opportunities' anti-poverty strategy.

To date the Executive Sub-Committee has met on two occasions, the most recent meeting taking place on 21 May 2009.

During the course of its first two meetings the Sub-Committee has;

- agreed its Terms of Reference which take account of recommendations arising from the OFMDFM Committee, including its recent recommendations on child poverty, the PSI Reports on *Lone Parents* and *People with a Disability* and Departmental reports in as much as they are relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Committee;
- been informed as to the extent of poverty in Northern Ireland;

- agreed that work should be undertaken to identify the key co-ordinated priority actions that are needed to benefit those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need;
- considered and agreed proposals in respect of a monitoring and reporting framework for the 'Lifetime Opportunities' Strategy; and
- agreed to an early re-establishment of the Ministerial-led Poverty and Social Inclusion Stakeholder Forum.

It is proposed that initial recommendations, in respect of the key co-ordinated actions needed to benefit those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need, will be considered at the Executive Sub-Committee's next meeting.

Cleaning Products

Mr G McHugh asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans it has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals.

(AQW 7971/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Procurement of cleaning products for use in all NICS departments and management of the cleaning contract are the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Personnel, through its Central Procurement Directorate.

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has no plans to purchase cleaning products outside of the current central contract arrangements.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DARD Direct in Newtownards

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the roll-out of DARD Direct in Newtownards, including any sites which have been examined.

(AQW 7610/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): Following my announcement on 23 January 2009 of 10 of the 11 remaining locations, DARD has put in place an implementation plan for the roll out of DARD Direct. The roll out will take place in a number of phases. The current DARD offices in Newtownards are unable to meet the requirements for a DARD Direct office and as a consequence a property search has been initiated through Land and Property Services in the Newtownards area to ascertain the availability of suitable premises. I am currently unable to provide specific details of sites.

In the meantime, the DARD Direct management processes will be rolled out to Newtownards from mid-summer onwards to allow farmers to avail of the benefits of an improved customer service.

Fines Paid to Department

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail, since she first took office, (i) all fines that have been paid by her Department; (ii) all fines yet to be paid by her Department; (iii) all financial settlements that have been paid by her Department; and (iv) all agreed settlements yet to be paid by her Department.

(AQW 7681/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) Nil return
- (ii) Nil return
- (iii) Number of Settlements: 18. Cost of Settlements: £557.6k
- (iv) Number of Settlements: 5. Cost of Settlements: £41.0k

Rivers Agency

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the processes followed by Rivers Agency when it is presented with evidence of repeat out of sewer or other flooding on the site of a planning application, which they have not raised in the statutory consultation process. (AQW 7740/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There is a close liaison between DARD Rivers Agency and DOE Planning Service in the implementation of the Planning Policy Statement on prevention of inappropriate development in flood plains. In its role as a consultee, Rivers Agency provides advice to Planning Service on development proposals that are referred to it. The Agency's advice is based on the most accurate information held at the time; relating to flood risk potential from watercourses and the sea. Should further information concerning flooding from watercourses or the sea become available to the Agency after the consultation this information is conveyed to Planning Service for consideration if the application has not yet been determined by Planning Service.

Rivers Agency officials are happy to meet the public and their representatives or agents to discuss specific sites in detail as required.

EU Single Farm Payment

Mr G McHugh asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) for her assessment of the EU Single Farm payment to farmers after 2013; and (ii) what representations she has made to the EU Commissioner regarding Single Farm Payment policy post 2013. (AQW 7829/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The future of the EU Single Farm Payment (SFP) from 2013 onwards will be determined by the outcome of discussions on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform over the period 2010–2012. The eventual agreement will depend on the views of the EU Commission, Member States and the European Parliament. I have made my view very clear that the SFP should continue in some form after 2013, including during my recent speech at the Balmoral Show in the presence of the EU Agriculture Commissioner, Mariann Fischer Boel. I expect a vigorous debate to take place over the next few years both on the amount of funding devoted to the SFP and the basis on which payments are made. I am encouraged by early soundings emerging from EU Commission officials agreeing that there is a role for the SFP post 2013.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Community Festivals Fund

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the amount of money awarded to organisations through the Community Festivals Fund, broken down by grants awarded to organisations identified as (i) Unionists; (ii) Nationalists; and (iii) others, in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09. (AQW 7698/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure does not collect or hold information on Community Festivals Fund grants which would facilitate a breakdown by grants to Unionists, Nationalists or other organisations.

Departmental Land

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when the most recent audit of departmental land was undertaken; and how much unused land the Department currently holds. (AQW 7729/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My department's assets, including land, are examined annually by the Northern Ireland Audit Office as part of its audit of the resource accounts. The last audit, which was completed in June 2008, was in respect of the year ended 31 March 2008.

The Department holds no unused land.

North West 200

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his estimate of how much will be generated for the local economy in East Londonderry by the North West 200 week-long festival of racing.

(AQW 7749/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The North West 200 is Northern Ireland's largest outdoor sporting event. The last estimate of the economic benefit attached to the event in 2008 suggested a return of over £55.00 for every £1 of public sector investment – the return is likely to have increased further since then. While it is not possible to disaggregate the impact of the event in the East Londonderry area organisers estimated that the event generates in excess of £7 million to the economy with visitors spending on average £215.90 on race day.

The success of the North West 200 in attracting internationally renowned participants, out-of-state visitors and world-wide media coverage has contributed to sustained growth. By way of example, in 2007 the number of visitors was estimated at over 150,000 of which around 40% were from outside of Northern Ireland. The number of accredited journalists registered to cover the event in 2006 totalled 145. In 2008 that number had increased to 361 - many of whom were from key target markets in Europe, USA and the Far East.

Irish Language and Ulster Scots Organisations

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure in relation to both Irish Language and Ulster Scots organisations to detail (i) the meetings he has arranged to attend with each; (ii) how many meetings he has had to date; (iii) what was the outcome of those meetings; and (iv) what plans he has to engage with both sectors in the future.

(AQW 7791/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since becoming Minister I have met with Ulster-Scots organisations at 10 events that I have attended and have held a further separate meeting with an Ulster-Scots organisation. I have had three meetings with Irish Language organisations. These meetings were of an informative nature with no specific outcomes. I have also chaired two NSMC meetings in Language Body Sectoral Format with both the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge in attendance and reports of these meetings are available in the Assembly's official report for Tuesday 23rd September 2008 and Tuesday 3rd February 2009. I consider all requests for meetings from Ulster-Scots and Irish Language organisations on merit and accept or decline in line with diary commitments and availability.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline (i) how the interim Chief Executive for the World Police and Fire Games was appointed; (ii) who is funding the appointment; and (iii) if the permanent appointment will be made on the basis of open competition.

(AQW 7799/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The interim Chief Executive was nominated by the Stakeholder Group to maintain contact with the World Police and Fire Games Federation and to support the Group with preliminary preparations for the Games in 2013. He is released by the RUC Athletic Association on a half day a week basis to undertake work for the 2013 Games.

In the event of a decision to appoint a permanent CEO this will be done on the basis of open competition.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline (i) who is funding the office established to administer the World Police and Fire Games; (ii) how was the staff member occupying the office recruited; and how is the post funded.

(AQW 7801/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The office and the staff member currently seconded to administer the World Police and Fire Games are funded by the Stakeholders. The interim Office Manager is seconded from the RUC Athletic Association by agreement of the Board of the RUC Athletic Association. The Stakeholders meet the cost of this secondment.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 5442/09, in relation to the £32,587.38 contributed by his Department towards the bid for the World Police and Fire Games, could the Minister (i) provide a breakdown of the contribution; and (ii) outline the procurement processes used.

(AQW 7802/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Detailed below is a breakdown of how the £32,587.38 was spent on the bid for the 2013 World Police and Fire Games.

Description	Expenditure
DVD Production Costs	£20,511.30
Bid Team Uniform	£2,307.08
Development of Logo	£770.00
Production of Bid Books	£6,350.00
Belfast Press Launch	£150.00
Cost associated with making Presentation in Adelaide	£2,499.00
Total	£32,587.38

Guidance on the procurement processes to be followed by NIEC is included in the Financial Memorandum between NIEC and the Department.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 5455/09, which stated that external appointments and recruitment of staff would be made by accordance with current legislation and best practice, can the Minister confirm (i) that this will also apply to the appointment of the board; or (ii) are the present directors of the stakeholder group expected to transfer to the formal board when established; and (iii) when the permanent board will be in place.

(AQW 7803/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Recommendations on the arrangements for the delivery of the Games will be included in a Business Case commissioned by the Stakeholder Group which is currently being prepared.

Decisions on the appointment of a Board, should one be necessary, will be determined by the delivery arrangement chosen for the 2013 Games.

World Police and Fire Games

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 5455/09, to outline (i) what process was adopted in appointing BDO Stoy Haywood; (ii) in the event that there was open competition who scrutinized the bids; and (iii) who is paying for the consultancy work.

(AQW 7804/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: BDO Stoy Hayward were appointed by the Stakeholders after an open tendering process. The tenders were scrutinized by a working group which was appointed by the Stakeholders. Sport Northern Ireland provided the select list and assisted with the scrutinization of the applications.

The Stakeholders will pay for the consultancy work.

Departmental Spend on Consultants

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7897/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure incurred no expenditure on internal consultants in any of the last three years. Expenditure on external consultants in these years was as follows:

2006-07	£1,273,691
2007-08	£3,534,432
2008-09	£87,572 *

* Figures for 2008-09 have yet to be finalised and may be subject to change following completion of the Department's Resource Accounts.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much his Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7940/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The information requested is set out at Annex A.

ANNEX A

	DCAL spend on Public notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers (£)	DCAL spend on other forms of media for consultations (£)
2006/07	834	Nil
2007/08	9,076	Nil
2008/09	1,207	Nil
Total	11,117	Nil

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education (i) which Voluntary Grammar Schools have operated outside their 5% annual budget; (ii) to what extent did each school operate outside their 5% annual budget; and (iii) what action has her Department taken to control any over/under spend by these schools, in each of the last three financial years. (AQW 7396/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Bíonn Scoileanna Gramadaí Deonacha ábalta leibhéil níos airde cistí neamhphoiblí scoile a fháil ná mar a bhíonn scoileanna san earnáil faoi chothabháil agus san earnáil rialaithe ábalta a fháil.

Voluntary Grammar Schools have an ability to generate higher levels of non-public school funds than schools within the maintained and controlled sectors. During the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 financial years the Department benchmarked surpluses and deficits generated by Voluntary Grammar Schools in the same manner as that applied to other schools in the controlled and maintained sectors i.e. not taking non-public funds into account when calculating cumulative deficits and surpluses. On the basis of this analysis the Department required several schools to produce 3 year financial plans setting out how they intended to reduce the surpluses and deficits greater than 5% of their annual delegated budget to within acceptable limits. The Department has since enhanced the accountability systems operated to take full account of both public and non-public school funds available to Voluntary Grammar Schools. The Department has conducted additional financial analysis on school expenditure and receipts on this basis to more accurately assess the financial stability of schools in this sector. This has identified that during the 2007/2008 financial year there were no Voluntary Grammar Schools who under spent the delegated funding received from the Department by more than 5 % of the annual delegated amount. Additionally, analysis has confirmed that no Voluntary Grammar Schools overspent or operated a

cumulative financial deficit during the 2007/2008 financial year when taking into account the balances of their public and non-public school funds.

Derryboye Primary School

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the provision of a new car park at Derryboye Primary School. (AQW 7609/09)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt go bhfuil na conraitheoirí ar an láithreán anois agus go mbeidh an tionscadal curtha i gcrích faoi thús mhí Mheán Fómhair 2009.

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board that the contractors are currently on site and the project will be completed by the beginning of September 2009.

Nursery Places

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of funded nursery places available this September; (ii) the number of children applying for funded nursery places this September, broken down by Education and Library Board area; and (iii) the reasons for any discrepancy in the two and what advice she can give to parents who have been told that the only funded nursery place available is an unreasonable distance from their home. (AQW 7779/09)

Minister of Education: Dheimhnigh na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne go mbeidh 20,901 áit chistithe réamhscoile ar fáil do mhí Mheán Fómhair;

- (i) The Education and Library Boards have confirmed 20,901 funded pre-school places available for September 2009;
- (ii) 20,041 children in their final pre-school year have applied for places in September 2009. The Education and Library Board split is BELB 3,132; WELB 3,483; NEELB 4,429; SEELB 4,280; and SELB 4,717. In addition, there have been 3,130 applications for children in their penultimate pre-school year; and
- (iii) The pre-school phase of education is non compulsory and not every parent wants to avail of a pre-school place for their child. The admissions process to pre-school settings, which includes the statutory sector, voluntary sector and private settings, in respect of the 2009/10 school year is still ongoing. Under the arrangements for September 2009 Admissions the initial process of admissions was completed on 1st May, when parents received a letter notifying them of the setting for which their pre-school child has been accepted. Parents of pre-school aged children unplaced in settings of their choice at 1st May 2009, were advised where alternative provision is still available. Education and Library Boards are now going through the re-allocation of places process for those children who were not placed at 1st May 2009. It is expected that this process will be completed by mid to end June.

Nursery Places

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Education to detail what percentage of the children who have been offered funded nursery places are; (i) children from families on income support; and (ii) children with statemented needs, broken down by Education and Library Board area, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7780/09)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas céatadán na bpáistí a raibh áiteanna réamhscoile tairgthe dóibh ar bhonn chúinsí a bhain le míbhuntáistí sóisialta, i.e. páistí a bhfuil liúntas tacaíochta ioncaim, nó liúntas do lucht cuardaigh fostaíochta atá ioncam-bhunaithe, á fháil ag tuismitheoir acu, i ngach bliain le cúig bliana anuas agus sonraithe ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne .

- (i) The percentage of children who were offered pre-school places on the basis of social disadvantaged circumstances, i.e. children with parents who are in receipt of income support or income-based jobseeker's allowance, for each of the last five years, broken down by Education and Library Board, is as follows:-

	2004/05 (%)	2005/06 (%)	2006/07 (%)	2007/08 (%)	2008/09 (%)
BELB	32.50	32.35	32.75	31.55	29.37
WELB	22.73	21.00	22.03	20.87	18.24
NEELB	12.23	12.48	11.14	10.71	10.55
SEELB	14.23	12.63	13.72	12.13	11.31
SELB	16.27	16.31	14.53	13.85	13.33
Total	18.90	18.24	18.01	17.02	15.79

- (ii) Children with statements of special educational needs are placed by each Education and Library Board's Special Education Section and their admission falls outside the pre-school admissions process and admissions numbers. The number of children with statements of special education needs admitted for each of the last five years, broken down by Education and Library Board, is as follows:-

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
BELB	10	5	7	11	12
WELB	30	32	23	28	25
NEELB	18	19	27	25	23
SEELB	20	13	22	18	21
SELB	23	21	24	19	19
Total	101	90	103	101	100

Funded Nursery Places

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education the number of children that were refused free nursery places in their first preference school or unit in (i) Newtownabbey; (ii) Larne; and (iii) Carrickfergus, for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 academic years. (AQW 7812/09)

Minister of Education: Thug Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlaine an Oirthuaiscirt eolas don Roinn maidir le líon na bpáistí a léirigh céad tosaíocht d'áit i naiscoil nó in aonad naiscoile sna ceantair shonraithe, agus nár éirigh leo an chéad tosaíocht sin a fháil.

The North Eastern Education and Library Board have advised the Department of the numbers of children expressing a first preference for a place in a nursery school or nursery unit in the areas specified, and who were unsuccessful in having their first preference met. Some of these children were in their final pre-school year, others were underage i.e. in their penultimate pre-school year. These children may subsequently have been placed at nursery schools or nursery units other than their first preference. The information requested is set out in the tables below.

2008/09

Area	Unplaced at first preference stage of the admissions process		
	Final pre-school year	Underage	Total
Carrickfergus	47	35	82
Larne	10	13	23
Newtownabbey	178	121	299

2009/10

Area	Unplaced at first preference stage of the admissions process		
	Final pre-school year	Underage	Total
Carrickfergus	54	48	102
Larne	21	30	51
Newtownabbey	162	141	303

Consumption of Milk

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Education to give her assessment on the consumption of milk in (a) nursery schools; (b) primary schools; (c) post-primary schools; and (d) special needs schools. (AQW 7833/09)

Minister of Education: Milk and dairy products are excellent sources of several nutrients such as calcium, protein and vitamins and for this reason they are included in the Department's Nutritional Standards for School Lunches and Other Food in Schools. Every lunch served in school must contain at least one portion of food from the milk and dairy foods group and, in addition, drinking milk must be available as an option every day.

At present, free school milk is provided to all pupils at special schools, to pupils in nursery and primary schools who do not have access to school meals and to individual nursery and primary school pupils where it is deemed necessary by the Public Health Authority in the interests of their health. Subsidised milk is available to nursery, primary, and, since August 2008, post-primary pupils through the EU School Milk Scheme, administered by the Department Of Agriculture and Rural Development. I understand the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development has already provided you with information in relation to this scheme. It is a matter for individual schools to decide if they wish to participate in the scheme.

Tá mé sásta, mar sin de, go mbíonn fáil ag scoileanna ar bhainne ó roinnt foinsí agus go bhfuil siad ar an eolas faoi na socruithe.

I am content, therefore, that milk is available to schools from a number of sources and that they are aware of the arrangements.

Departmental Spend on Consultants

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7835/09)

Minister of Education: Níl eolas ar fáil go fóill maidir leis an mhéid a chaith an Roinn Oideachais ar chomhairleacht sa bhliain 2008/2009. Níor chaith an Roinn airgead ar bith ar chomhairleacht inmheánach idir na blianta 2005/06 agus 2007/08. Seo a leanas an méid a chaith an Roinn ar chomhairleacht sheachtrach idir 2007/08:

Data in relation to the Department of Education's consultancy spend in 2008/09 is not yet available. No departmental expenditure took place on internal consultancy between 2005/06 and 2007/08. Expenditure by the Department on external consultancy between 2005/06 and 2007/08 is as follows:

Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Expenditure	£532,244	£905,601	£1,067,705

ICT in Schools

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what plans her Department has to maximise the use of ICT in schools in relation to area planning. (AQW 7845/09)

Minister of Education: Tríd an chur chuige nua atá ann maidir le pleanáil bunaithe sa cheantar, cinnteofar go bhfuil scoileanna láidre againn atá inmharthana ó thaobh oideachais de a sholáthraíonn an curaclam agus a fhreastalaíonn ar riachtanais na gceantar áitiúla.

