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# OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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Wilson, Brian (North Down)  
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

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# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 5 June 2009

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### Maze Project

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to give an undertaking that land sold as part of the Maze project will be valued at the market rate at the time of an agreement to purchase.

(AQW 7847/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):** The Land and Property Services Agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel provide market valuations of Executive properties being considered for sale. Should any land be considered for sale at Maze/Long Kesh we would seek a market valuation by the Agency.

#### Child Poverty

**Mrs N Long** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the creation of a baseline system of measurement for severe child poverty.

(AQW 7866/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** A method to measure the level of severe child poverty has been outlined in a paper for consideration by the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People.

Once agreed by the Ministerial Sub-Committee and the Executive, the method will be used to monitor levels of severe child poverty.

#### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many credit cards have been issued to its 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 7907/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

- (i) The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has issued 14 credit cards (Government Procurement Cards) to officials for work purposes.
- (ii) (a) and (b) There have been 6 punitive bank charges incurred on these cards over the last five years amounting to £1,738.
- (ii) (c) These charges were as a result of the late payment of bills during the immediate transition to a new accounting system for the Department in 2007-08. These initial processing issues have now been resolved. In addition, all monthly balances on these cards are now paid by direct debit to ensure that late payment charges are not incurred.

## Legislation

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of pieces of draft legislation from its Department that have been discussed at the Executive Committee in 2009. (AQO 2835/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We refer the Member to the answer given to the Member for South Antrim to AQO 2832/09.

## Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when it will present its strategy on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. (AQO 2838/09)

**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 OFMDFM and the Executive. We have reflected this priority in the Strategic Priorities of the Programme for Government and as one of the Programme's two cross-cutting themes. 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. We have been delivering substantial additional funding secured in the Executive's budget. 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.

## Special European Union Programmes Body

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on recent funding applications granted by the special European Union Programmes Body. (AQO 2839/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Special EU Programmes Body has responsibility for the delivery of the PEACE III Programme and funding applications.

PEACE III Programme Steering Committees have to date approved ninety-nine applications with a combined value of approximately £140 million / €153 million. This represents almost half of the total funds available. Seventy-eight letters of offer have been issued.

INTERREG IVA Steering Committees have approved thirty-three applications with a combined value of approximately £138 million, representing almost 60 per cent of the total programme value. Sixteen letters of offer have been issued.

## Bill of Rights

**Mrs C Hanna** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the discussions it has had with the Secretary of State in relation to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. (AQO 2841/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We have not had discussions with the Secretary of State in relation to a Bill of Rights. We anticipate that the Secretary of State will write to us, in due course, seeking our views. We will, in turn, want to seek the views of the Executive, given the cross-cutting nature of the issues.

## Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

**Mr D Ford** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide a timetable for the publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy. (AQO 2844/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We refer the Member to the answer to AQO 2838/09. Our comments then are equally applicable to this question.

## Economy

**Mr R Newton** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps the Executive is taking to deal with the economic downturn. (AQO 2845/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** We announced a package of measures to address the economic downturn in the Assembly on 15th December 2008 which included measures to address problems in five key areas: energy and fuel poverty; debt and unemployment; the rising cost of living for households; support for the housing and construction sectors; and support for business. We brought forward a Financial Assistance Bill to allow us to react quickly to emerging problems and difficulties.

During the course of last year we met with a series of stakeholder groups to learn directly of the core problems and difficulties arising from the development of the economic downturn. To develop and build upon this dialogue we have established an economic taskforce under the title of the Cross Sector Advisory Forum. In addition, we have met with the four main banks in recent months where we discussed how they were responding to the credit crunch in Northern Ireland. Further meetings are being arranged with the building societies and Barclays.

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

## Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

**Ms A Lo** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the impact the delay in the publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy has had on racial equality. (AQO 2846/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Whilst we continue to develop our detailed proposals for a Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration, we also continue to implement the strategic approach of the current Racial Equality Strategy 2005-10. We certainly consider that the six shared aims of the Racial Equality Strategy remain current and robust, especially given the increasing diversity of our population in recent years.

You will be aware of the practical work to improve racial equality and create good race relations that has also continued to be promoted by OFMDFM. For example, the Migrant Workers thematic sub-group has continued to operate, and its work has been widely welcomed, including the Migrant Workers Strategy and Action plan.

You will also be aware of how, in terms of resourcing racial equality, Junior Ministers recently announced the recipients of a funding package worth more than £1million to support the integration of minority ethnic communities. The funding package of £1,046,894 was awarded to 27 different organisations over the 2009/10 financial year, representing an increase of 10% on funding provided in 2008/09.