The new area-based planning approach will help to ensure that we have strong, educationally sustainable schools delivering on the curriculum and meeting the needs of local areas. This will involve a variety of new arrangements for sharing and collaboration between schools including ICT networking as appropriate.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education how much her Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years, (AQW 7853/09)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas an t-eolas a iarradh:

The information requested is as follows:

- | | | |
|------|---------|------------|
| (i) | 2006/07 | £13,391.26 |
| | 2007/08 | £5327.19 |
| | 2008/09 | £7892.51 |
| (ii) | NIL | |

Teachers

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how many teachers are employed in the controlled sector broken down by (i) Protestant; and (ii) Roman Catholic. (AQW 7919/09)

Minister of Education: Ní fhostaíonn an Roinn múinteoirí agus ní choinníonn sí eolas staitistiúil ar chreideamh múinteoirí.

The Department does not employ teachers and does not hold statistical information on the religious breakdown of teachers.

Primary Schools: Funding

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education what extra finance she has directed towards primary school education since taking up office. (AQO 2779/09)

Minister of Education: Aithním an tábhacht a bhaineann le hinfheistiú inár mbunscoileanna; lena chinntiú go mbíonn an tús is fearr do na páistí ina saol oideachais. Ó ghlac mise leis an oifig, d'ardaigh mé leibhéal an chistithe tarmhligthe a thugtar do bhunscoileanna agus thug mé isteach roinnt clár tacaíochta go speisialta do dhaltai bunscoile.

I fully recognise the importance of investing in our primary schools; to ensure children get the best start to their education. Since taking up office, I have increased the levels of delegated funding to primary schools and introduced a number of specific programmes of support for primary school pupils..

However, it must be recognised that I am working within a finite overall budget for schools and in so doing, I have had to ensure that any skewing of funds to primary schools, from within existing allocations, does not create an unduly adverse impact for the needs of pupils at other phases of learning.

As I outlined in my statement of 12 February 2008, over the three year budget period from 2008/09 to 2010/11, significant additional funding has been directed towards specifically supporting primary schools:

- £12 million specifically to help primary school teaching Principals;
- an extra £32 million for the foundation stage of the revised curriculum in primary schools;
- extra funding of £12 million for Literacy and Numeracy measures across all schools, including targeted support for disadvantaged pupils in primary schools – such as the Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry – Bright Futures;

In addition to this, I have also made available further funding of £3 million in each of the last two years to provide for increases in the Primary AWPU weighting applied to primary-age pupils.

Further to this, primary schools are now benefitting from extra funding made available to provide for the primary languages and sports programmes (over £2 million in total will be spent on these programmes in this financial year) and in recognition of the current economic hardships I have made over £1 million available to extend the uniform allowance to primary school children.

These measures represent significant increases in the levels of funding available to support primary schools and early learning, to give children the best possible start to their education.

Within available resources, there will continue to be a clear focus on maximising the levels of funding being made available to support primary learning. I have asked my officials to carry out a review of education funding and the Terms of Reference for this Review are currently being drafted.

Education Attainment

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education what action her Department is taking to improve educational attainment, particularly in areas identified in the latest report produced by the Chief Inspector of Schools.

(AQO 2780/09)

Minister of Education: Leagann tuairisc an Phríomhchigire béim ar an obair mhaith atá á déanamh inár scoileanna ach cuireann sí in iúl go gcaithfidh muid níos mó a dhéanamh freisin. Léiríonn sí go bhfuil gá ann don chlár athruithe atá á threorú agam le dul i ngleic leis an thearcghnóthachtáil agus le caighdeáin a ardú.

The Chief Inspector's report highlights the good work in our schools but also indicates we need to do more. It clearly underlines the need for the programme of change I have been leading, to tackle underachievement and raise standards.

I have discussed the detail of the report with Stanley Goudie and every principal and board of governors has received a letter highlighting the need for action.

The issuing of final Departmental guidance for Transfer 2010, following a period of consultation, with recommendations for wholly non-selective admissions criteria, will lay the foundations of a system based on social justice, equality and excellence.

On 30 April, I launched 'Every School a Good School – A Policy for School Improvement'. This flagship policy will tackle underachievement, raise standards and address the issues raised by the Chief Inspector. Its implementation will ensure all schools focus on improvement. It will be supported by the revised literacy and numeracy strategy, currently being finalised.

We know early intervention is key. The developing Early Years Strategy and Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion both aim to identify and address the needs of children in a coherent way as early as possible.

To help overcome potential barriers to achievement, on 1st April, I launched 'Every School A Good School – Supporting Newcomer Pupils' and I have also set up a Taskforce on Traveller education.

My reform programme clearly addresses the concerns raised by the Chief Inspector. I want to make sure that every young person has the same opportunity to succeed, regardless of socio-economic background, gender or race.

When I was appointed as Minister of Education in the restored Assembly, I inherited a system that was built around and geared towards the needs of 40% of children. Every year thousands of children were failed by the education system. For the most part, these were already disadvantaged children. I am not prepared to tolerate such inequality.

I want to see a system that is child-centred and delivers the educational outcomes we need as a society. Our focus is on the child and on the education we deliver for them, and Transfer 2010 represents an important milestone in my reform programme.

School Admissions Criteria

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to provide an example of how post-primary schools setting admissions criteria based on academic attainment could be unlawful.

(AQO 2782/09)

Minister of Education: Tá beartas na Roinne Oideachais ar shocrú chritéir iontrála mar chuid den Treoir um Aistirú 2010, a shocrófar i ndiaidh tréimhsí chomhairliúcháin. Déanann an treoir cur síos ar réimse critéar neamh acadúla a moladh agus caithfear scoileanna aird a thabhairt ar an treoir seo.

Department of Education policy on the setting of admissions criteria is contained in Transfer 2010 guidance, to be finalised following a period of consultation. The guidance describes a range of recommended non-academic admissions criteria, and schools must have regard to this guidance.

For a school's Board of Governors not to have regard for the Transfer 2010 guidance issued by the Department in the drawing up of admissions criteria is unlawful. Any school that gives due regard to the guidance but chooses thereafter to depart from Departmental policy as described in the guidance leaves itself open to challenge.

The guidance explains that there remain a number of established legal requirements that all post-primary schools must comply with.

In particular, school Boards of Governors still have a responsibility to draw up admissions criteria that will enable them to identify for admission exactly the number of applicants that their admissions number, set by the Department, permits them to admit. Any school that uses admissions criteria that are not capable of doing this will be in breach of the law.

Schools must also take care to set admissions criteria that do not breach equality legislation, as described more fully in the guidance.

Northern Ireland Act 1998

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to outline the implications of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) in relation to education policy. (AQO 2783/09)

Minister of Education: Agus a bhfeidhmeanna á gcomhlíonadh ag an Roinn Oideachais, tugtar aird mar is cuí don ghá atá ann le comhionannas deiseanna a chothú:

- idir gach cineál duine beag beann ar a gcreideamh, ar a dtuairimí polaitíochta, ar a gcine, ar a n-aois, ar a stádas pósta nó ar a ngnéas-chlaonadh;
- idir fhir agus mhná go ginearálta; idir dhaoine atá faoi mhíchumas agus dhaoine nach bhfuil; agus idir dhaoine a bhfuil cleithiúnaithe acu agus dhaoine nach bhfuil.

The Department of Education in carrying out its functions has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Equality Commission's Guide to the Statutory Duties states:

“The main aim of Section 75 is to ensure that equality of opportunity is “mainstreamed” by public authorities in their policy making, policy implementation and policy review”

Section 75 is important to education policy review and policy formulation in order to:

- recognise inequalities which exist in terms of the impact of policies on people;
- participate with those affected by policies, to check for inequalities and the extent of adverse impact; and
- revise policies, following assessment and consultation, so that equality of opportunity can be better delivered.

In a recent article, Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of Equality Commission's stated:-

“Equality laws are fundamentally about protecting people against injustice and ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.”

I very much agree with his words.

Transfer 2010

Mr M Brady asked the Minister of Education to outline her response to the decision by the Catholic sector to advise all Catholic schools to implement Transfer 2010 as fully as possible. (AQO 2784/09)

Minister of Education: Leagtar amach sa treoir ar Aistriú 2010 beartas na Roinne le haghaidh aistrithe iarbhunscoile sa bhliain 2010, agus tabharfar an beartas chun críche i ndiaidh na tréimhse comhairliúcháin.

Transfer 2010 guidance sets out the Department's policy for post-primary transfer in 2010, and will be finalised following a period of consultation.

I welcome the recent statement, reported in the media as having been issued by the principals of 90 Catholic schools following a conference in Cookstown, in which they offer support for the guidance. I note in particular the comment that:

“The availability to schools of the minister's admissions criteria makes testing superfluous and unnecessary. Our schools have no difficulty with such criteria, nor should any Catholic post-primary school”.

Support for the Transfer 2010 guidance has also been forthcoming in a separate statement made by the Principals of six West Belfast post-primary schools - St Louise's College; De La Salle College; St Rose's High School; St Genevieve's High School; Corpus Christi College; and Christian Brothers School.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) has written to the Chairpersons of Boards of Governors and Principals of all Catholic Maintained Primary Schools with advice on Transfer 2010. That advice asks schools to note “that in the event that they have wilfully disregarded and acted outwith advice [from DE or CCMS] it may be difficult to support the indemnification of their actions.”

I also welcome much of the statement from the Commission for Catholic Education, which restates its opposition to academic selection at the age of 11 as a means of transferring to post-primary education, and I note the call for all schools in the Catholic sector to move to an alternative form of transfer. I welcome the Commission's call for schools in the Catholic sector to follow the Transfer 2010 guidance as fully as possible.

I note the Commission's recognition of some of the risks involved in the operation of breakaway tests: the risk of discriminating against a child or groups of children; the risk of children having to sit multiple tests; and the risk of distorting the statutory curriculum. All of those risks and others can be avoided if the Transfer 2010 guidance is complied with.

Pre-School Places

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education if all those people who have applied for pre-school places for their children for September 2009 will be facilitated. (AQO 2786/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sé mar aidhm ag an Chlár um Oideachas Réamhscoile a Leathnú bliain amháin d'ardchaighdeán oideachais chistithe réamhscoile a sholáthar do gach páiste ar mian lena dtuismitheoirí í, sa bhliain roimh oideachas éigeantach.

The aim of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme is to provide one year of high quality funded pre-school education, in the year before compulsory education, for every child whose parents wish it.

The admissions process to pre-school settings in respect of the 2009/10 school year is still ongoing. Under the arrangements for September 2009 Admissions, the initial process of admissions was completed on 1st May 2009, when parents received a letter notifying them of the setting for which their pre-school child has been accepted.

Parents of pre-school aged children unplaced in settings of their choice at 1st May 2009, were advised where alternative provision is still available.

Education and Library Boards are now going through the re-allocation of places process for those children who were not placed at 1st May 2009. It is expected that this process will be completed by mid to end June.

Post-Primary Transfer: Consultation

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Education what meetings she has had with post-primary school principals in her consultation on proposals for post-primary transfer published on 15 May 2008. (AQO 2787/09)

Minister of Education: In the period between my 4 December 2007 statement outlining a long term vision for post-primary education and the bringing forward of consensual proposals for Transfer 2010 on 15 May 2008, and as part of an extensive round of meetings with education partners, I met with bodies that represent the views of post-primary school principals from all sectors, including all the teaching unions. I also met with individual principals of controlled grammar schools for whom there is no dedicated representative body.

In the period following 15 May 2008, and prior to the decision to move forward on the basis of Transfer 2010 guidance announced on 2 February 2009, I hosted dinners dedicated to this issue with post-primary principals in Enniskillen, Newcastle, Newry, Limavady, Ballymena, Cookstown and Derry.

Thug mé cuairteanna ar scoileanna i ngach earnáil, ghlac mé páirt i gcruinnithe poiblí ar fud an tuaiscirt, agus bhí cruinnithe agam le comhpháirtithe eile oideachais lena n-áiríodh na ceardchumann ar fad a léirigh tuairimí ghairm na múinteoireachta.

I have also visited schools across all sectors, participated in public meetings throughout the north, and held meetings with other education partners including all the unions representing the views of the teaching profession.

School Transport

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Education how much money is spent annually on transporting pupils to Grammar Schools under the School Transport scheme; and how this compares to Great Britain and the Irish Republic. (AQO 2788/09)

Minister of Education: Sa bhliain dhá mhíle is a seacht / dhá mhíle is a hocht (2007/08), caitheadh seacht deag ponc a naoi milliún (£17.9m) ar iompar daltaí chuig Scoileanna Ghramadaí Dheonacha faoi Shocruithe Iompair ó Bhaile go Scoil.

In the 2007/08 year a total of £17.9 million was spent transporting pupils to Voluntary Grammar Schools under the Home to School Transport arrangements. The total cost of transporting all pupils was £67.2 million. Pupils at Voluntary Grammar Schools compose roughly one third of all pupils funded for home to school transport.

The Department does not hold separate figures in relation to Controlled Grammar Schools, nor for pupils attending Grammar schools in England, Scotland and Wales. An exercise to obtain data for England, Scotland and Wales would result in disproportionate cost. There are no Grammar Schools in the South of Ireland comparable to those in the North.

Specialist Schools

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education, in relation to her announcement of 22 April 2009 about specialist school funding, why four of the schools awarded funding were non-STEM schools. (AQO 2789/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mé sásta go raibh mé ábalta cistiú a thabhairt, cé gur cistiú ar leibhéal níos lú a bhí i gceist, ní amháin do dhá nó do thrí scoil speisialaithe STEM ach don deich scoil ar fad, na ceithre scoil speisialaithe neamhSTEM san áireamh, a d'aithin an painéal neamhspleách gur chomhlíon na scoileanna sin na critéir ar fad.

I am pleased that I have been able to fund, albeit at a reduced level, not just two or three STEM specialist schools but all ten schools including 4 non STEM specialists, that the Independent panel identified as having met all the criteria.

Following my budget announcement in March 2009, I indicated that funding was available from within the Innovation Fund for a very small number of schools with lead specialisms in STEM related subjects. However I indicated that I wished to look at options when the outcome of the assessment process was known and asked that all 20 Specialist Schools applications were assessed to allow for decisions to be made. Following a rigorous assessment by the Independent Panel, ten schools were identified as meeting the criteria required for designation. Six of these had STEM-related specialisms, with the remaining four having specialisms in other areas.

In recognition of the work that schools had put into the preparation of applications and following extensive representations from schools and their partner schools. I am pleased that we have been able to arrive at a workable solution that has been welcomed by the ten schools.

I have also decided that the designation under the current arrangements for all specialist schools will end in August 2011. I believe this is a good time to review the Specialist Schools model and have asked for work to be carried out to identify how best to build on the strengths of the specialist schools programme while also introducing a clearer focus on inclusion and on sharing best practice in a way that can contribute more directly to my wider reform programme.

School Selection Criteria

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education what advice the Equality Commission has provided in relation to her selection criteria guidance. (AQO 2790/09)

Minister of Education: Is féidir an freagra iomlán a bhí ag an Coimisiún um Chomhionannas, maidir le comhairliúchán na Roinne Oideachais ar Threoir an Aistrithe 2010, a fheiceáil ar láithreán gréasáin an Choimisiúin.

The Equality Commission's response to the Department of Education's consultation on Transfer 2010 guidance can be viewed in full on the Commission's website.

The response includes the following conclusion - "The Commission welcomes the guidance document and that a number of the Commission's previous recommendations have been incorporated. We recommend that the Department has the appropriate structures in place to support the effective implementation of these arrangements."

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Credit Cards

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how many credit cards have been issued to his Department's staff for work purposes; and (ii) in relation to punitive bank charges on these cards, (a) how many have there been; (b) the total cost of the charges; and (c) the reasons for the charges, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7670/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Department for Employment and Learning currently has five Government Visa Procurement cards.

There are no bank charges on any of these cards in each of the last five years.

Departmental Spend on Consultants

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7836/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning:

	2005/06 £m	2006/07 £m	2007/08 £m
Expenditure on External Consultancy	0.62	0.38	0.60

The 2008/09 accounts have not yet been finalised.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much his Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7854/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning:

- (i) The Department for Employment and Learning has spent a total of £98,405.53 on public notices for consultations in local/regional newspapers over the past three years.

The table below provides a breakdown of this total over the past three years.

PUBLIC NOTICE ADVERTISING

1st April 2006 - 31st March 2007	£ 50,612.88
1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008	£ 24,961.53
1st April 2008 - 31st March 2009	£ 22,831.12
Total	£ 98,405.53

- (ii) The Department for Employment and Learning also publishes public notices for consultations on the departmental website – www.delni.gov.uk. There is no nominal cost to the department for this.

Apprenticeships

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department will adopt the proposals for a target for apprentices being employed in contracts awarded by government, based on the Westminster proposals for 1000 apprentices. (AQO 2791/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: A Sustainability Task Group, set up under the auspices of the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland has developed ‘Proposals for Promoting Equality and Sustainable Development by Sustainable Procurement in Construction’. These proposals, to be included, in so far as it is practicable, in all new public construction contracts from December 2008, require main contractors to recruit one apprentice, either directly or through the supply chain, for each £2m of project value, depending on the nature of the project. In areas of social or economic disadvantage, the Contracting Authority may adjust this target in order to reflect particular social or economic circumstances in relation to a specific target.

My Department will encourage other NI Departments to ensure that all contracts of this scale provide employment opportunities for apprentices. From this my officials will advise on any future specific targets that need to be brought forward. This principal need not apply to construction only but could be applied to all large value public procurements.

University of Ulster: Yorkgate

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the proposals of the University of Ulster to transfer courses to a future Yorkgate College Campus. (AQO 2792/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: This is a major proposal that has been put forward by the University of Ulster. The University has submitted an economic appraisal for the capital investment required and that is still under consideration by the economists within my Department. If approved at that stage, the economic appraisal will be submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel for its approval.

The potential transfer of courses from Jordanstown to the York Street campus would be a matter for the university.

Visteon Workers

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what careers, training and redundancy support his Department has provided to workers at Visteon Ford. (AQO 2796/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My officials offered to provide an on-site redundancy service to Visteon workers with the Administrator but were unable to gain access to the site. Copies of the DEL leaflet “We can help you back to work” and the addresses of local offices were provided to the employees through the Administrator. A significant number of employees have since been interviewed by Advisers where employment

opportunities, training options, CV preparation and job-search were discussed. Some of these employees have already availed of short accredited courses through Steps to Work and were referred to Careers staff as appropriate.

PhD Students

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress has been made on achieving the Programme for Government target of increasing the number of PhD research students by 300 at local universities by 2010. (AQO 2798/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department is on course to achieve this target. The first 100 additional places were filled in Academic Year 2008/09 and the Department has notified the universities of their respective allocations for the second tranche of an additional 100 places in Academic Year 2009/10.

Pathways to Work

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the extension of the Pathways to Work pilot for lone parents; and whether the pilot is to be extended. (AQO 2800/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Pathways to Work for Lone Parents pilot project ended on 31 March and is currently being evaluated. The financial incentives that were tested by the pilot – the Return to Work Credit of £40 per week and the In Work Emergencies Fund – have already been made available to all lone parents in Northern Ireland. My Department will give due consideration to the evaluation report when it is available and, subject to resource availability, will bring forward additional proposals if necessary.

Training

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration has been given to helping companies, using short-time working, to continue to provide training. (AQO 2801/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The global recession has been keenly felt across Northern Ireland, with significant job losses in numerous industries and many employers placing large numbers of staff on short time working patterns.

My Department recognises that as the training needs of business change, apprentices can often be vulnerable during these difficult economic times. This is why I announced earlier today, details of the 'skillsafe' scheme which my Department is putting in place to address the needs of those apprentices placed on short time working as a result of the recession.

'Skillsafe' will initially be targeted at those apprentices in the manufacturing engineering sector, but will be kept under review with the possibility of rolling the scheme out to other sectors in the future.

From 8th June, my Department will work with employers who have placed one or more of their current apprentices on short time working, and the relevant training organisation, to help fill the apprentice's downtime with accredited training.

In addition to this, my Department will pay the apprentice a training allowance to help offset the reduction in their pay brought about as a result of being placed on short time working.

Stranmillis University College/Queen's University Belfast: Merger

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if, and when, his Department will publish the Business Case submitted by Stranmillis University College in relation to its proposed merger with Queen's University Belfast (AQO 2802/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Business Case is currently being considered by officials in my Department.

The Business Case will be made available to the Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning once it has received internal approval from my Department, subsequent approval from the Department of Finance and

Personnel and from me, as Minister. If such approvals are given, a series of further steps will then need to be taken, including consultation and both Committee and Assembly scrutiny of any proposed legislation.

Further Education

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what (i) short-term; and (ii) long-term plans he has to ensure that Further Education Colleges collaborate more with the business sector in developing courses to meet their employee skill needs. (AQO 2803/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department has established Workforce Development Forums in each of the six areas served by Further Education Colleges.

Workforce Development Forums are representative of industry and commerce, local government, and other statutory and non-statutory bodies that have a significant interest in ensuring that the colleges meet the skills needs of local business.

Colleges also engage extensively with employer representative bodies, individual companies and Sector Skills Councils (SSC) to identify and address their sectoral as well as company specific skills needs.

An immediate priority for colleges is the provision of customised skills training, and other assistance, to help local businesses deal with the impact of the economic downturn, including the threat of redundancies and short-time working.

Longer term, our revised curriculum policy enables colleges to offer courses and qualifications that will help address the economy's need for a better skilled workforce.

Wage Subsidy

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment have completed their consideration of a possible wage subsidy or similar scheme; and when the proposals will be published. (AQO 2804/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has been working closely with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to ensure that any programmes we have been developing complement those of DETI.

As a result, this morning I announced details of my Department's 'Skillsafe' scheme to the Assembly. This scheme is being put in place to address the needs of Apprentices who have been placed on short time working as a result of the recession.

'Skillsafe' will be of benefit to Apprentices in two ways. Firstly, we will fill their down time with accredited training which will contribute towards their Apprenticeship. Secondly, the Department will pay a training allowance which will help offset the reduction in their pay.

This scheme will be available from 8th June and will initially be targeted at those Apprentices who have been placed on short time working patterns within the manufacturing engineering sector.

Visteon Workers

Ms J McCann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in light of the recent treatment of workers at the Visteon plant, if he has had any meetings or discussions with the Trade Unions about bringing forward legislation so that workers are protected. (AQO 2805/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Officials meet regularly with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to discuss legislative developments.

Under the law employees already have rights and protections, including the right to receive statutory redundancy pay as a minimum. If the employer is unable to make the payment and my Department is satisfied that the requirements specified in Employment Rights legislation have been met, payment will be made by the Department and any monies claimed back from the assets of the business.

Employers proposing to make collective redundancies must complete a consultation period with employee representatives before issuing redundancy notices. Employees are also entitled to a statutory or contractual notice period which takes effect from the date consultation is complete.

Employees who do not feel they have been paid at least the statutory minimum or have not been properly consulted or received adequate notice may make a complaint to an Industrial Tribunal.

There are no plans to bring forward further legislation for the protection of workers in redundancy situations.

Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, following the Public Accounts Committee investigation into £2.5 million debt of the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education in 2006/07, what actions his Department has implemented to alleviate the situation. (AQO 2806/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Since becoming aware of this deficit, my Department has been closely monitoring Belfast Institute which, following merger, now forms part of Belfast Metropolitan College. As a result of that monitoring, the Department raised significant concerns about the College's finances and commissioned an efficiency review to discover the reasons for its deteriorating financial position and make recommendations for improvement.

The review has been completed and the Department will be working closely with the College Governing Body as it takes forward a formal recovery process.

Holylands Stakeholders Forum

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the first meeting of the Holylands Stakeholder Forum on 7 May 2009. (AQO 2807/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I was very encouraged by the discussions that took place at the Forum on 7 May 2009. As you are aware, the Forum brought together key representatives of various organisations and interested parties to discuss the issues affecting the Holyland area. On the basis of those discussions, a draft report is being produced and circulated to all of the delegates for their consideration. Once the report has been finalised, it is my intention to write to the relevant agencies and organisations, including Executive colleagues, with a view to agreeing a way forward.

Employment: East Antrim

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the changes in the numbers of Job Seeker Allowance claimants and vacancies in the East Antrim constituency, over the last 12 months. (AQO 2808/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: From 1 April 2008 until 31 March 2009, the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in East Antrim (Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey Jobs and Benefits Offices) has increased from 1533 to 3091, which represents an increase of just over 100%. During the same period, 2770 vacancies were notified to the three Jobs and Benefits Offices representing a 41% decrease on the previous year's total of 4683.

Employment Services Board: Sainsbury's

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given the excellent record of the West Belfast Employment Service Board in getting people out of long term unemployment, if the Board was properly involved in planning for the jobs at Andersonstown Sainsburys. (AQO 2809/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My officials met with the Sainsbury's Human Resources Manager in early March to outline how the Department could support them with recruitment and to inform them of the key community stakeholders in the area. Ultimately it is a matter for Sainsbury's to determine its recruitment policy. Sainsbury's main priority was to interview Curley's staff to establish if they wanted to transfer to employment

with Sainsbury's. When this exercise was complete Sainsbury's agreed to advertise remaining vacancies with the Department. Vacancies were advertised on 1 May. Representatives from the Employment Services Board were kept informed of the recruitment process at various Neighbourhood Partnership meetings.

Economy

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he has met with his counterparts in the Republic of Ireland to discuss their response to the economic downturn. (AQO 2810/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I met the Tanaiste, Mary Coughlan, on 11 March 2009 and, amongst a number of other issues, discussed actions that we are taking to tackle the economic downturn.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Energy from Waste Grant Funding

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much of the £18million Energy from Waste grant funding that was to be issued by April 2008 has been given out; and to whom it has been distributed. (AQW 7432/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): Although April 2008 was the initial target date for the issue of funding to Energy from Waste projects the complexity of the projects necessitated detailed appraisals before approvals could be sought. DETI therefore secured funding in the current Comprehensive Spending Review period to cover the commitments to the Energy from Waste projects and allow them to complete in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 financial years.

Offers totalling £14,771 million have been made to five projects, one of which is a public sector project. No funding has as yet been distributed but as all the promoters are confident that the projects will proceed, the budget remains allocated and committed to the five successful projects.

Of the remaining £3.229 million, £0.43 million was returned to the Northern Ireland block in the 07/08 financial year and £2.8 million was redirected to the Reconnect programme to increase its budget to £10.8 million during the 08/09 financial year.

Public Procurement Contracts

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the companies that were successful in securing public procurement contracts in works, services and goods through the Department, in the last two years and the percentage of those that were from the SME or the Social Economy sectors. (AQW 7436/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Companies that were successful in securing public procurement contracts in 2007-08 and 2008-09 in works, services and goods are listed at Annex A.

The percentage of companies from SME or the Social Economy sectors is as follows: -

ANNEX A

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
A4e	A&L Goodbody
Abacus Recruitment Agency	Actica Consulting
Abbey Court Hotel	AEA Energy & Environment

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
Agri Foods BioSciences Institute	Alan Dunlop
Alan Britten	Albert McKeaveney
Ana McColgan	Anderson Spratt
Analysys Mason	Ann Gorman Marketing
Angelena Boden	Anne Faux Accountants
Arco Ltd	Apparitum
ASM Horwath	Arco Ltd
Atkins	Arthur Cox
AV Browne	Arthur D Little
Avanti	ASA Marketing
Baker, Tilly, Mooney Moore	ASM Horwath
Banner Business Supplies Ltd	Atlas Communications
BDO Stoy Hayward	Banner Business Office Supplies
Beers Consulting	Barklie & Logan
Bel-Air Refrigeration	BDO Stoy Hayward
BGS GSNI	Beamish Associates International
BHA Consulting	Bearing Point
Bigger & Strahan	Belfast City Council
BJM Chartered Accountants	Blackbox Marketing
BOC	Brian Dynes
Brian Morrison	Brian Mackey
Brilliant Red	Brian McKee
Broadmind	Brigid Duggan Consultants
Bryson Charitable Group	CA Promotions
BTS Solutions	Cambridge Econometrics
Business Consulting UK Ltd	Campbell & Caher
CA Promotions	Carson McDowell
Centre for Competitiveness	Centre for Competitiveness
Champion Exposition Services	Circle Exhibitions
Ciber UK Ltd	Citizens Advice Bureau
Citizens Advice Bureau	Claredon Executive
Clare Veterinary Clinic	Clear Direction
Cobweb Information Ltd	Clearwater Consulting
Central Office of Information	Cleaver Fulton Rankin
Commendium Ltd	Colin Jackson
Commercial Graphics	Computacentre
Copytext	Copytext

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
David Cordiner Photography	Coventry University
Dawson Hinds Ltd	Create
DC Ives	Crown Records
Deloitte	D5 Consulting
Dennison Commercials Ltd	David Brew Consulting
DHA Consulting	David Woodhead
Diamond Recruitment Agency	DBA (Des Bingham Associates Ltd)
Direct News	Deloitte
Duffy Lafferty Communications	Denton Wilde Sapte
Dun & Bradstreet Ltd	DesignCo
DWCL Group	Dimension
Ecofys	Disability Action
Editorial Solutions	Douglas Mgt Consultancy
EG Consulting	DSGI
Electro Industries	Duke Consulting
Element Consulting	Duncan Consulting
Energy Footprint	East Belfast Enterprise
Envision	Ecom Software Ltd
Equanet	Edgecumbe Catering Services Ltd
Ernst & Young	EG Information Consulting
Esynergy	Envision Management Consultants
Ethos	Ernst & Young
Event Exhibition & Display	Ethos Information Solutions
Eventful Consultancy	European Business Link
Excite Exhibition & Display	Event
Exclaim	Exclaim
Expertise	EYE (Advertising)
EYE (Advertising)	Food from Britain
Faber Maunsell	Forth Data Management
FGS McClure Watters	FR Kelly
Financial Times	Full Circle
Fire IMC	Gaia Marketing & Design
Flex Language Services	Gareth Jones
Focus Management Consultancy	Goldblatt McGuigan
Food from Britain France	GPS Colour Graphics
Forde May Consulting	Handel Exporting
FPM Accountants	Happening

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
FR Kelly	HELM Corporation
Full Circle	Heron Consulting
FuturoFirma	Hertz Lease
G2 Environmental Services Ltd	Hillsborough Consultancy
Genesis	HMC Global
Geological Survey of Ireland	Hopkirk and Russ
Geosystem Srl	Hutchinson Mgt Consultancy
Gilmartin Consulting	IFF Research
Gilmore Signs	IMS
Global Connect	Insight Business Services
Goldblatt McGuigan	Inspired eBusiness Solutions
Google	Ipsos Mori
GPS Colour Graphics Ltd	Iris Colour
Grant Thornton	Iron Mountain
Hallmark Solutions	Jack Patterson
Handel Export Consulting	James Burke
Hanna Thompson	Jenkinson Consulting
Harbinson Mulholland	Jeris Associates
Harrison Management Consulting Ltd	Joe Doherty & Associates
Harrison Photography	John Boggs
Helix Innovation Partnerships Ltd	John Bradley
Heron	John McQuillan Contracts
Hewlett-Packard	John Orsi
Hutchinson	Johnston Printing
Hyder Consulting	Jones & Cassidy
IFF Research	Kappa Consulting
Innotec	Keith Charlton
Inspired	Ken McElwaine
Ipsos Mori	Kerr Consulting
ISL Ltd	KPMG
J.A. McClelland & Sons (Aucts) Ltd	Kremer
Jackson Mullan	KTS Consultants
James Deeny	L'Strange & Brett
John McVeigh	Lacey Consultancy
John P Hanna	Linkubator
John Sheridan & Sons Ltd	Louise Corken
Ken Morrison Consulting	MA Consulting

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
Ker Graphics	MacMillan Media
Kiang	MacNeill Consultancy
KPMG	Maeflower Consulting Private Ltd
Kremer Consulting	Marcom
Lagan Technologies Ltd	Marie-Claire Houston
Lake consulting Ltd	Marketise
Lansdowne Market Research	Marlagh
Lewis Communications Private Ltd	MaST
Linkubator	Matthews
Locum Consulting	Max Branding
Lord Europ	MCA Consulting
M Barrett	McClure Watters
Mabbett & Associates	McConnells
Marsh	McGrigors LLP
Marshall Addidle	Mentec
MaST	Michael Cooper
Matthews Business Consulting	Michael Morrow Marketing
McAdam Design/Ecovision	Mick McAteer
McCadden Creative	Millward Brown
McCann Consulting	Mooney Media
McClure Watters	Moran Consulting
MCI UK	Mount Charles Catering
McKinsey & Co	MPD International
Mediatrack Research	NI Technology Centre (QUB)
Meltem	Nicola Brown Associates
MERC	North West Marketing Ltd
Michael Cooper Photography	Northern Ireland Media Monitoring
Michael Gallagher	Northern Whig Ltd
Millward Brown Ulster	OCO Consulting
Morrow Communications	Oliver Wyman Actuarial Consulting
MS BIS	Oswald Cross
Neueda	PA Consulting Ltd
NI Technology Centre QUB	Parker Butler
NIMMS	Parsons Brinkerhoff
NISP	Partiy
North Time & Data	Perceptive Insight
North West Marketing	Platinum Expo

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
Northern Innovation	Prof Andrew Scott
Northern Ireland Media Monitoring	Prof D Storey
OCO Consulting	Prof L Stevenson
Orchardville	Prof Mark Hart
Over Arup	PWC
Oxera	R W Pierce
PA Consulting	Regional Forecasts
Pan Leisure	Resource TM
Parker Butler	RMK Associates
PDC Consulting	Robert Reid
Perceptive Insight Market Research	Roger Frampton
Pierce Communications	Saffron Brand
PLB Projects Ltd	Sax Ltd
Poyry Energy	SB Associates
Pragmatique Ltd	SCM
Press Eye Ltd	Singularity
Prof Mark Hart	Sita UK
Progressive Associates	SMB Golf
PWC	Sopra
Quadra	Sopra Newell & Budge
Quadriga Consulting	SPA Consulting
QUB	SQW Ltd
Ransted Recruitment Agency	Stormont Hotel
Ream Ltd	Stratagem
Renewable Building	StreamOn.net
Resource TM	Sunesis
RPS Consulting	Terry Stevens
Sage UK	TES Business Consultants
Sam Butler	The Analysis Bureau
Serco Integrated Services	The Charm Company
Shauna Magill Associates	The Rural College, Derrynoid
Sita UK	TIME Associates
Sopra Group	TNS Travel & Tourism
Stormont Hotel	Tom McAvoy
Strategem Ireland Limited	Trade and Commerce
Strathclyde University	Tranzformix
Sweet & Maxwell	Tughans

2008-09 83%	2007-08 85%
2008/09 Financial Year	2007/08 Financial Year
Company	Company
TDP Advertising	Turkington Technology
Team	Ulster Exhibition
Templeton Hotel	W5 Ltd
Terry McCaughey	Weber Shandwick
The Analysis Bureau	Western Connect
The Jessop Group Ltd	Whitenoise
The Right Solution	Whitewater Consulting
The Stanley Motor Works (1932) Ltd	William Balmer
Thinking Place	William McKay
TNS Millward brown	William Stewart
Tony Pleavin	Windsor Photoprints
Tribal Helm	Xerox
TTC	
TTC International	
Turkington	
Ursula Lindsay	
Visual Access	
Waterman Sustainable	
WCS Consultants	
White Young Green	
Wilden Management Services	
Xcel Signs	
Xerox	
YTKO	

Departmental Land

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when the most recent audit of departmental land was undertaken; and how much unused land the Department currently holds. (AQW 7731/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI holds land exclusively for the use of client companies with an approved business case and a demonstrable immediate property need. Its total landholding amounts to 2776 acres of which 758 acres remain available for Invest NI client company projects.

Invest NI's landholding is kept under continual review as per public sector best practice. This is to ensure that any property deemed as surplus is released with the least possible delay, subject to the need to realise full value for the Exchequer.

The most recent audit of Invest NI's property portfolio was carried out by the organisation in April 2009 and it identified that it had no surplus landholding.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7857/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Information on DETI spend on consultation in each of the past three years is set out in the attached tables.

(i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers;

DETI (including NDPBs)	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Total	£12,608	£24,235	£13,483

(ii) Other forms of media for consultations;

DETI (including NDPBs)	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Total	£ 0	£ 0	£ 0

Project Kelvin

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the Derry Telehouse will be connected to the Project Kelvin network by at least three separate cable routes. (AQW 7874/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Hibernia Atlantic is continuing with the work associated with the submission of a change request to the Project Kelvin contract which will propose a new location for the Telehouse in Londonderry. Until the exact location is known, details of how the Telehouse will be connected to Hibernia's network cannot be finalised.

The contract for the project specifies that it must operate on an open access, carrier neutral basis. As a result any telecommunications company can, if they choose, connect their networks to any of the project's Points of Presence including the Telehouse. As BT, Eircom, Ntl, Bytel and other telecommunications companies have networks in Londonderry, the Telehouse could be connected to multiple networks if there is a commercial reason to do this.

Tourism

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what analysis her Department has carried out on how the main tourist attractions could be better promoted. (AQO 2813/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland Tourism Signature Projects and other key attractions in Northern Ireland are featured extensively in Tourism Ireland's suite of publications which are distributed to potential visitors in markets across the world. They are also well represented throughout Tourism Ireland's suite of 41 websites in 19 languages. These provide access to over 30,000 records on things to do and see, places to stay and information of interest to overseas visitors and which attract over 10 million unique visitors a year.