The work of these 27 organisations is a practical response to the increasing diversity of our population and it clearly demonstrates our commitment to promoting racial equality and good race relations.

## Special European Union Programmes Body

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline its role in the process of allocating Special European Union Programmes Body funding. (AQO 2847/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The Department's role in respect of PEACE III funding is that of Accountable Department and it is also represented in the decision-making process of funding awards through participation in the Steering Groups related to Priorities 1.1 – Building Positive Relationships at the local level; Priority 1.2 – Acknowledging and dealing with the past and Priority 2.2 Key institutional capacities are developed for a shared society.

### Child Poverty: Funding

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of an Executive Programme Fund to help ensure that the Executive meets its targets in relation to child poverty.

(AQO 2848/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Tackling poverty and disadvantage is highlighted as one of our priorities within the Programme for Government 2008-2011 and as a theme that cuts across Departmental boundaries. Currently departments are required, in line with Public Expenditure guidelines, to consider data and research available on poverty when allocating resources to programmes to ensure resources and efforts are directed to those in greatest need.

It will be the responsibility of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion to agree priorities and actions necessary to meet child poverty targets.

It would also be for the Executive and the Assembly to decide on how it will resource these priorities and actions and whether an Executive Programme Fund would help ensure the Executive meets its targets in relation to child poverty.

### European Commission

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action it is taking at European level, to ensure that Northern Ireland remains on the agenda of the European Union ahead of the appointment of a new Commission later this year.

(AQO 2849/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Since the restoration of devolution and President Barroso's announcement setting up the European Commission's Northern Ireland Task Force, we have been aware that our small region has attracted a high level of attention from the European Institutions. Maintaining that level of attention is clearly important.

In meetings with Commission President Barroso we have developed a clear understanding that the Taskforce will exist until 2013, beyond the life of the current Commission. However, for the Taskforce to be effective, an ongoing programme of work is required, including visits by Ministers and officials to build and maintain key relationships. As part of that engagement, we are currently working on a series of visits that will include senior NICS officials travelling to Brussels, a Ministerial visit to Brussels by the Junior Ministers, and a Commission Taskforce visit here. The momentum achieved by these events will help maintain attention on us when the new Commission is appointed.

Executive Ministers are able to play a role in negotiations at Council where there is a clear devolved interest and OFMDFM and DARD officials in Brussels can support Executive Ministers when they participate in Council. The Agriculture Minister has attended Council on several occasions to ensure our interests are taken into account.

Depending on the outcome of the Irish Government's referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, it is envisaged that the European Parliament will gain significant new powers in several areas of importance to Northern Ireland, but most particularly in agriculture and fisheries. OFMDFM officials, in co-operation with colleagues from Whitehall, Scotland and Wales, are currently considering how best to develop engagement with the European Parliament post Lisbon.

Our work with each of the 3 main Institutions helps to keep our place near the top of the European agenda.

### Policing and Justice Powers

**Mr D McKay** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the transfer of Policing and Justice.

(AQO 2850/09)

**Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:** Preparations for the devolution of policing and justice powers have progressed in line with the process paper which we made public following our attendance at the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) on 18 November last year. On 20 January 2009, the Assembly approved a report from the AERC on the arrangements for the devolution of policing and justice matters. It endorsed our view that there should be a single justice department with a single Minister elected



by the Assembly. The Committee is currently working on a second report dealing with a broad range of other issues, including financial provisions, which need to be resolved before devolution can happen. Legislation has been enacted at Westminster to make the necessary legislative amendments arising from our decisions announced on 18 November 2008 and from the AERC report. The Secretary of State has also made an order to increase the maximum permitted number of Ministerial offices to accommodate a Minister of Justice. Officials have held discussions with DFP, the NIO, the NI Court Service and Whitehall departments on future financial arrangements to support the functions which would transfer on devolution.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### Belfast Flooding Stakeholder Group

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Belfast Flooding Stakeholder group established by the Rivers Agency including details of (i) its membership; (ii) the number of meetings held to date; (iii) plans for future meetings; and (iv) its forward work plan. [R] (AQW 7785/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew):** The Belfast Stakeholder Group was established to assist in taking forward the preparation and implementation of the Belfast Flood Risk Management Study. Membership of the Group includes representatives from NI Water, Roads Service, NI Environment Agency, Belfast Resilience Forum, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Rivers Agency. The inaugural meeting of the Group is scheduled for the 3rd July 2009 and the frequency of future meetings will be considered at this meeting. The Terms of Reference for the Group, when agreed, will assist in the development of forward work plans and programmes for the Group.

Given that the study is at data acquisition stage, currently representation is from core stakeholders. However, there is flexibility to co-opt other interested parties as the study progresses and work programmes are clarified.