NITB has also recently developed a brand strategy for Northern Ireland tourism. The brand aims to create the new Northern Ireland experience and get it on everyone's destination wishlist. The brand identified 2 themes that articulate what Northern Ireland has to offer that no one else can offer. The themes are "Experience Our Awakening" and "Uncover our Stories". The latter provides the direction to promote our unique attractions.

NITB has also recently delivered an advertising campaign in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland promoting the unique tourism assets that Northern Ireland has, that cannot be experienced in any other destination.

NITB is seeking to exploit the Sterling/Euro exchange rate advantage by driving home the message that Northern Ireland is a great destination to visit, is easily accessible and offers good value for money.

Invest NI: West Tyrone

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the efforts of Invest NI to secure inward investment in the West Tyrone constituency in the last five years. (AQO 2818/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI promotes all of Northern Ireland as an attractive and viable location which is capable of providing solutions to the business needs of potential inward investors.

Invest NI does not determine the locations chosen for potential investor visits or the final locations for investment projects. However, the agency does work closely with each company when preparing a draft visit programme. This is to ensure that the locations to be visited meet the company's needs and maximise the opportunity to sell the Northern Ireland proposition.

From April 2002 to March 2008, Invest NI facilitated 18 inward visits by potential investors to the West Tyrone Parliamentary Constituency area. These visits provide the means for potential investors to assess the opportunities and benefits of locating their businesses within Northern Ireland.

In the last five years, Invest NI has supported nine Foreign Direct Investment projects in the West Tyrone constituency. These projects plan to promote 328 new jobs and will result in £34 million of investment in the constituency.

Project Kelvin, scheduled for completion in 2009, will deliver points of presence in Strabane and Omagh, offering businesses access to direct international connectivity services at prices which are consistent across all of Northern Ireland.

Caravans

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she is aware of the high sales of mobile caravans in the last year; and what plans she has to provide for an increase in, or to encourage other providers to increase, the number of caravan sites. (AQO 2819/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There are no specific statistics available for Northern Ireland. The National Caravan Council, the trade association that represents the UK caravan industry, reports that sales of new touring caravans across the UK fell in 2008 by 16 per cent. Trade sales of caravan holiday homes fell by 22 per cent in the same period. There are no statistics for sales in individual regions. However, sales of pre-owned touring caravans were very healthy during 2008 and the first quarter of 2009, meaning that the industry has held up comparatively well in the economic crisis.

NITB has previously provided funding support for the development of the touring sector. Decisions as to the further development of sites must be taken by the developers having regard to the market conditions.

Debt Relief Scheme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration she has given to fast tracking the proposed debt relief scheme. (AQO 2820/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In a previous answer given on 16 March 2009 I indicated that my Department would give full consideration to the outcome of the consultation process before considering further whether there was a case for fast-tracking. My officials are due to brief the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee about the outcome on 28 May 2009. It would therefore be premature for me to make any decision about fast-tracking before I have taken account of the Committee's views.

It will be possible to opt for accelerated passage at any time up to two weeks before a Bill is introduced. Subject to the Executive's agreement, I plan to introduce the Bill to set up the Debt Relief scheme no later than June 2010.

Natural Gas: Licensing

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans are being developed to increase licences to supply natural gas. (AQO 2821/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Five companies, in addition to Phoenix Natural Gas, have acquired licences to supply natural gas in the Greater Belfast and Larne licenced area, since the Belfast gas market has been fully open to competition, from 1 January 2007. The Department and the Utility Regulator continue to encourage gas supply licence applications within this licenced area, and believe that competition between supply companies will result in customer switching, particularly if dual fuel offers (both gas and electricity supply) emerge from the market.

Matrix Report

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on the Matrix Report. (AQO 2822/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I am pleased to report that considerable progress towards the implementation of the MATRIX Panel's recommendations has already been made. Some measure of MATRIX success is that this has been driven by the business community; supported and facilitated by my Department and by Invest NI.

Several of the Businesses engaged in the MATRIX and Horizon Process are now actively forming the kind of Industry-led Innovation Communities which MATRIX recommends.

It is very pleasing to see that, even in these difficult times, the work of MATRIX has helped to secure existing jobs and create new employment. Independent analysis, undertaken by PA Consulting, has found that 330 new jobs have already been created and a further 300 have been safeguarded directly as a result of companies coming together to work in the MATRIX innovation community model! I am confident that this is only the beginning of what can be achieved as the MATRIX recommendations are progressively implemented in the months ahead.

In addition, since the launch of the MATRIX Report, my Executive Colleagues and I have established an inter-departmental group of senior officials, comprising DETI, Invest NI, DEL, DARD, DOE, DHSSPS and DFP. This has been tasked with the development of a detailed and coordinated cross-government response to the MATRIX' findings and recommendations. I expect to receive a report from this group by the summer.

It is also clear that Invest NI has made very good progress in quickly taking on board emerging findings from MATRIX. This is evidenced by its new Competence Centres Call; the new R&D Grant Scheme; the new IP Assistance Programme; and in particular the role which the Collaborative Networks Team is playing in facilitating the Industry-led Innovation Communities emerging from MATRIX.

Employment: Sustainable Energy

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to create jobs in sustainable energy. (AQO 2823/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The growth of the sustainable energy sector presents many opportunities for Northern Ireland businesses involved in the design, installation or manufacture of the component parts associated with a range of renewable energy technologies.

In recognition of this, Invest NI has allocated resources to identify business opportunities in the renewables sector and to build awareness of these within local industry.

Increasing the amount of energy generated from renewable sources will not only help to create employment in the generation sector, but also provide greater confidence to those companies that are considering entering the sustainable energy supply chain.

An Invest NI strategy for the renewables sector is also under development. This will promote and stimulate the uptake, by Northern Ireland businesses, of the opportunities that are rapidly unfolding.

On 13 May 2009, Invest NI hosted a seminar and workshop on business opportunities in the renewables sector. At this, it launched a series of DVDs that promote Northern Ireland's capability in the sector.

Invest NI is actively engaged with the Department of Energy and Climate Change's Renewable Energy Forum and the UK Renewables Deployment Group in targeting of renewables as a growth sector.

Now is the right time to encourage investment in renewable energy technologies for the future. My Department will shortly be consulting on a new Strategic Energy Framework. This will highlight how renewable

energy technologies can help deliver security of supply, address climate change and create local employment opportunities.

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

Invest NI

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline Invest NI's strategy for attracting investment during the economic downturn. (AQO 2824/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI's efforts remain focused on securing both new foreign direct and locally owned investment whilst providing support to assist its existing clients to undertake new investment projects and pursue a wide range of value-added activities.

Whilst the forward pipeline of clients' planned investments has reduced as a result of the economic climate, Invest NI continues to focus its efforts on those markets and sectors that offer the best prospects for securing new foreign direct investment for Northern Ireland.

Although short-term prospects remain challenging, Invest NI has also put in place a range of tailored support to help its clients to survive in the current market. In September 2008, I launched the £5 million Accelerated Support Fund and I will shortly be announcing details of a new short-term aid scheme. This will provide eligible businesses with financial assistance to enable them to plan and, where necessary, restructure for the future, while maintaining significant employment and retaining key staff so they are ready to take advantage of an economic upturn.

My Department is engaged in ongoing discussions to consider what further we can do to support businesses at this time. The economic downturn is now a standing item on the agenda for Executive meetings. Members will be aware of the £44.5 million package of measures to tackle the economic downturn that were announced by the Executive in December. Additionally, £1.2 billion of public sector construction schemes are currently on site.

In my capacity as Chair of the Economic Development Forum, I have also established a number of sub-groups, led by the private sector, to consider what additional measures I and my Executive colleagues could take.

Republic of Ireland Employees

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if a record is kept of persons employed in Northern Ireland whose addresses are in the Republic of Ireland; and what steps the Minister proposes to ensure that such data is collected and available. (AQO 2825/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment does not currently collect information on persons employed in Northern Ireland whose addresses are in the Republic of Ireland.

Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs holds address information on persons employed who could be liable to UK income tax under Pay As You Earn and self assessment. This includes residents of the Republic of Ireland. The Department does not therefore propose to collect such information.

Renewable Energy

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment has been made of the likely UK targets for renewable energy production, resulting from the recent European Union Council of Ministers target of 20% for the EU; and how targets will be attributed across heating, transport and electricity production. (AQO 2826/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The EU is giving effect to the 20% target for renewable energy consumption through the Renewable Energy Directive, which was formally agreed earlier this year, and which sets the UK a binding target of 15% renewable energy by 2020.

The UK Government will publish a Renewable Energy Strategy this summer. This will set out measures to meet the target and DETI will contribute to this. The Strategy will include scenarios for the distribution of effort between sectors, but will not set targets for sectoral shares. In the transport sector, the Directive includes a binding 10% share for renewable energy in transport in each Member State, subject to sustainability.

In the Government's Renewable Energy Strategy consultation in summer 2008, the UK proposed a scenario of 32% renewables in electricity; 14% in heat; and 10% in transport. DECC is currently updating its analysis of the costs and benefits of measures to deliver the overall target, and this central scenario will be updated in the final RES.

In NI, DETI will shortly be publishing a revised Strategic Energy Framework for consultation. It will set out proposals for a renewable electricity target to 2020, and for an interim renewable heat target to 2020, the latter to be confirmed after further work in this area.

Natural Gas Pipeline

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to expand the existing gas pipeline so that people living west of the Bann have equality of opportunity to access natural gas. (AQO 2827/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department, in conjunction with the Utility Regulator, is in the process of commissioning a study to determine the technical and economic feasibility of bringing gas to towns in the west and north-west of Northern Ireland. The towns under consideration will include Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Strabane, Omagh, and Enniskillen. It is planned to appoint consultants in July and have a report by the end of 2009.

Investment: Indigenous Companies

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much money was allocated to indigenous companies for the first quarter of last year; and the projected allocation for the first quarter of this year. (AQO 2828/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI does not allocate its budget between indigenous or Foreign Direct Investment projects. Instead, the agency operates a number of programmes, the outputs from which are designed to deliver the agency's wide range of Corporate Plan targets.

Data for the first quarter of the 2008 calendar year shows that Invest NI issued offers to 533 indigenous companies. This amounted to total assistance of £22.4 million, leading to planned investment of £84.5 million.

Data for activity during the first three months of 2009 indicates that Invest NI issued 689 offers of assistance to indigenous companies, amounting to £14.6 million worth of assistance and generating potential total investment of £71.9 million.

Efficiency Savings: DETI

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's efficiency savings in the last two financial years. (AQO 2829/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI delivered efficiency savings of £27.5 million and £8.2 million for the years 2007/08 and 2008/09 against targets of £6.2 million and £8.2 million.

The savings are broken down by budget category in the table below.

£ million	Admin.	Resource	Non Resource	Total
2007/08	1.0	22.3	4.2	27.5
2008/09	0.6	7.6	0	8.2
Total	1.6	29.9	4.2	35.7

Administration and Resource savings release cash. Non Resource efficiency savings do not release cash but improve services.

Renewable Energy: Public Transport

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there have been discussions with the Department for Regional Development about the implications for public transport arising from the decision to set European Union targets for renewable energy across all areas of energy consumption.

(AQO 2830/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The EU is giving effect to the 20% target for renewable energy consumption through the Renewable Energy Directive, which is expected to be published shortly. The proposals indicate that the UK's target will be a requirement for 15% of final energy consumption (across electricity, heat and transport) to be from renewable sources. DETI officials have met DRD officials to discuss the Directive and the full range of implications for transport. Officials plan to meet again once the Directive is published.

In addition, DRD is represented on the Sustainable Energy Inter-departmental Working Group which I chair and the group will consider the implications of the Directive when it is published.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Irish Hare

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if he will consider amending the Wildlife Order to make hare coursing illegal and to give the Irish hare full protection. (AQW 7694/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): The Wildlife Order consultation exercise considered the long term protection requirements for the Irish Hare for conservation purposes. Based on population trends from independent surveys and responses from the consultation exercise, I have no plans to amend existing statutory provisions.

A ban on hare coursing is not within the remit of the Wildlife Order, which is primarily for conservation purposes. I, therefore, intend to write to my DARD colleague on the subject.

Departmental Land

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of the Environment when the most recent audit of departmental land was undertaken; and how much unused land the Department currently holds. (AQW 7732/09)

Minister of the Environment: The most recent audit of departmental land was undertaken on land owned by my Department's Environment and Heritage Service (Now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) between October and December 2007. I can also confirm that my Department currently holds 10.36 hectares of unused land.

Cyclists

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment if he would consider legislation to make wearing helmets compulsory for cyclists. (AQW 7741/09)

Minister of the Environment: To date the Department has not given formal consideration to making the wearing of cycle helmets mandatory. Rather, and based on the research evidence currently available, the Department's policy is to advise and encourage all cyclists to wear approved helmets. The Department for Transport has recently commissioned further research into cycling safety including a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of cycling helmets. It is hoped that the outcome of this work will help to inform DOE's future policy direction on this issue in a way that will keep cyclists safe and is acceptable to all interested parties.

Cyclists' safety will also form part of the considerations of the Department in arriving at a new road safety strategy for Northern Ireland to be published in 2010.

Planning Applications

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment if he would consider including discussions with architects and/or applicants prior to any planning applications being brought to local councils with an opinion to approve, in order to cut down on the amount of deferrals for new plans. (AQW 7750/09)

Minister of the Environment: When all stages of the development management process are completed a Schedule of Applications to be presented to the council for consultation is sent by my Department prior to the meeting. This includes application reference, my Department's opinion, applicant and location details and description of development. The official attending the council meeting will also have access to the application files. My Department regularly engages with individual councillors, architects and/or applicants as part of the development management process before an application is included on the council schedule and is committed to giving a transparent service to all interested parties involved in this process. The public have the right to inspect the application file through my Department's open files procedures. Applicants, agents and objectors use this facility on a regular basis to track progress on applications. The Good Practice Guide, which I intend to launch on 18 June, encourages planning officers to engage pro-actively with applicants and agents in order to agree amendments to schemes, if possible, before council is consulted.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what targets have been set for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in relation to response times for water pollution incidents. (AQW 7751/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating reports of pollution affecting ground or surface waters.

NIEA estimates the environmental impact that a pollutant has on a watercourse using the pollution incident assessment criteria, attached at Annex A, and assigns a likely incident severity. The NIEA target for staff to assess and estimate the incident severity and forward the incident details to field staff for investigation is within 30 minutes of the report being received.

The target for field staff to respond to incidents is:

- a. High or Medium Severity, within 2 hrs (reported during normal working hours)
- b. High or Medium Severity, within 4 hrs (reported outside normal working hours) and
- c. Low Severity incidents, within 1 working day.

Annex A

Pollution incident impact assessment criteria.

High Severity

A major incident involving one or more of the following:

- a. potential or actual persistent effect on water quality or aquatic life;
- b. closure of potable water, industrial or agricultural abstraction if necessary;
- c. extensive fish kill;
- d. excessive breaches of consent conditions;
- e. extensive remedial measures necessary;
- f. major effect on amenity value.

Medium Severity

A significant pollution incident involving one or more of the following:

- a. notification to abstractors necessary;
- b. significant fish kill;
- c. measurable effect on invertebrate life;
- d. water unfit for stock;
- e. bed of watercourse contaminated;
- f. amenity value to the public, owners or users reduced by odour or appearance.

Low Severity

A minor incident resulting in localised environmental impact only. Some of the following may apply:

- a. notification to abstractors not necessary;
- b. fish kill of fewer than 10 fish (species of no particular importance to the affected water);
- c. no readily observable effect on invertebrate life;
- d. water unfit for stock;
- e. bed of watercourse only locally contaminated;
- f. minimal environmental impact and amenity only marginally affected.

Unsubstantiated

A reported pollution incident which, on investigation, proves to be unsubstantiated, i.e. no evidence can be found of a pollution incident having occurred.

Road Safety

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of the Environment to provide details of the Road Safety issues that were discussed at the recent North-South Ministerial Council. (AQW 7768/09)

Minister of the Environment: At the NSMC transport sectoral in Larne on 3 April 2009 Ministers noted that the road safety statistics for 2008 from both sides of the border had been the best since records began. However, it was also noted that both Northern Ireland and the Republic still lagged some way behind the best-performing countries in Europe and that there could therefore be no let-up in our efforts to maintain progress.

We noted the progress made towards achieving mutual recognition of driving disqualifications between the UK and Ireland, and agreed to the development of a project plan for achieving mutual recognition of penalty points.

We discussed the continuing level of cooperation on advertising, and agreed to further coordination of efforts to utilise new technology for advertising and publicity purposes.

We agreed that progress on developing and delivering a strategic approach to improving road safety on both sides of the border should continue, and that results of current and planned research projects should be shared.

We also agreed to give further consideration to the question of developing a coordinated approach to drink drive limits.

Planning Legislation

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of the Environment if it is possible under planning legislation to convert a showroom into a community use leisure complex; and to explain the process. (AQW 7775/09)

Minister of the Environment: Under Article 11 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 development management extends not only to buildings, engineering, mining or other operations, but also to the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

The Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004 defines similar group of uses (or classes) of land and buildings. The Use Classes Order provides a legal mechanism whereby broadly similar changes of use do not require planning permission. However, planning permission will be required for a change of use from a showroom to a community use leisure complex.

Where an application is made for a change of use, my Department in dealing with the application shall assess the proposal against all relevant planning policies and any other material considerations such as letters of objection / support and comments of consultees. As part of the determination of a planning application for a change of use my Department will consider all factors and make a balanced judgement based on the individual merits of the case.

Planning Policy Statement 8

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment whether jobs and economic development will now be considered “a community benefit” under Planning Policy Statement 8. (AQW 7783/09)

Minister of the Environment: This is a matter which can only be properly assessed on a case by case basis.

Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment how many offenders have been prosecuted under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 for taking, damaging or destroying the nests of any wild bird while the nest is in use or being built. (AQW 7786/09)

Minister of the Environment: I understand that the PSNI does not keep records of prosecutions taken under the Wildlife Order (Northern Ireland) 1985 for taking, damaging or destroying the nests of any wild birds while the nest is in use or being built.

However, I am aware that in December 2008 a building contractor was convicted in Armagh Magistrates Court of destroying the nest of a wild bird and was fined £200.

Officials in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency regularly give advice to the general public and to arboriculturalists to ensure that damage to nests does not occur.

Protection of Mature Trees

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7463/09, whether any sanctions exist to control or monitor tree cutting and hedge trimming during the nesting period in line with guidance from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; and for an assessment of the benefits of such controls. (AQW 7787/09)

Minister of the Environment: Under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 it is an offence to take, damage or destroy the nests of any wild birds while the nest is in use or being built. Any tree cutting or hedge trimming activity carried out during this time that can be proven to have damaged or destroyed a nest is potentially an offence and the PSNI can pursue a prosecution.

If the prosecution is upheld by the court, the Magistrate can levy a fine of up to £5,000 per offence and award costs against the guilty party.

All farmers in receipt of direct agricultural support must ensure that hedge cutting/coppicing or laying is not undertaken between 1 March and 31 August. Hedge cutting between these dates is only permitted where health and safety is an issue, for example roadside hedges. This is to avoid damaging birds, nests or chicks and complies with the Wildlife Order.

Each year farms are inspected to ensure compliance with the above condition. During 2008, 25 financial penalties were applied to Single Farm Payment in respect of either hedge cutting during the bird nesting season or field boundary removal without permission.

Planning Service

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of planning applications involving business expansion and job creation which have been with Planning Service and remain undetermined for (i) more than one year; and (ii) more than two years. (AQW 7796/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department does not record this level of detail on the current system of electronic data retrieval – 20/20. To provide accurate figures for the information requested can only be done by a manual search of all our existing files. This information would not be available in the time specified and would incur disproportionate costs.

The time taken to process a planning application to determination will be influenced by whether or not full and adequate information is available to enable such a determination to be made, the complexity of the proposal, and will be subject to compliance with all relevant statutory processes including the consideration of objections/representations and Council input. The onus is clearly on the applicant to ensure that a comprehensive package of supporting information accompanies the planning application. However, my Department has been actively working to reduce the number of planning applications in the system longer than 12 months as required by the Planning Service Business Plan. Annual Development Management Statistics for 2007/2008 show a 13% reduction in planning applications in the system longer than 12 months. The next Annual Statistical Bulletin for 2008/09 is due for publication in October 2009.

I can also advise that Planning Service has introduced an on-line system which allows applicants, agents and the public to track progress of applications through the system from receipt to decision, using the Planning Service web site.

Listed Buildings in Newry

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment how many listed buildings there are in the city of Newry. (AQW 7815/09)

Minister of the Environment: There are 136 entries on the list for Newry City. It should be noted that some of these entries may relate to multiple properties - such as terraces or large estates - which may feature on the list as a single record. Other entries relate to listed bridges, arches and memorials.

I have attached a copy of the list for Newry City, for ease of reference.

Cairngorms National Park

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the views of farmers during his recent visit to the Cairngorms National Park. (AQW 7827/09)

Minister of the Environment: During my visit to the Cairngorms, I met two farmers who told me they had had reservations about the prospect of a National Park. However, after they learned more about it they recognised the opportunities and benefits that National Park status offered.

Erosion of the High Mournes

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the steps he is taking to prevent the erosion of the High Mournes, by those damaging the habitat by using quad bikes and trail bikes and if the PSNI has been asked to investigate this. (AQW 7828/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment has not directly received any reports of damage caused by quad and trail bikes in the High Mournes since 2005.

I am aware however that the Mourne Mountains are being used by an increasing number of people for recreational activities and that this has created some erosion problems. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is working closely with the District Councils, the National Trust, the Mourne Heritage Trust and others to find appropriate solutions to these problems.

NIEA has for many years supported erosion control projects in the Mournes and has grant aided the National Trust and the Mourne Heritage Trust to carry out such works. My predecessor made a sum of £500,000 available to address access issues within the Mourne AONB and some of this money has been allocated towards the employment of an additional Ranger whose presence may discourage the illegal use of bikes in that area.

I recommend that any reports of inappropriate use of the Mournes by those using quad bikes and trail bikes are referred to the Mourne Heritage Trust who will draw them to the attention of the Safer Mournes Partnership which includes representatives from the PSNI.

Departmental Spend on Consultants

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7837/09)

Minister of the Environment: The table below gives details of my Department's expenditure on internal and external consultancy over the last three years.

	2006-07 £	2007-08 £	2008-09 £
Internal Consultancy	355,486	542,125	505,671
External Consultancy	2,135,003	1,993,716	1,821,675
Total	2,490,489	2,535,841	2,327,346

Planning Permission

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the fees applicable for outline planning permission for a single house in the countryside (i) prior to December 2005; and (ii) post December 2005. (AQW 7846/09)

Minister of the Environment: As Planning fees were last increased in May 2005, the same fee was applicable for outline planning permission for building a single house in the countryside prior to and post December 2005. This fee is based on a charge of £200 per 0.1 hectare up to a maximum charge of £8,000 for a site area of 4 hectares or more.

Prior to 18 May 2005 the fee for outline planning permission for erection of a single dwelling in the countryside was a flat fee of £200.

Non-Farming Rural Dwellers

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on PPS21 in relation to non-farming rural dwellers. (AQW 7848/09)

Minister of the Environment: I look forward to receiving the report from the Independent Working Group that is looking at options for non-farming rural dwellers by 26 June 2009.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7855/09)

Minister of the Environment: The table below gives details of my Department's expenditure on Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers and other forms of media consultations over the last three years.

	2006-07 £	2007-08 £	2008-09 £
Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers	115,308	70,414	66,007
Other forms of media for consultations	-	-	-
Total	115,308	70,414	66,007

Omagh Divisional Office

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment how the numbers of planning applications submitted to the Omagh Divisional Office in the financial year 2008/09, compare with those submitted in the financial year 2007/08. (AQW 7862/09)

Minister of the Environment: The number of planning applications received by the Omagh Divisional Planning Office in the financial year 2008/09 compared to the number received in the financial year 2007/08 is set out in the table below.

In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) and the associated Code of Practice a figure for Quarter 4 of 2008/09 is not currently available but is scheduled for publication on the planning service website (<http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/tools/about-statistics.htm>) on 18 June 2009.

However figures for 2007/08 and up to Dec 2008 are provided.

OMAGH DIVISIONAL OFFICE - APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Quarter	2008/09	2007/08
Q1	1527	1659
Q2	1136	1900
Q3	917	1503
Q4	-	1370
Total	3580	6432

Correspondence Received from Assembly Members

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment the target turn-around time for all letters and emails received from Assembly Members. (AQW 7887/09)

Minister of the Environment: The target turn-around time for correspondence received from Assembly Members, as set out in the DOE Corporate and Business Plan 2008-2011, is 10 working days.

Cleaning Products

Mr G McHugh asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7980/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment is required to purchase cleaning, household and toiletry products through contracts let by the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel. While the conditions of contract relating to the supply of these products do not refer specifically to animal testing, all products supplied must comply with any regulations relating to the manufacture of such products, be fit for purpose and be environmentally friendly.

Radon Certificates

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment if he intends to introduce Radon Certificates in all public buildings, given the associated health risks. (AQW 8006/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment has no plans to introduce Radon Certificates in public buildings. The measurement of radon in public buildings is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Anti-TNF Drugs

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following his statement on 22 January 2008, entitled 'Extra funding for health will save lives', to detail when the anti-TNF medication, to treat rheumatoid arthritis, will become available to all patients requiring this drug treatment. (AQW 7598/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): I have allocated additional funding of £39.1 million for specialist drugs over the CSR period 2008-11. Of that sum, commissioners have allocated in excess of £11 million to meet the PSA target that the maximum waiting-time for anti-TNF treatment for severe arthritis will be reduced to 21 weeks by March 2011. As an interim target the Health and Social Care sector is working to reduce waiting times to 9 months by the end of March 2010.

Anti-TNF Drugs

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment he has made of whether early treatment with anti-TNF drugs would be more effective in avoiding crippling joint damage resulting from delaying the availability of the drugs because of cost to joint surgery. (AQW 7601/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Anti-TNF drugs are prescribed for patients in Northern Ireland according to the guidance set down by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). It is a matter for national regulatory bodies such as NICE to assess the effectiveness of new uses for existing drugs and to advise accordingly.

Private Antenatal Care

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will commission research to ascertain why women who elect for private antenatal care are more likely to have their babies delivered by caesarian section. (AQW 7650/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The safety and quality of our maternity services are a top priority. Over the past year a number of recommendations have been made to Trusts, which when implemented will improve the safety and quality of maternity services in Northern Ireland.

The caesarean rate in Northern Ireland is broadly comparable to the rest of the UK, however the rising rate is an issue which has been of concern across the UK for some time. The Department is working on the introduction of a monitoring system which will collate data on performance in various areas of maternity practice and will flag up any deviations in numbers for investigation and action.

Given the work currently being carried out I do not consider further research into caesarean rates would be appropriate at this time.

Maternity Liaison Committee

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when guidance in relation to the Maternity Liaison Committee will be published. (AQW 7652/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Maternity Services Liaison Guidance was published and issued to the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and HSC Trusts on 7th May 2009. It is also available on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety website.

Fracture Patients

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the sites which ensure that the further assessment and management of fracture patients is co-ordinated by a fracture liaison nurse or a similar designated person. (AQW 7653/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A fracture liaison nurse is in place at the Belfast Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. Their role is one of secondary fracture prevention and includes the Accident and Emergency Departments at the Belfast City and Royal Victoria Hospitals. In addition, they provide a co-ordinated service to fracture patients at Lagan Valley Hospital and Drumlough House Care Home within the South Eastern HSC Trust. An Osteoporosis Nurse Specialist provides a similar service for the North Down Ards localities.

A fracture liaison nurse within the Southern Trust provides a service at Craigavon and Daisy Hill hospitals.

I am advised that the Western HSC Trust plans to appoint a fracture liaison nurse during 2009/2010.

Also, a report on 'The Prevention and Management of Fragility Fractures in Northern Ireland' is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. The Report will make a number of recommendations, one of which is for the establishment of a fracture liaison in all Trusts, for further improving falls prevention and fracture services in Northern Ireland.

Home Births

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each Health and Social Care Trust, how many pregnant women were told they cannot have home births, and for what reasons, in (i) 2008/09; and (ii) 2007/08. (AQW 7656/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department and the five Health and Social Care Trusts are broadly supportive of patient choice and full information and an explanation of risk factors will always be given so that this choice is fully informed. It is not policy to tell women that they may not have home births, but in some cases women are advised against this choice if it is considered that it may put them and/or their baby at risk. Safety will always be the top priority and advice on this matter will be based solely on a clinical judgement.

In 2007/08 and 2008/09 the numbers of women advised against home births were as follows:

	2007/08	2008/09
Belfast Trust	0	0
Northern Trust	0	3
South Eastern Trust	0	0
Southern Trust	0	0
Western Trust	7	6

Family Support Workers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety pursuant to answer AQW 7077/09 to provide dates and minutes of all meetings and consultations held with staff in question. (AQW 7658/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trust has advised that the process involving Family Support Workers is a small element of the entire review of social work services across the Southern Trust following RPA, including service developments and organisational structures. The process of consultation commenced on the 25th of February, when a meeting was convened as an information briefing including the staff concerned and their Union representative. The Trust has advised that there is no formal minute of this meeting as it was a briefing session. It was agreed that a further meeting would be convened on the 20th April when information in relation to HR issues would be clarified. At the request of the staff concerned, this meeting was postponed until the 20th May.

The meeting took place on 20th May with the staff concerned and a union representative. The Trust has advised that there is no minute of this meeting, but that the meeting involved discussion of issues raised in a Trust position paper. These issues included the rationale for the re-deployment, the proposed re-deployment arrangements and management and supervision arrangements. The meeting also discussed the reimbursement of additional mileage in line with Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions and the Trust's preference for voluntary selection based on individual workers' personal circumstances and expressed preference. If this process is unsuccessful and a resolution is not found, it is intended that a formal selection process restricted to staff affected will be undertaken. Staff agreed to consider the proposals and come back to the Trust with their comments and position by the 19th June.

The Head of Family Support for the Southern Trust is happy to meet with you to discuss this matter if you would find that helpful.

Credit Cards

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many credit cards have been issued to Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety staff for work purposes; and (ii) in relation to punitive bank charges on these cards, (a) how many has there been; (b) the total cost of the charges; and (c) the reasons for the charges, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7668/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) DHSSPS uses 2 credit card accounts under the Government Procurement Card scheme. A third account, used by Health Estates Agency, was recently closed following organisational restructuring.
- (ii) Response to questions (a) and (b) are set out in the table below

	(a) Number of charges	(b) Total cost of charges
2004/05	0	0
2005/06	0	0
2006/07	0	0
2007/08	2	£5.08
2008/09	5	£856.33

- (ii) (c) Interest charges are incurred when balances are not cleared in full within 14 days from the date of issue of monthly statements by the card provider. These charges were mainly due to technical issues which led to delays in processing payments within a new accounting system introduced in November 2008. These issues have now been fully resolved.

DHSSPS follows government payment policy of avoiding incurring interest charges on credit cards by endeavouring to pay balances in full by the due date. Processes are in place to ensure this is adhered to where possible.

Children Missing from Care

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to advise if he will review the recording and analysis of incidents of children missing from care, including looked after children, so that the extent of the problem can be assessed and the effect of changes to policy and services can be monitored.[R]

(AQW 7682/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department has recently funded a two year project specifically looking at the issue of young people who habitually go missing from care and the establishment of the Health and Social Care Board offers an opportunity to achieve greater consistency in the recording and analysis of this information. I have asked my officials to liaise with the Board to take this forward.

Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on the Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan.

(AQW 7684/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Since publication of the Sexual Health Strategy and Action Plan in December 2008, my Department has identified a Chair and drawn up terms of reference for the Sexual Health Promotion Network, which will oversee implementation of the Action Plan. A preliminary meeting will take place with the Chair in the near future to discuss appropriate membership of the Network taking account of the reorganisation of the infrastructure of Health and Social Care Organisation. In the meantime, funding has been made available to the Public Health Agency towards implementation of the Action Plan.

Car Parking Fees

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to abolishing car parking fees for patients attending hospital to undergo tests for cancer.

(AQW 7689/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The underlying principle of exemption from hospital car parking charges is that patients who incur significant costs because of the frequency or duration of their visits to hospital should be exempt from car parking charges. Diagnostic tests for cancer should normally result in a limited number of visits and would not be subject to exemption. However, if cancer is diagnosed and patients require radiotherapy or chemotherapy, they will be entitled to exemption from car parking charges for their treatment.

Oasis Dental Care Contract

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when dentists appointed through the Oasis Dental Care contract will begin treating patients in Derry City.

(AQW 7725/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The agreement with Oasis Dental care specifies that there will be a phased roll out of dental practices across Northern Ireland, starting with the areas of greatest need. I expect that the 4 additional dentists allocated to Londonderry will begin seeing patients towards the end of this year, subject to any required planning permission being approved promptly.

This interim period will allow Oasis the time necessary to acquire and equip new premises to the high standards expected of any Health Service dental practice. Once opened, 6000 people currently unable to access Health Service dentistry will be able to see a Health Service Dentist for quality, affordable dental treatment.

Mobile Phone Networks

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department will make representation to mobile phone network providers to address the excessive charges incurred by mobile phone users in border areas, given its impact on people using suicide awareness hotlines due to the additional drain on phone credits and the subsequent difficulty faced by agencies in returning calls to users whose credit has expired.

(AQW 7767/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Reducing the rate of suicide remains a priority for my Department. I established the “Lifeline” 24/7 crisis response helpline in January 2008 to provide additional support for people at times of crisis in their lives. The “Lifeline” service handled over 55,000 calls in its first year in operation.

Lifeline is free to call within Northern Ireland from both landlines and mobile phones. However, I appreciate that people who live in border areas are often affected by the “roaming” nature of mobile phone networks. Depending on their location they can be switched to a provider based in the Republic of Ireland and thereby incur charges should they phone the “Lifeline” number.

I do not have responsibility for telecom matters; however, I am supportive of all efforts to remove the additional charges incurred by people in such circumstances. Whilst I understand that this is a European-wide border problem, I intend to write to Ofcom to highlight the particular problems faced by individuals in border areas in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Wheelchair Service

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations contained in his report of August 2008, “Proposals for the Reform of the Northern Ireland Wheelchair Service”, including performance targets and related outcomes and measurements. (AQW 7761/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A Regional Wheelchair Implementation Group has been established, which includes service users, to take forward the Report’s recommendations. As part of the process of implementing the recommendations, my Department has adopted a Whole Systems Thinking approach using LEAN methodology to increase efficiency and streamline wheelchair services in Northern Ireland. A successful pilot in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust produced an 86% reduction in waiting times for basic wheelchairs from an average of 125 days to an average of 15 days, and was welcomed by service users and staff. This approach has been rolled out across all Health and Social Care Trusts. A series of rapid improvement events have also been held in Trusts to involve key staff and identify and secure sustainable improvements to the wheelchair service from point of need to delivery. Furthermore, I have also set the following targets for the improvement of wheelchair provision in Northern Ireland:

- By March 2009, provide 35 additional specialised seats/wheelchairs compared to the position at March 2008 (The 2008/09 target, which was to provide an additional 35 specialist wheelchairs, has been successfully met);
- By 31 March 2010, ensure a maximum waiting time of 18 weeks for 90% of all wheelchairs;
- By 2011, ensure a 13 week maximum waiting time for specialised wheelchairs.

Actichlor Solution

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to Actichlor solution being introduced as a disinfectant throughout Health and Social Care Trusts (i) to detail when a health impact assessment was implemented and to provide the results; (ii) to provide COSHH assessments; (iii) how many incidents involving accidental eye splashes and other incidents with Actichlor have occurred; and (iv) to detail the risks of occupational hazards from continued exposure to Actichlor. (AQW 7894/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 require employers, in this case the Health & Social Care Trusts, to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health. Information on (i) health impact assessments; (ii) COSHH assessments; and (iii) incidents involving Actichlor; is not held centrally. Potential problems with Actichlor include irritation of eyes and the respiratory system but there should be no occupational hazards providing these products are used in accordance with manufacturers’ instructions.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bridges

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what plans there are to construct bridges across the Blackwater River at Annaghroe and Knockaginny; (ii) what are the most recent cost estimates for the bridges and associated expenditure to be carried out by his Department; and (iii) if the 'credit crunch' has led to reconsideration of these projects. (AQW 4090/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): With regard to AQW 4090/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that plans to construct bridges across the Blackwater River at Annaghroe and Knockaginny are at an advanced stage. Work is scheduled to start by the autumn of this year and due to be completed by spring 2010. Funding for the construction of these bridges is being provided by the Irish Government and this funding does not appear to have been compromised by the recent economic downturn.

Regarding AQW 4091/09, I would refer the Member to my response to AQW 5055/08, in which I advised that my Department's Roads Service estimated that approximately 200 vehicles per day use the Ballagh crossing and that approximately 800 vehicles per day use the Cortynan crossing.

In relation to AQW 4092/09, Planning Service consultation arrangements for these proposals are the normal procedures associated with planning applications, i.e. advertisements in the local press and the issuing of neighbour notification notices to applicable properties.

The two applications, M/2008/1111/F for the Knockaginny Bridge and M/2008/1112/F for the Annaghroe Bridge, were advertised in the local press during the week ending 25 October 2008. As there are no occupied dwellings within 90 metres of either application site, no neighbour notification letters were issued.

In respect of M/2008/111/F, one letter of objection was received and in respect of M/2008/1112/F, five letters of objection were received.