### Animal Abuse

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures she is taking to end animal abuse. (AQW 7852/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** My Department has an important and active role in developing national and EU animal welfare legislation and in educating livestock keepers in standards of animal welfare. Owners and keepers of farmed animals are required to comply fully with domestic and EU legislation, which sets down minimum standards for keeping farm animals.

The legislation contains specific requirements relating to record keeping, freedom of movement, buildings, equipment, feeding and watering of animals. Farm animal welfare inspections are carried out by my Department's Veterinary Service against these standards. Farm animals may also be assessed in markets, in slaughterhouses and during transport against legal requirements, and enforcement is used where appropriate. Under the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (NI) 2000, my officials can serve a Notice to a keeper setting out what steps are necessary to improve the welfare of their animals. This is an effective tool for seeking to ensure an animal's needs are met. Failure to comply with a Notice can lead to prosecution.

My Department's Veterinary Service also investigates welfare complaints from members of the public, and carries out targeted farm inspections if welfare issues are identified by a Veterinary Officer working in an abattoir. Farms with a history of welfare violations are revisited on a regular basis to ensure that corrective action has been taken and maintained. In the most serious cases of animal welfare abuse, my Department will prosecute offenders and has done so successfully on 31 occasions in the last two years.

My Department also produces Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock. These provide advice and guidance for the upkeep of farm animals and details of relevant legislation. Livestock farmers and employers are required by law to ensure that all those attending to their livestock are familiar with, and have access to, the relevant Codes.

In addition, my Officials work closely with the PSNI which is responsible for enforcing animal welfare legislation with regards to non-farmed animals.

In recognition that current animal welfare legislation here is perhaps not as robust as it should be, I have already stated that it is my intention to bring forward a new Animal Welfare Bill. A Review of current legislation is nearing completion and I will shortly be examining all the evidence presented to me. I expect to be in a position shortly after the Summer Recess to seek Executive approval to bring forward the Bill.

### Animal Identification Ear Tags

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many animal identification ear tags were replaced in 2007/08 and what was the cost in terms of expense to farmers. (AQW 7872/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** In total, 272,016 replacement ear tag authorisations were issued in 2007/08. The cost to farmers would be in the order of £3.50 per individual tag, if ordered singly.

I have recently agreed a change to the rules surrounding replacement tags which negates the requirement for a replacement tag in cases of animals arriving at a meat plant with only one ear tag.

### Animal Tagging System

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the adequacy and cost effectiveness of the present animal tagging system. (AQW 7873/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** It is essential for the success of our farming industry and also mandatory under EU animal health and food legislation, that effective animal traceability is achieved. Regarding cattle, we are fully compliant with Council Regulation 1760/2000, which lays down a traceability system throughout the EU, requiring cattle to be double tagged, with one tag in each ear. However, I am well aware of the drawbacks of an animal identification system based on conventional eartags. These can include errors through visual reading and manual recording of tag numbers along with the cost and inconvenience of reading and recording this information, and of course there is the risk of tags themselves being lost or removed.

The industry here is considering the introduction of electronic identification (EID) of cattle to address some of these issues. Cattle EID is also under active consideration in Brussels and I am watching developments closely.

I have recently made improvements to our cattle traceability policy to ensure that keepers can avail of the opportunity to prove the identity of an animal, as required by EU legislation, through the use of DNA testing. By allowing the identity of animals to be established in this way, fewer cattle will be restricted on-farm and all eligible cattle can be accepted for human consumption. I have also agreed in consultation with the industry that cattle which have lost an ear tag en route to the slaughter plant may proceed to slaughter without an additional replacement tag being required in the lairage.

My officials have also worked with tag suppliers, and officials in the South, to ensure a standard system of numbering and bar-coding on cattle tags, passports and the advance electronic transmission of this information to facilitate all-Island trade and onward movements to the EU.

Regarding sheep, our plans for the introduction of EID are well advanced in line with the EU requirement to have EID in place across the EU from the end of this year. I am working to ensure that changes are made at EU level to the detailed rules of this system so that it is as simple and straightforward as possible.

As regards future developments on the identification of animals, I am supporting the work of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) on evaluating systems for retinal scanning, which will contribute to traceability by providing a reliable means of maintaining an animal's identity.

### Divisional Veterinary Office in Larne

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will make her final decision on the closure of her Department's Larne office. (AQW 7878/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** An analysis of a number of locational options for a DARD Direct office to provide farmer focussed services in South and East Antrim has recently been completed. I will shortly be reviewing this along with feedback from key stakeholders representing customers and staff with a view to announcing the final location in June.

### Departmental Spend on Consultants

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much her Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7896/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The Department of Agriculture has incurred no expenditure in the last three years on internal consultants.