Blackwater River Crossings

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to the answer to AQW 5055/08, to detail the traffic volume monitoring information for the Blackwater River crossings from Ballagh to Cortynan. (AQW 4091/09)

Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 4090/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that plans to construct bridges across the Blackwater River at Annaghroe and Knockaginny are at an advanced stage. Work is scheduled to start by the autumn of this year and due to be completed by spring 2010. Funding for the construction of these bridges is being provided by the Irish Government and this funding does not appear to have been compromised by the recent economic downturn.

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In respect of M/2008/111/F, one letter of objection was received and in respect of M/2008/1112/F, five letters of objection were received.

Bridges

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Regional Development what arrangements the Planning Service has in place to consult riparian owners and other local residents about proposals to construct bridges over

the Blackwater River at Annaghroe and Knockaginny; and what are the outcomes of this consultation.

(AQW 4092/09)

Minister for Regional Development: With regard to AQW 4090/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that plans to construct bridges across the Blackwater River at Annaghroe and Knockaginny are at an advanced stage. Work is scheduled to start by the autumn of this year and due to be completed by spring 2010. Funding for the construction of these bridges is being provided by the Irish Government and this funding does not appear to have been compromised by the recent economic downturn.

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In respect of M/2008/1111/F, one letter of objection was received and in respect of M/2008/1112/F, five letters of objection were received.

Roads Service

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's spending on roads maintenance, by Roads Service division, for 2005-06; 2006-07; and 2007-08. (AQW 4186/09)

Minister for Regional Development: All figures are in £ million's.

Division	Operation & Maintenance	Operation & Maintenance	Operation & Maintenance
	Year 2005-2006	Year 2006-2007	Year 2007-2008
Northern Division	29,475	26,737	28,950
Eastern Division	32,844	31,047	36,011
Southern Division	30,719	28,349	32,501
Western Division	28,146	28,016	30,717
Total	121,184	114,149	128,179

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 3742/09 to provide this monthly breakdown for (i) 2004; (ii) 2005; (iii) 2006; and (iv) 2007. (AQW 4391/09)

Minister for Regional Development:

P&L FUEL COSTS 2004

	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jan	880,661	251,491	112,306	1,244,458
Feb	991,364	269,306	129,229	1,389,899
Mar	1,254,375	334,229	161,719	1,750,323
Apr	877,493	243,595	109,924	1,231,012
May	974,007	254,812	105,277	1,334,096

	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jun	1,234,149	322,739	139,325	1,696,213
Jul	761,246	222,013	111,529	1,094,788
Aug	769,352	222,485	119,103	1,110,940
Sep	1,203,035	317,085	115,697	1,635,817
Oct	1,051,446	274,939	155,394	1,481,779
Nov	1,009,942	268,785	126,198	1,404,925
Dec	1,218,221	329,136	156,204	1,703,561
	12,225,291	3,310,615	1,541,905	17,077,811

P&L FUEL COSTS 2005

	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jan	878,840	244,507	121,545	1,244,892
Feb	996,133	282,875	167,253	1,446,261
Mar	1,220,664	371,177	135,011	1,726,852
Apr	893,455	274,681	113,356	1,281,492
May	932,529	271,309	40,416	1,244,253
Jun	1,195,368	369,683	41,086	1,606,138
Jul	747,348	230,284	414,789	1,392,421
Aug	827,551	245,061	214,896	1,287,509
Sep	1,051,794	335,631	184,744	1,572,169
Oct	1,038,634	309,618	175,518	1,523,769
Nov	1,045,855	323,408	263,512	1,632,775
Dec	1,243,209	395,083	219,066	1,857,358
	12,071,382	3,653,315	2,091,192	17,815,889

P&L FUEL COSTS 2006

	Ulsterbus	Metro	Nir	Total
Jan	804,651	279,004	152,982	1,236,637
Feb	984,238	322,696	170,542	1,477,475
Mar	1,427,921	533,320	443,610	2,404,851
Apr	984,070	310,196	212,555	1,506,821
May	1,190,287	373,550	278,035	1,841,873
Jun	1,479,995	483,815	267,576	2,231,387
Jul	1,382,895	347,561	299,934	2,030,390
Aug	981,211	351,339	322,058	1,654,608
Sep	1,475,016	503,978	425,401	2,404,395
Oct	1,033,947	276,972	466,529	1,777,447
Nov	1,288,508	414,478	303,458	2,006,444
Dec	1,694,182	496,385	376,622	2,567,189
	14,726,921	4,693,295	3,719,301	23,139,517

P&L FUEL COSTS 2007

	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jan	958,095	316,223	232,903	1,507,221
Feb	1,502,593	456,362	421,224	2,380,179
Mar	1,778,475	503,553	426,530	2,708,557
Apr	1,180,934	374,047	313,881	1,868,862
May	1,320,188	390,695	340,432	2,051,315
Jun	1,626,049	502,244	406,470	2,534,764
Jul	942,145	366,703	352,981	1,661,829
Aug	960,725	366,895	299,489	1,627,109
Sep	1,878,177	522,639	402,808	2,803,624
Oct	1,328,877	414,308	360,947	2,104,133
Nov	1,364,100	424,570	367,588	2,156,258
Dec	1,910,569	560,408	475,849	2,946,826
	16,750,927	5,198,647	4,401,102	26,350,676

P&L FUEL COSTS 2008

	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR	Total
Jan	1,116,935	363,579	322,564	1,803,078
Feb	1,512,201	444,906	358,507	2,315,615
Mar	2,041,830	598,762	589,081	3,229,674
Apr	1,701,277	507,592	439,223	2,648,092
May	1,624,874	483,947	439,813	2,548,634
Jun	2,143,896	682,104	558,572	3,384,572
Jul	1,237,996	428,161	406,894	2,073,051
Aug	1,391,795	511,441	482,638	2,385,874
Sep	1,884,938	588,379	491,789	2,965,105
Oct	1,891,400	584,058	527,441	3,002,900
Nov	1,790,200	618,611	571,832	2,980,642
Dec	1,987,786	639,670	579,951	3,207,407
	20,325,128	6,451,211	5,768,305	32,544,644

Roads Service

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the basis on which his Department determines the budget for each division of Roads Service. (AQW 4450/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that my Department's Road Service budget is allocated to its Divisions on a basis of need.

In relation to the budget for major works, improvements are prioritised across the whole of the North, after considering a wide range of criteria, including 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, 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 a needs-based priority approach. 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 approach used, ensures so far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds across the North.

In relation to roads maintenance, the resources available are also allocated to the four Roads Service Divisions on the basis of need, 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 across council areas, to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds across the whole of the North.

Newcastle Wastewater Treatment and Pumping Plants

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the energy costs for Newcastle Wastewater Treatment and Pumping Plants, in each of the last five years; and how do these costs compare with other waste water treatment plants of similar scale and capacity. (AQW 4564/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below shows the energy costs from 2004/05 for Newcastle Wastewater Treatment Works and two comparable works in terms of the amount of wastewater treated.

Works	Energy Costs				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09* YTD
Newcastle	£85,434	£79,907	£88,338	£137,130	£136,205
Banbridge	£82,987	£86,775	£107,450	£115,560	£111,632
Ballyclare	New works under construction		£107,396**	£137,697	£144,816

* Year to date costs

** Part year costs for new works (9 months in 2006/07)

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that differences in energy costs between similar sized wastewater treatment works can be due to a number of factors including different treatment processes or varying discharge standards set by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The energy costs for pumping stations associated with these works are not readily available and could only be provided following a substantial manual exercise.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development when he expects Translink to grant approval for the Crumlin railway bridge illumination project; and to outline the cost of this project. (AQW 4730/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department is not providing funding for this project. Translink are liaising with Antrim Borough Council, who are promoting and funding the scheme, to ensure that all requisite approvals are obtained and that there are no implications for railway safety and operations in the vicinity of the bridge.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the dates and outcomes of all major fare price reviews conducted by Translink for (i) bus services; and (ii) rail services, in each of the last five years; and to state the overall percentage change in fare prices following each review. (AQW 4855/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The following table provides detail on the dates and percentage changes of Translink's average fares for bus and rail for the last 5 years.

Date of fares increase	Ulsterbus	Metro	NIR
29/3/04	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
28/3/05	2.0%	2.0%	5.0%
27/3/06	9.0%	7.0%	9.0%
26/3/07	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
31/3/08	4.0%	3.1%	4.9%
25/8/08	5.0%	6.4%	4.3%

Fuel

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4389/09, what quantity of fuels, or barrels or litres, was purchased as a result of each of these individual agreements. (AQW 4932/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The quantity of fuel purchased as a result of these agreements is provided below:

	Million litres	
	ULSD	Gas Oil
12 Months April 2004 to March 2005	21.5	7.5
12 Months April 2005 to March 2006	21.5	7.5
6 Months April 2006 to September 2006	8.65	4.3
6 Months October 2006 to March 2007	11.0	5.4
6 Months April 2007 to September 2007	10.5	5.4
6 Months October 2007 to March 2008	11.3	5.4
6 Months April 2008 to September 2008	11.9	5.7
3 Months October 2008 to December 2008	6.6	2.9
6 Months January 2009 to June 2009	13.2	5.7
3 Months July 2009 to September 2009	6.6	2.9
3 Months October 2009 to December 2009	6.6	2.9
6 Months January 2010 to June 2010	13.2	5.7

Note that the figures above include one period, in April 2006, when fuel was purchased direct from the supplier at the market price before a forward contract was put in place in May 2006.

Translink

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the mileage of Translink operated bus routes that carry children to and from school that are (i) gritted; and (ii) not gritted, by the Roads Service. (AQW 5013/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink has advised that they don't operate a dedicated school bus fleet and therefore don't record the specific information requested, in relation to the mileage of bus services operated to carry children to and from school.

With regard to my Department's Roads Service's policy on salting school bus routes, I would refer the Member to my recent reply to his Assembly Question AQW5014/09.

Closure of the M2

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions were taken to advertise the recent closure of the M2 for resurfacing. (AQW 5263/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that prior to the closure of the M2 for resurfacing, on Sunday 15 February 2009, normal notice arrangements for major road closures were put in place using various media. These included the following:

- On Wednesday 11 February 2009, a press release issued by Roads Service. In addition to this, advance notification was also provided to all the emergency services and utility providers.
- On Thursday 12 February, Radio Ulster interviewed a Roads Service official, on the Good Evening Ulster programme.
- On Friday 13 February various radio stations, particularly Radio Ulster, issued bulletins. Advance information was also provided, through this media, on the morning of Saturday 14 February.
- On Friday 13 February Roads Service posted details of the closure on its 'Trafficwatchni' website. This included details of the section of motorway to be closed, the period of closure and advised that a diversionary route was in operation. Similar information was also provided through a taped telephone message, for members of the public telephoning Roads Service's traffic information hotline number.
- On Friday 13 February 'Traffic Alerts' were e-mailed to all registered users. These notified users of all proposed major road closures and also provided information on diversionary routes.
- Appropriate information was displayed on static and variable message signs, on the M2, in advance of the closure.

Closure of the M2

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what procedures are in place to compensate people who missed flights or ferries as a result of delays caused by roadworks on the M2 on 15 February 2009. (AQW 5264/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Whilst I regret that there was inconvenience caused to road users during the closure of the M2 on Sunday 15 February, I must advise you that no statutory provision exists for the payment of compensation to road users who are delayed by roadworks on the road network.

As I advised the Member in my reply to his Assembly Question AQW 5263/09, this was a planned closure to allow the final surfacing to be laid on the city bound carriageway of the M2. The closure was well advertised through the normal range of channels, which included:

- a press release to the media,
- Roads Service's website (Trafficwatchni),
- Roads Service's active email alert service, and
- Roads Service's Road Works Report.

The press release and subsequent interview with Roads Service officials on Radio Ulster warned of possible delays on the M2. Radio stations, including Radio Ulster, also issued traffic bulletins on Friday 13 February, advising of the planned closure of the M2 on Sunday 15 February. Further bulletins were issued on the morning of Saturday 14 February. Signs warning of the planned closure were erected at Sandyknowes junction and on the M2 one week prior the closure.

I am satisfied that Roads Service did take all reasonable steps to inform the public about the planned closure of the M2 on Sunday 15 February.

Road Works

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all press releases from his Department advising of the road works and lane restrictions on the M2 on Sunday 15 February. (AQW 5268/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that prior to the closure of the M2 for resurfacing, on Sunday 15 February 2009, normal notice arrangements for major road closures were put in place using various media. These included the following:

- On Wednesday 11 February 2009, a press release issued by Roads Service. In addition to this, advance notification was also provided to all the emergency services and utility providers.
- On Thursday 12 February, Radio Ulster interviewed a Roads Service official, on the Good Evening Ulster programme.
- On Friday 13 February various radio stations, particularly Radio Ulster, issued bulletins. Advance information was also provided, through this media, on the morning of Saturday 14 February.
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- Appropriate information was displayed on static and variable message signs, on the M2, in advance of the closure.

Traffic Jam on M2

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps have been taken to ensure there is no repeat of the traffic jams experienced on the M2 on Sunday 15 February 2009. (AQW 5276/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that major roadworks on the M2 are normally limited to off peak periods, that is, overnight 10pm to 6am on weekdays and on Saturday night 10pm to 11:00am on Sunday. Now that the work associated with the exceptional closure on Sunday 15 February 2009 has been completed, I can advise, there are no current plans to close the M2 outside of these off-peak periods.

As a consequence of the traffic jams on Sunday 15 February, Roads Service will review its notification procedures for all future motorway works. In addition, Roads Service will be writing to the motorway maintenance contractor reminding them of the importance of providing appropriate advance notification for all closures.

Although these measures will reduce the possibility for further significant traffic jams due to roadworks, other unforeseen incidents, such as traffic accidents, which are out of the control of Roads Service, have the potential to cause considerable disruption to the flow of traffic. In such circumstances, Roads Service will implement suitable remedial action, in an attempt to keep any traffic delays to a minimum.

Traffic Jam on M2

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps the Department is taking to ensure that the traffic jam that occurred on the M2 Sunday February 15, 2009, will not be repeated. (AQW 5302/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that major roadworks on the M2 are normally limited to off peak periods, that is, overnight 10pm to 6am on weekdays and on Saturday night 10pm to 11:00am on Sunday. Now that the work associated with the exceptional closure on Sunday 15 February 2009 has been completed, I can advise, there are no current plans to close the M2 outside of these off-peak periods.

As a consequence of the traffic jams on Sunday 15 February, Roads Service will review its notification procedures for all future motorway works. In addition, Roads Service will be writing to the motorway

maintenance contractor reminding them of the importance of providing appropriate advance notification for all closures.

Although these measures will reduce the possibility for further significant traffic jams due to roadworks, other unforeseen incidents, such as traffic accidents, which are out of the control of Roads Service, have the potential to cause considerable disruption to the flow of traffic. In such circumstances, Roads Service will implement suitable remedial action, in an attempt to keep any traffic delays to a minimum.

Economic Downturn

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what the impact of the economic downturn has been on the delivery of his current policies and practices; and (ii) what changes to existing policies and practices have been made in relation to his Department's responsibilities to address the effects of the economic downturn. (AQW 5463/09)

Minister for Regional Development:

- (i) On Public Transport, there is some evidence that the downturn may reduce passenger numbers. The downturn in the local property market may also delay or reduce anticipated proceeds from asset sales. For Roads Service, there is no discernible impact of the downturn on delivery at this stage.
- (ii) Roads Service has met and will continue to meet with construction industry representatives to ensure that the earliest possible notice is given for those schemes ready to start in 2009/10.

On Water, future funding arrangements are for the Executive to agree collectively. Appreciating the difficulties faced by households with increasing bills, the Executive decided in November 2008 that there will be no additional household water and sewerage payments in 2009/10. In February 2009 the Executive agreed to extend phasing in of continued non-domestic contributions to ease the impact on businesses and other non-domestic customers in 2009/10.

My Department is also delivering its part of the Executive's December response to the economic downturn which allocated £4.3 million for Public Transport Capital Works and further resurfacing work by local contractors.

Money Spent on Trains in North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money has been spent in the North Down area on (i) trains; (ii) train tracks; and (iii) train stations, over the last three years, and how this compares with other areas. (AQW 7584/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In the last three years capital investment of (i) £16.5m was paid towards the procurement of 20 new trains; a number of these trains will be deployed in the North Down area to facilitate increases in frequency and capacity; (ii) £299,962 has been spent on signalling along the train tracks and (iii) £5,263 on train stations within the North Down area. Stations and halts in the North Down area were included within works on train stations and halts, totalling in the region of £15m, which were undertaken to comply with Disability Discrimination legislation and Translink's New Rail Service Programme.

Given the complexity of the rail network it is difficult to give meaningful comparisons with other areas. Expenditure on the rail network is prioritised on the basis of need.

Southern Distributor Road, Newtownards

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development what the anticipated opening date is for the southern distributor road in Newtownards. (AQW 7608/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the A20 Southern Distributor Road is programmed to be substantially completed by 30 July 2009.

M2 Hill Section Country Bound

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for his assessment of the surface of the M2 hill section country bound; and (ii) if all resurfacing work on this section of the motorway is complete.

(AQW 7666/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the condition of the M2 road surface is routinely inspected and monitored by Roads Service and by Highway Management, the Contractor, using a number of techniques, which include daily patrols, weekly inspections, visual surveys and various machine condition surveys. An inspection of the surface condition of the country-bound carriageway of the M2 was undertaken in January this year and showed some deficiencies in the road surface. As an outcome of this survey, resurfacing of lane 3 and various areas of lane 1 and lane 2 was subsequently undertaken on this section of the M2 during January and February.

There is presently no further resurfacing work planned for this section of the M2, however, a further road condition survey is planned for the M2 in July and August this year. If the outcome of this survey indicates that the surface is unsatisfactory, the contract requires Highway Management to carry out the necessary maintenance works.

Roads Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of locations where the Roads Service has replaced lighting at the back of houses, in the last three years.

(AQW 7679/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Officials from my Department's Roads Service have advised that they do not maintain records that facilitate the identification of street lighting, located at the back of houses. They have, however, noted that Roads Service does not generally provide street lighting on footpaths or back entries, which only give rear access to properties, or are alternative routes to already lighted roads or footpaths.

Exceptions to this general rule include locations where a footpath or back entry serves as a through link to another street, or services a significant local amenity, such as a community hall or school.

Vandalism at Bus Stops

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of repairs resulting from acts of vandalism at bus stops in (i) Newtownabbey; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Larne, in each of the past five years.

(AQW 7736/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In January 2001, my Department's Roads Service, and the majority of District Councils, entered into a 15-year contract with Adshel (the bus shelter provider) for the provision of approximately 1500 bus shelters throughout the various council areas.

The provision and maintenance of these shelters are funded by Adshel through advertising revenue and at no cost to the Department. The contract covers the vast majority of bus shelters in the North. The Department has no information on the costs incurred by Adshel in carrying out their contractual commitments.

Translink have advised that their information on costs for the repair and maintenance of bus-stops, in Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus and Larne Ulsterbus operational areas, is only available for the past four financial years. While the majority of these costs were incurred as a result of vandalism, the figures in the table below, also include costs for repairs due to general wear and tear.

	Carrickfergus £	Larne £	Newtownabbey £	Total £
2005/2006	829	2,465	3,588	6,882
2006/2007	1,223	501	2,606	4,330
2007/2008	599	2,235	3,541	6,375
2008/2009	656	572	4,997	6,225

	Carrickfergus £	Larne £	Newtownabbey £	Total £
Total	3,307	5,773	14,732	23,812

Road Service and NI Water

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the processes followed by Road Service and NI Water when they are presented with evidence of repeat out of sewer or other flooding on the site of a planning application, which they have not raised in the statutory consultation process. (AQW 7739/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that they are a consultee to Planning Service, providing specialist information and transportation advice for development applications that affect the public road network. Road Service's assessment of planning applications is, therefore, restricted to road safety, traffic progression and transportation issues.

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has advised that its response to Planning Service is informative about the availability of water supply, foul and surface water infrastructure and wastewater treatment capacity.

If an application is approved by Planning Service, NIW requires the developer to submit details of proposed drainage layouts for assessment and new developments are not permitted to connect to the public sewerage system unless adequate capacity has been identified.

NIW undertakes regular scheduled maintenance on the sewerage infrastructure to ensure that it operates effectively. It is also currently undertaking a number of drainage area studies to assess the capacity of the sewerage network and to identify parts of the system that need to be upgraded. These studies will lead to a programme of sewer improvements and upgrades which will reduce the risk of repeated out-of-sewer flooding and will cater for future development.

Water Supply in Upper Bann

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development why there were 89 planned interruptions to the water supply in the Upper Bann area, which amounts to 35% of all planned interruptions across 18 parliamentary constituencies, in the last four months. (AQW 7746/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that a programme of major watermains rehabilitation work has been undertaken in the Upper Bann area during the past four months, which has resulted in a higher than average number of planned interruptions to the public water supply.

This work will provide major benefits for customers in the area including enhanced drinking water quality, reduced interruptions to supply and improved water pressure.

Potable Water for Households

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the sources of potable water for households in (i) Lurgan; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Banbridge. (AQW 7748/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the Lurgan and Portadown areas are supplied from Castor Bay Water Treatment Works while the Banbridge area is supplied from both Castor Bay and Foffany Water Treatment Works.

The raw water sources for Castor Bay and Foffany Water Treatment Works are Lough Neagh, Foffany Impounding Reservoir and Spelga Dam.

Car Parking

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if there is a mediation system in place to enable car parking problems in estates to be settled and, if so, whether his Department and the PSNI are involved. (AQW 7754/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I am not aware of a mediation system in place to enable car parking problems in estates to be settled. However, my Department's Roads Service has a policy, agreed with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, for processing requests for additional parking facilities. The PSNI may, on occasions, be consulted by Roads Service as part of this process.

Vehicles Damaged by Potholes

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of compensation claims which have been received by his Department from owners of vehicles damaged by potholes in the West Tyrone constituency; and (ii) the amount of money that has been paid out, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7759/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Unfortunately, my Department's Central Claims Unit does not hold the information in the format requested. However, Central Claims Unit does maintain a record of compensation claims details for each Roads Service Section Office. The area of the West Tyrone constituency includes all of the Omagh and Strabane Section Offices plus some parts of roads which fall within the Derry Section Office area. The following figures show the number of compensation claims received and the amounts of compensation paid by the Central Claims Unit for each of the last five financial years in respect to damage to motor vehicles caused by potholes in the Omagh and Strabane Section Office areas. Disaggregation of the Derry Section Office figures to isolate the stretches of road within the West Tyrone constituency could only be extracted at disproportionate cost.

2008/2009

	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Omagh	223	£6,374.54
Strabane	12	£507.29
Total	235	£6,881.83
2007/08		
Omagh	73	£4,677.57
Strabane	13	£866.74
Total	86	£5,544.31
2006/07		
Omagh	78	£6,055.05
Strabane	17	£633.21
Total	95	£6,688.26

2005/06

	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Omagh	30	£2,090.41
Strabane	6	£205.00
Total	36	£2,295.41
2004/05		
Omagh	43	£1,659.93
Strabane	2	£503.16
Total	45	£2,163.09

Translink

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the level of revenue subsidy paid to Translink for each financial year since 2003-2004, broken into its various headings, including public service obligation and concessionary fares. (AQW 7781/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of the revenue paid to Translink for each financial year since 2003-2004, broken into its various headings including public service obligation and concessionary fares are set out below:

Revenue subsidy to Translink	2003/04 £000s	2004/05 £000s	2005/06 £000s	2006/07 £000s	2007/08 £000s	2008/09 £000s
Concessionary Fares Bus	13,885	14,751	15,320	16,860	17,606	20,956
Concessionary Fares Implementation & Admin	259	261	76	332	577	1,004
Concessionary Fares Rail	1,922	2,091	2,393	3,306	4,104	6,067
Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR)	7,711	8,040	8,565	8,688	9,704	10,471
Public Service Obligation-Railways (PSO)	18,724	20,924	21,859	21,682	24,054	22,984
NILGOSC Bus	0	0	2,012	3,502	4,943	3,706
NITHC Pensions	815	755	704	637	594	568
Rural Transport Fund (RTF)	766	737	831	976	929	1,071
Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	182	161
Bus Route Subsidy	1,313	1,302	1,442	2,137	2,207	0
Total	45,395	49,271	53,428	58,481	62,693	66,988

It is arguable if concessionary fares reimbursement, which operates on a 'no better no worse' principle, can be described as a subsidy to Translink. It is effectively a subsidy to the passengers eligible. Similarly RTF and TPPD payments are effectively contract payments as opposed to subsidy.

Translink

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the level of revenue budgeted for Translink for (i) 2009/10 and(ii) 2010/11, broken into its various headings, including public service obligation and concessionary fares. (AQW 7782/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of revenue budgeted for Translink for (i) 2009/10 and (ii) 2010/11, broken into its various headings, including public service obligation and concessionary fares is set out below:

Revenue Budgeted for Translink	2009/10 £000s	2010/11 £000s
Concessionary Fares Bus	23,198	24,742
Concessionary Fares Implementation & Admin	886	886
Concessionary Fares Rail	5,255	5,683
Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR)	10,220	10,710
Public Service Obligation (PSO)	21,274	21,274
NILGOSC Bus	2,800	2,800

Revenue Budgeted for Translink	2009/10 £000s	2010/11 £000s
NITHC Pensions	448	618
Rural Transport Fund (RTF)	1275	1275
Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)	200	200
Total	65,556	68,188

Note the table above excludes Bus Route Subsidy which is not payable in 2009/10 and 2010/11. In comparing figures above against previous years it should be recognised that in year bids have not been made in 2009/10 as yet.

Roads Service Car Park in Holywood

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timescale for the completion of the transfer of the Roads Service car park in Holywood to the Department for Social Development in relation to 'the Front' development. (AQW 7784/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In order to facilitate the development in Holywood known as 'the Front', my Department's Roads Service has agreed, in principle, to transfer the car park in Hibernia Street to the Department for Social Development, who will be dealing with the proposed sale to the developer.

The transfer of this land between the two Departments requires joint Ministerial agreement and the approval of the Executive. A joint submission to the Executive from Minister Ritchie and myself, in respect of the transfer of non-surplus DRD car parks to DSD, to facilitate town centre regeneration, will issue shortly.

M1 Motorway

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has plans to provide south facing slip roads to the M1 motorway in the Dunmurry area. (AQW 7794/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has confirmed that the provision of additional slip roads onto the M1 at Blacks Road, Dunmurry is included in both the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, and the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (2015). The proposed slip roads will facilitate traffic heading to and from Lisburn, the South and the West.

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland sets the funding priorities for the period 2008-2018 and determines the relative priority and timing of all planned Major Works. The Blacks Road Slips Scheme is currently programmed for delivery in the period 2013/14 to 2017/18. The provision of this road scheme will be subject to the successful completion of the statutory procedures, detailed economic appraisal and the availability of funding, at that time.

M5 Motorway

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development the expected lifespan of the carriageway surface of the M5 motorway and when the next major resurfacing is scheduled to begin. (AQW 7814/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the surface of the M5 was constructed in 1980 and was resurfaced in 1997. Highway resurfacing materials are generally expected to have a typical life-span of 12 to 15 years. However, this depends on a number of factors, including the volume of traffic and weather conditions.

It is planned to resurface a total of 0.5 km in each direction of the M5 this year. The work is planned to take place during overnight closures on the 27 and 28 June 2009.

Newcastle Sewerage Treatment Works

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development if he plans to meet with the Environment Minister, to discuss the situation where no multiple developments are obtaining planning approval, due to the condition of Newcastle sewerage treatment works. (AQW 7830/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have no plans at present to meet with the Environment Minister to discuss the situation in Newcastle.

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that because the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) presently has concerns about the impact of any increase in the loading of the Newcastle sewerage system, it has agreed, as an interim measure, not to recommend connections to the sewer network apart from those previously consented or those on a like for like basis. NIW is currently developing design options and intends to discuss solutions with NIEA at the earliest opportunity in order to allow further consideration of the planning application restrictions. The upgrade of Newcastle Wastewater Treatment Works which is required to comply with the revised Bathing Water Directive has been identified as a high priority in the 2010-2013 funding period but remains subject to approval as part of the price control review in 2010. Upgrading of the sewerage network in Newcastle is ongoing and will continue within the existing funding period through to 2010.

NIW has arranged to make a presentation to Down District Council on Tuesday 26 May 2009 to explain the reason for the temporary restrictions on connections to the public sewer system and its proposals for resolving the situation.

I believe that this represents a sensible way forward.

It should be noted that while NIW is consulted by Planning Service about the availability of water and sewerage facilities during the normal planning process, a decision on whether or not a planning application should be approved is ultimately a matter for Planning Service.

Ulsterbus Foyle Day Ticket Passengers

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many Ulsterbus Foyle Day Ticket passengers made only one trip on each ticket in the past year; (ii) how many Foyle Day Ticket passengers took more than one trip on each ticket in the past year; (iii) what assessment has been made of the impact of its withdrawal on passenger numbers and revenues; and (iv) what consideration has been given to the removal of this ticket option to people on low incomes. (AQW 7834/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink has informed me that the information needed to answer points (i) and (ii) is not available as no additional usage information is recorded once a day ticket has been issued.

In relation to point (iii), Translink expects that passenger numbers will be largely unaffected by the withdrawal of the Day Ticket and that revenue will increase slightly as changes to the ticket type will reduce fraud and instances of abuse.

Alternative ticket options have been put in place so that users will not have to revert to purchasing single tickets. As a result, Translink considers that the removal of this ticket option will not have a significant adverse impact on people with low incomes.

Landscaping Roundabouts

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how much money has been spent on landscaping roundabouts in each of the last five years. (AQW 7843/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not record separately the information requested by the Member. However, the Member will be aware that in many cases, roundabouts are maintained under agreement with local councils or under sponsorship by private firms.

Traffic Calming Measures

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an update on the proposed public consultation on traffic calming measures in the Rathenraw estate, Antrim and a timeline for the implementation of this scheme. (AQW 7892/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I am pleased to inform you that a traffic calming scheme for the Rathenraw area in Antrim has been included in my Department's Roads Service's programme for the current financial year.

Initial design work on the scheme has been completed and consultation is currently being arranged. A meeting is being organised with the local residents' association, and should be held within the next few weeks. Following this, plans of the scheme will be exhibited in a local community office.

A letter drop will then be carried out within the area to inform residents of the scheme and inviting them to view the plans. A Roads Service official will be available at a specified time to discuss the scheme with members of the public. At the same time, a public notice will be published in local newspapers circulating in the area. This will allow members of the public 31 days to object to, or make other representation, in writing, to the Department. Roads Service will also inform Antrim Borough Council and the police of the proposed scheme.

It is anticipated, assuming that no objections to the works are received, and a contractor becomes available, that the work should be complete by the autumn of this year.

Knockmore Railway Line

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will (i) consider conducting a feasibility review on opening up the Knockmore railway line; and (ii) give details of any pending major work schemes to support the road infrastructure and accessibility to and from the International Airport. (AQW 7893/09)

Minister for Regional Development:

- (i) A study by an inter-departmental steering group in August 2007, which looked at the options for future railways investment in the North, found that there was no economic case at present for re-opening the line between Knockmore and Antrim. The funding that is available for railway services is being focussed on other, priority areas.

I have, however, had discussions with the Kilbride Group, a private sector development company which has produced proposals for restoring the Antrim to Knockmore line, and I have indicated that I would consider part funding a Feasibility Study if the local Councils in the area were also willing to make a financial contribution to the study.

- (ii) As regards the roads infrastructure, my Department's Roads Service Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) outlines a £3.1 billion programme of investment in roads over the next ten years, which will transform the strategic road network of the North. Whereas this is the largest ever programme of investment in our road system, resources are finite and choices have had to be made. These choices have been made in line with the guidance contained in the Regional Transportation Strategy and supporting Transport Plans.

While it has not been possible to include an upgrade of the link from the M2 to Belfast International Airport in the IDP, this proposal will be assessed along with other potential schemes for inclusion in future programmes. The IDP does, however, include schemes which will improve accessibility for passengers travelling to Belfast International Airport, including from the South of Ireland. For example, the scheme under construction between Beech Hill and Cloghogue at Newry will complete the dualling of the A1 from Sprucefield to the border and will significantly improve access from and to Belfast International Airport.

Accessibility to the Airport will also be further improved when the major improvements at the M1/Westlink, M2 and A4 (Dungannon – Ballygawley) are fully completed. Major dualling schemes are also planned for substantial sections of the A6 between Derry and Randalstown, and the A26 between Coleraine and Ballymena.

Sewerage System in Rasharkin

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new houses will be connected to the main sewerage system in Rasharkin as a result of the work being carried out. (AQW 7915/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that around 70 new properties will be provided with first time sewerage services following the completion of work to upgrade the public sewerage system in Rasharkin. This work will also benefit the wider community and the environment by reducing the risk of flooding in the village.

Enterprise Service

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development for an estimate of the cost of providing separate generator functions to avoid the use of head-end power on the Enterprise service. (AQW 7925/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In conjunction with Iarnród Éireann, Translink are assessing a number of options for reconfiguring generator power supplies on Enterprise trains. The estimated costs at this time range from £1 million - £3 million. When final designs and costs are available a business case will be prepared to assess each option.

Enterprise Service

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the progress in introducing a clock face timetable on the Enterprise, and to identify any potential stumbling blocks including additional rolling-stock requirements. (AQW 7926/09)

Minister for Regional Development: A business case was prepared by Northern Ireland Rail and Iarnród Éireann which examined the options for increasing the frequency of the Enterprise service to an hourly basis. Due to the capital and revenue cost of refurbishing and running surplus rolling stock held by Iarnród Éireann, no commitment was given to the introduction of frequency improvements in the foreseeable future. However, the two railways companies are exploring the scope for improving the reliability of the rolling stock on the Enterprise line.

Enterprise Service

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail Translink's plans to introduce new rolling stock to facilitate additional Enterprise services. (AQW 7927/09)

Minister for Regional Development: A business case was prepared by Northern Ireland Rail and Iarnród Éireann which examined the options for increasing the frequency of the Enterprise service to an hourly basis. Due to the capital and revenue cost of refurbishing and running surplus rolling stock held by Iarnród Éireann, no commitment was given to the introduction of frequency improvements in the foreseeable future. There are, therefore, no plans to introduce new rolling stock to the Enterprise service. However, the two railways companies are exploring the scope for improving the reliability of the rolling stock on the Enterprise line.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Housing

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the contractors and companies from whom 'off the shelf' housing has been bought; and (ii) the amount her Department has paid to individual contractors and companies for social housing, since she came into office. (AQW 7709/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): In relation to (i) the names of the contractors/companies from whom 'off the shelf' housing has been bought are listed in the table below.

Ardara Ltd	Beech Valley Developments	Connolly & Fee	New Quay Developments	N McKinnley
Hughes & Sons	Bramley Construction	M J Jordan	P McAvoy Contracts Ltd	Greene & O'Harte
Tully & Son	Maine Developments	Cancourt Developments	Largie Developments	Moore Bros Construction
O'Hagan Construction	Kevin Watson Group	Gallagher Bros.	William Rodgers	Jamesons Group
UPS	Braidwater Construction	A Donaghy	Brookdale Property Developments Ltd	Kelly Brothers
Black & White Developments	Polly Brothers	Western Builders	McKenna & McKibben	Colm Meehan
Galgorm Group Properties	NMC Developments Ltd	Fernheath Developments Ltd	L Smyth Builder/ Developer	Boconnell Properties
Bush Developments, NI Ltd	TAL Construction	Eglinton Construction	MBC Ltd	Moss Construction
Micwall Developments	P K Murphy	Carville group	Heathom Properties Ltd	Pacific Wharf Holdings
Glentor Developments	O'Hanlon & McSherry	Vincent Developments	Windyridge Developments	Alan Elliott Donaghadee
Dixon Contracts Dunloy				

In relation to (ii) the amount paid to individual contractors and companies is deemed commercially sensitive and has not been provided. However, the total amount of Housing Association grant paid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to Housing Associations in respect of "off the shelf" housing in the period was as follows:

2007/08	-	£35,275,780
2008/09	-	£29,862,527

Social Housing

Mr I Paisley Jnr asked the Minister for Social Development, in each of the last two years, the number of properties for social housing need her Department has (i) purchased; and (ii) sold. (AQW 7734/09)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the total number of social housing properties purchased and sold by Housing Associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last two years:

Year	Purchased	Sold
2007/08	613	872
2008/09	522	60

Social Security Tribunal Hearings

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development the average cost of a Social Security Tribunal hearing. (AQW 7737/09)

Minister for Social Development: In 2008/09 the average cost of a hearing including all administrative expenses was £283.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development how many Warm Homes Scheme grants were awarded to homes in the Upper Bann area, for each month, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7747/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is set out in the table below.

	Heating	Insulation	Total Jobs	Heating Value	Insulation Value	Total Value
Apr-06	10	18		£37,572.00	£11,693.00	
May-06	10	41		£32,391.00	£24,023.00	
Jun-06	15	50		£51,276.00	£22,014.00	
Jul-06	15	47		£50,546.00	£22,126.00	
Aug-06	9	87		£27,642.00	£49,555.00	
Sep-06	26	40		£91,960.00	£21,900.00	
Oct-06	50	66		£179,305.00	£40,209.00	
Nov-06	60	48		£228,806.00	£18,897.00	
Dec-06	39	53		£145,483.00	£27,839.00	
Jan-07	68	68		£253,399.00	£32,959.00	
Feb-07	34	75		£130,879.00	£35,942.00	
Mar-07	45	70		£179,074.00	£33,169.00	
Total	381	663	1044	£1,408,333.00	£340,326.00	£1,748,659.00

	Heating	Insulation	Total Jobs	Heating Value	Insulation Value	Total Value
Apr-07	34	54		£139,041.00	£28,019.00	
May-07	33	73		£143,213.00	£37,072.00	
Jun-07	20	56		£91,284.00	£27,901.00	
Jul-07	42	41		£206,044.00	£21,129.00	
Aug-07	39	72		£177,802.00	£33,921.00	
Sep-07	37	52		£155,892.00	£27,524.00	
Oct-07	60	110		£230,336.00	£45,299.00	
Nov-07	37	106		£133,456.00	£39,892.00	
Dec-07	36	100		£141,108.00	£43,393.00	
Jan-08	30	45		£109,324.00	£22,374.00	
Feb-08	26	57		£94,830.00	£28,224.00	
Mar-08	15	27		£52,791.00	£13,510.00	
Total	409	793	1202	£1,675,121.00	£368,258.00	£2,043,379.00

	Heating	Insulation	Total Jobs	Heating Value	Insulation Value	Total Value
Apr-08	11	63		£40,021.00	£33,879.00	
May-08	10	62		£39,862.00	£31,958.00	
Jun-08	46	63		£197,503.00	£36,742.00	
Jul-08	58	75		£245,867.00	£44,329.00	
Aug-08	51	80		£222,571.00	£40,726.00	
Sep-08	27	73		£113,701.00	£30,688.00	
Oct-08	46	92		£183,069.00	£54,086.00	
Nov-08	22	66		£83,521.00	£42,334.00	
Dec-08	10	40		£39,078.00	£23,477.00	
Jan-09	40	80		£150,014.00	£49,507.00	

	Heating	Insulation	Total Jobs	Heating Value	Insulation Value	Total Value
Feb-09	21	73		£77,840.00	£39,608.00	
Mar-09	17	24		£62,924.00	£14,966.00	
Total	359	791	1150	£1,455,971.00	£442,300.00	£1,898,271.00

Housing Executive Bungalows

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for Housing Executive three bed bungalows have been made in each of the last three years, that have not resulted in the allocation of such a property. (AQW 7752/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. The number of applications made for Housing Executive three bedroom ground floor accommodation (which includes three bedroom bungalows) in each of the last three years, that did not result in the allocation of such a property, is as follows:-

2006/07 - 53
2007/08 - 55
2008/09 - 103

Housing Executive Bungalows

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for Housing Executive three bed bungalows have been made, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7753/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. The number of applications made for Housing Executive three bedroom ground floor accommodation (which includes three bedroom bungalows) in each of the last three years is as follows:-

2006/07 - 140
2007/08 - 112
2208/09 - 123

Strategic Business Review

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, with regard to the Strategic Business Review, will the Department of Education and Learning be taking over more of the maintenance and general running costs of local offices in the future. (AQW 7757/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is normal Northern Ireland Civil Service practice for the largest occupier of a building to take on the responsibility for managing the premises on a day to day basis. Currently the Department for Social Development carries out this function in all local offices. With regard to the Strategic Business Review the situation would be re-assessed jointly with the Department for Employment and Learning following the Minister's decision on the public consultation.

Bangor Town Centre

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development to provide an update on her Department's work on a masterplan for Bangor Town Centre.[R] (AQW 7762/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department has drawn up a Terms of Reference for the Bangor Masterplan in conjunction with North Down Borough Council and other key stakeholders in the town. We are progressing rapidly through the necessary processes for the approval of the expenditure involved. If

the expenditure is approved, the next stage will be to appoint a consultancy team through the Government procurement process.

Bangor Town Centre

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development to provide an update on the timescale for the various stages in the development of a masterplan for Bangor Town Centre. [R] (AQW 7763/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department has submitted a business case to DFP requesting approval for the expenditure in carrying out a masterplan for Bangor. I anticipate a decision from DFP by the end of May 2009. If approved, a consultancy team will be commissioned through the Central Procurement Directorate consultancy framework. That process takes 5/6 weeks. Masterplan assignments typically take 6 months to complete from appointment of the consultancy team. Therefore, if DFP approval is granted this month, the consultancy team should be appointed in July 2009 and the assignment completed in January 2010.

Shared Neighbourhood Programme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development to provide an update on the development of a shared neighbourhood in Loughview/Reburn, Holywood (AQW 7764/09)

Minister for Social Development: I can confirm that the Loughview/Redburn area of Holywood is being considered to participate in the Shared Neighbourhood Programme and I expect to make an announcement in the coming weeks.

Shared Neighbourhood Programme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department has any plans to develop a shared neighbourhood in any of the Housing Executive estates in Bangor. (AQW 7765/09)

Minister for Social Development: I can confirm that we are looking at the potential of existing Housing Executive estates in Bangor for inclusion in Phase 3 of our Shared Neighbourhood Programme to be delivered during 2010/2011. However, it is much too early in that process to be any more specific at this time.

Social Housing

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the review of the financial and economic options for the better delivery of social and affordable housing in Northern Ireland, conducted by Baroness Ford, and the time-scale for the publication of her report. (AQW 7766/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information from this report was helpful in developing aspects of the New Housing Agenda which I announced in February 2008. The report also covers sensitive commercial information and a wide range of policy issues that continue to be taken forward.

The report also discussed means of introducing a higher level of private finance into housing. I have already acted on some of these and am taking forward others. I do not propose to release the report at present. However, when the policy development work is completed I shall certainly do so.

Ards Development Bureau

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what the Ards Development Bureau does for community groups. (AQW 7776/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Ards Development Bureau and Community Network is a 'sub-regional' organisation providing support services, networking opportunities, capacity building, facilities and resources to groups and organisations throughout the Ards Borough area.

Ards Development Bureau

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development, for each of the last three years, how much funding Ards Development Bureau received. (AQW 7777/09)

Minister for Social Development: I am unable to provide details of all the funding Ards Development Bureau and Community Network has been awarded. However, I can provide you with details of the funding awarded by my own Department and that which is listed on the Government Funder's Database.

Peace II Extension 2006-2008	Ards Community Capacity Building Programme £128,695
DSD Community Investment Fund 2007-2009	Core Costs £136,818.76
DSD Community Investment Fund 2009-2010	Core Costs £65,000

Ards Development Bureau

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Ards Development Bureau, (i) how much funding has it passed down to community groups; and (ii) which community groups have received funding. (AQW 7778/09)

Minister for Social Development: No funding has been passed from Ards Development Bureau and Community Network to any other community group in relation to the grants received from my Department.

In relation to details on the funding received under the Peace II Extension as noted in AQW 7777/09, I must refer you to the appropriate funder, in this instance the Community Foundation Northern Ireland, as my Department did not administer or manage this funding programme. I am advised that under this programme Ards Development Bureau & Community Network were funded to support capacity building and community development with three local communities, which included financial assistance with some basic administration and running costs.

Rent Arrears

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) how many tenants are still in rent arrears as a result of the former heating plant in the Twinbrook estate; and (ii) how much is owed in arrears by tenants to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. (AQW 7795/09)

Minister for Social Development: There are no current Housing Executive tenants in rent arrears as a result of the former heating plant in the Twinbrook estate. However, 4 former tenants of the Twinbrook Estate still have District Heating arrears within the Housing Executive's Lisburn Dairy Farm Office area. At 30 April 2009, the total rent arrears owed by current and former tenants of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was £14,270,553.

Stroke Survivors

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development to outline how her Department, in co-operation with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, is making it easier for stroke survivors to access benefits. (AQW 7800/09)

Minister for Social Development: Depending on the individual circumstances, a range of social security benefits are available to people who have had a stroke, including Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and income-related benefits, such as Income Support, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

The Housing Executive works closely with health and social care professionals to ensure there is an awareness of the services they provide for the disabled, including the Housing Benefit Service. In this way, when a care package is being developed for an individual, any entitlement to Housing Benefit can be explored and prepared for and any resulting claim can be dealt with promptly and effectively.

The Social Security Agency as part of its day to day business provides a range of services, including information and advice on benefit entitlement that meet the needs of individual customers. Depending on the benefit being claimed customers are able to complete a claim form in different ways, including opting for a

telephone interview which can be arranged at a mutually agreed time, arranging an appointment to have the form completed at a face-to-face interview or, using the Department for Social Development's internet site, complete and submit a form on-line.

Front-Office and Back-Office Services

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the front-office and back-office services currently provided at (i) Jobs and Benefits offices; and (ii) Social Security offices in (a) Larne; (b) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey. (AQW 7819/09)

Minister for Social Development: Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey offices are Jobs & Benefits offices. As part of the government's modernisation service, the Agency in partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning has introduced a Jobs and Benefits service for customers served by Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey offices. The service provides an integrated work-focused service to people of working age putting the emphasis on getting people into work and helping them tackle their barriers to employment.

The main SSA services provided by these offices are listed in the table below:

Office	Back Office	Front Office
Larne	Jobseekers Allowance Income Support (for Larne and Carrickfergus)	Information and advice
		Claims taking
		Social Fund Crisis loans
		Finance service for the issue of clerical payments.
Carrickfergus	Jobseekers Allowance	Information and advice
		Claims taking
		Social Fund Crisis loans
		Finance service for the issue of clerical payments.
Newtownabbey	Jobseekers Allowance Income Support	Information and advice
		Claims taking
		Social Fund Crisis loans
		Finance service for the issue of clerical payments.

Removal of Bridge Over the Sixmilewater River

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the proposals to remove the derelict bridge over the Sixmilewater River at Grangers Mill in Antrim. (AQW 7841/09)

Minister for Social Development: I understand that a recent Rivers Agency's investigation into flood flow levels determined that normal flows and flows up to 1:50 years are unlikely to be affected by the bridge. The Rivers Agency has also commissioned a study into the cause of last years flooding which will include the bridge's impact, if any, on flood risk. A decision on the future of the bridge will be made when the results of this study are known.

I have instructed officials to keep you informed.

Child Support

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of men who have paid child support in respect of children where subsequent evidence revealed they were not the biological fathers; (ii) the sum total of payments made by these men; (iii) whether these men were reimbursed for the payments; (iv) if any monies were recovered from the mothers involved in these cases; (v) whether any compensation was paid to the

individuals involved; (vi) the sum total of any compensation paid; and (vii) which Department or body paid the compensation, in the last ten years. (AQW 7842/09)

Minister for Social Development: There have been and continue to be a small number of cases in which the Non Resident Parent questions paternity after a formal assessment has been made (post assessment). Information is available for year 2008-2009, however to go back further than last year would necessitate a significant resource requirement which would identify a small number of individual cases.

In 2008-2009, 5 men paid child maintenance in respect of children where subsequent evidence revealed they were not the biological fathers.

The sum total of payments received from these men was £4065.94. This amount compares to a total of £22.81 million child maintenance collected/arranged at the end of March 2009.

In each case the amounts paid were reimbursed.

Recovery of monies was not sought from the Parents With Care involved. The welfare of the child/children is always considered in such cases

No compensation was paid as the Division acted in good faith and the Alleged Non Resident Parents had initially accepted paternity.

Compensation was not paid by any Department or body.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Employment and Support Allowance, if a GP provides evidence to the effect that a person is unable to attend a medical examination due to medical reasons, why this is not acceptable to the medical referee. (AQW 7859/09)

Minister for Social Development: If a customer is unable to attend a medical examination due to illness, the case will be considered by a decision maker to determine if the customer has shown 'good cause' for the non-attendance. The decision will not be made by the health care professional. If the customer provides specific medical evidence from a GP to show they are incapable of attending a medical examination, the decision maker will normally accept that 'good cause' for non-attendance has been proved. In these circumstances a further appointment for a medical examination will be arranged.

If a customer's medical condition is such that they consider they will never be able to attend a medical examination, and they provide specific evidence from a GP to support this, the case will be referred to a Medical Officer for consideration. If the evidence provided is deemed to be sufficient the Medical Officer will instruct that a domiciliary visit be arranged to complete the medical examination.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Employment and Support Allowance appeals, what procedures a tribunal follows if a client is unable to attend. (AQW 7860/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department does not have a role in such matters as appeal tribunals are independent judicial bodies composed of members taken from a panel appointed by the Lord Chancellor. In the circumstances, the Member may wish to write directly to the President of Appeal Tribunals at 6th floor, Cleaver House, 3 Donegall Square North, Belfast, BT1 5GA for a response.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Employment and Support Allowance, what measures her Department has taken to ensure that people whose allowance has been disallowed are given alternative resources until the review or appeal process is completed. (AQW 7861/09)

Minister for Social Development: A person who is appealing against a decision that they do not have limited capability for work can continue to receive Employment and Support Allowance at the assessment phase rate pending the outcome of the appeal as long as they continue to provide medical evidence. Alternatively, a person

who is disallowed Employment and Support Allowance and is still out of work may claim Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support depending on the individual circumstances.

Larne Masterplan

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development when the Larne Masterplan will be completed.
(AQW 7880/09)

Minister for Social Development: In May 2008, my Department commissioned consultants to produce a masterplan for Larne. Whilst a significant amount of work has been undertaken, the masterplan cannot be finalised until the results of a retail capacity study are available.

These results will be available in early July 2009. This will allow the consultant to produce a draft copy of the Masterplan for public consultation by the end of the summer. I anticipate that the completed Masterplan for Larne will be published by the end of 2009.

Crisis Loans

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development to outline (i) the maximum amount permitted for a crisis loan; (ii) the number of crisis loans approved; (iii) the amount of monies paid, in 2008/09; and in the current financial year to date.
(AQW 7884/09)

Minister for Social Development: A Crisis Loan can be awarded where it is the only means of preventing a serious risk to health and safety. Where the award is to meet the need for immediate living expenses the maximum amount payable is an amount equivalent to 75% of the amount of Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, or income-based Jobseekers Allowance appropriate to the customer's circumstances. Where the award is to meet the need for services or items the maximum payable is £1500.

The table below details the number of crisis loans awarded and the associated expenditure in 2008/09 and the current financial year to date.

	2008/2009	2009/2010 *
No of Crisis Loans Awarded	101,271	9,433
Crisis Loan Expenditure	£12,321,510	£1,131,043

* Latest data available up to 30 April 2009.

Crisis Loans

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development to clarify whether foreign nationals are permitted to claim for a crisis loan immediately upon arrival, or if they must be resident or employed for a required period of time before being eligible to do so.
(AQW 7885/09)

Minister for Social Development: Non-EEA nationals, persons subject to immigration control and persons who are treated as a person from abroad for benefit purposes are eligible to claim an interest-free Crisis Loan from the Social Fund without the need to have been resident or employed in Northern Ireland for a specific period of time. However, a loan will only be paid if it is needed to alleviate the consequences of a disaster.

Co-Ownership Housing

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for co-ownership housing were (i) submitted; and (ii) successful in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 to date, in the Upper Bann constituency.
(AQW 7890/09)

Minister for Social Development: Co-Ownership Housing has advised me that it records statistics according to local council area, rather than by constituency. The table below details the information requested in both the Craigavon and Banbridge council areas which are situated, at least in part, in the Upper Bann constituency.

Year	Applications made	Successful
2006/07	26	18
2007/08	208	119
2008/091	43	31
2009/102	34	7

1. The number of applications for the 2008/09 financial year was affected by the suspension of new applications to the scheme between April and November 2008.
2. The figures for applications reflect activity for the full month of April and part of May. The figure for applications made includes only completed forms that have been processed.

Credit Cards Issued to Departmental Staff

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many credit cards have been issued to her Department's staff for work purposes; and (ii) in relation to punitive bank charges on these cards, (a) how many has there been; (b) the total cost of the charges; and (c) the reasons for the charges, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7903/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department for Social Development and its Agencies do not hold or issue to staff any credit cards.

Departmental Spend on Consultants

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7937/09)

Minister for Social Development: The total cost of employing external consultants within the Department for Social Development (including the Social Security Agency and Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division) amounts to £640,518 for 2006/07, £760,597 for 2007/08 and £1,929,236 for 2008/09.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Lord and Lady Craigavon's Tomb

Mr T Elliott asked the Assembly Commission how it encourages people coming to Parliament Buildings to pay a visit to Lord and Lady Craigavon's tomb. (AQW 7712/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Moutray): Lord and Lady Craigavon's tomb has been an integral element in the official tour script since 1999. In addition, it is established practice for Events and Education office staff conducting official tours to highlight the tomb and its location for those wishing to visit it.

Lord and Lady Craigavon's Tomb

Mr T Elliott asked the Assembly Commission if it will consider adding a visit to Lord and Lady Craigavon's tomb as a non-compulsory part of the tours of Parliament Buildings. (AQW 7713/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Moutray): Present arrangements provide for those visitors wishing to avail of the option to visit the tomb, and tour guests are advised of the tomb's location as outlined above. Nonetheless, and to ensure tour guests are fully aware of the option, official tour guests will be informed specifically that they can visit the tomb if they wish.

REVISED WRITTEN ANSWERS

Friday 29 May 2009

Written Answer Booklet of 24 April 2009
(Volume 40, No WA2)

In page WA175, replace the answer to question (AQW 6786/09) with;

Details of year end surpluses on primary schools budgets in each of the last three years (2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08), are contained in the schools LMS Outturn Statements for each individual school which have been deposited in the Assembly Library. A summary of the amount of year-end surplus in each of the last three years for primary schools of all management types, broken down by Education and Library Board area is provided in the table below.

Under the Local Management of School (LMS) arrangements, a school may accumulate savings over a period of several years, however these should not be in excess of 5% or £75,000, whichever is the lesser, of their delegated budget unless they are being accumulated for specific purposes and are detailed in the school financial plans.

Tá na barrachais chinn bhliana ar fad leithdháilte ar scoileanna aonair agus tá sé de dhualagas ar na Boird Gobhanóirí scoile cinntí a dhéanamah ar cén dóigh a úsáidfeair na barrachais seo, laistigh de théarmaí na Foirmle Có-mhaoinithe do scoileanna.

All year-end surpluses remain committed to individual schools and the decisions on how the surpluses are utilised are for the schools' Board of Governors to determine within the terms of the Common Funding Formula for schools.

PRIMARY SCHOOL SURPLUS BY EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	No of Schools	(£000s)	No of Schools	(£000s)	No of Schools	(£000s)
Belfast	35	1,808	47	2,763	54	4,126
North Eastern	128	2,914	158	5,719	180	6,780
South Eastern	89	4,846	101	5,556	120	7,834
Southern	119	3,398	145	5,202	168	7,094
Western	141	4,461	160	7,195	177	8,879

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