Expenditure incurred by the Department on external consultants in the last three years is as follows:-

Year	06/07	07/08	08/09
Total Spend	£780,000	£480,121	£886,000

### Departmental Consultations

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development 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 7939/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The following table outlines Departmental expenditure.

Financial Year	Cost of Public Notices	Cost of other forms of Media
2008/09	£23,700	-
2007/08	£15,498	-
2006/07	£5,946	-

### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in each of the last five years (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 there has been; (b) the total cost of the charges; and (c) the reasons for the charges. (AQW 7964/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** My department uses the Government Procurement Card which officers use for work purposes.

The number of cards issued in each of the last 5 years is as follows:

- 2004/05 - 3 issued
- 2005/06 - 1 issued
- 2006/07 - 4 issued
- 2007/08 - 3 issued
- 2008/09 - 7 issued

There have been 11 charges over the 5 year period totalling £96.63 for interest due to late payment.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7967/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** In line with procurement procedures, the Department purchases all cleaning, household and toiletry products from cleaning and/or supplies contracts managed by Central Procurement Directorate in the Department of Finance and Personnel. The contracts stipulate that products must be fit for purpose and environmentally friendly – there is no reference to animal testing.

However the Executive has brought forward new procurement guidelines which ensure social, sustainable and environmental aspects are fully considered and I will endeavour to ensure that these guidelines are implemented by my Department at the contract renewal date.

### **Divisional Veterinary Office in Larne**

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department has investigated the possibility of relocating staff from the Divisional Veterinary/DARD office currently in Larne to the (i) Mullusk area; or (ii) Templepatrick area, if so, to outline (a) the cost involved in relocating to existing accommodation; and (b) the cost involved in land purchase and construction of a new building. (AQW 8003/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I am seeking to identify the best option to deliver farm business services to customers in the South and East Antrim area. To further this, my Department has undertaken an analysis of a number of options for a location of a DARD Direct office. The locations considered are Larne, Ballyclare, Mullusk, Templepatrick, Antrim, Dundrod and Lisburn. A financial analysis is currently being completed, so I am unable to provide you with costs at this stage.

### **Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority**

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail who sits on the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority and were the appointments carried out in line with public appointments procedures and equality legislation. (AQW 8041/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The membership of the NI Fishery Harbour Authority Board is:

- Margaret Andrews, Chairperson
- Morris Walters
- Peter Ronaldson
- Gordon Irwin OBE
- Terry Jarvis
- Harold Henning
- Roy Teggarty

All of the above appointments were carried out in line with guidance issued by the Office of Commissioner for Public Appointments NI and complied with equality legislation.

### **European Fisheries Fund**

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when will each European Fisheries Fund measure be opened for applications. (AQW 8042/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Subject to DFP approval of the business cases currently being assessed by economists, the first four European Fisheries Fund Measures will open for applications on 30th June. These key measures are Collective Actions; Fishing Ports, Landing Sites and Shelters; Investments in Processing and Marketing; and, Productive Investments in Aquaculture.

Priority Axis 1 Measures, that focus on the adaptation of fishing fleets will open this November, when the Fisheries Forum, which met yesterday, has reported its recommendations to me and the proposals have been subject to commensurate appraisal.

Priority Axis 4, focusing on the Sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas, will open in April 2010 after the South Down Fishing Taskforce Action Plan has been evaluated. This independent evaluation will be used to shape the Axis 4 Programme for our fishing dependent communities.

Other than Priority Axis 4, it is anticipated that all other Measures, within Priority Axis 2 and 3, such as protection and development of aquatic fauna and flora; development of new markets and promotional campaigns; and, pilot projects, will be opened before the end of the current calendar year.

### Fisheries Forum

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the Fisheries Forum will report. (AQW 8043/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The Fisheries Forum discussed its report in plenary session at its meeting on 3rd June. I expect that the Forum will send it to me shortly for consideration.

### Supply of Ice

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the economic problems facing the fishing fleet and industry, for her assessment of the privatisation of the supply of ice. (AQW 8044/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Ice supply, particularly in the summer and for small vessels, is essential for product quality and in the current economic climate it is important that the local fishing fleet continues to provide top quality product in a difficult and competitive market place.

The NI Fisheries Harbour Authority has concluded that the business of producing and selling ice to the private sector only is a commercial activity that does not sit comfortably with NIFHA's role as a public sector body. The work done to date by NIFHA suggests that the ice requirements of the industry could be provided more flexibly and cost-effectively by the private sector. I would urge the industry to engage positively with the Harbour Authority and my Department (in relation to grants that may be available) to put in place the alternative sources of supply that will be needed whenever NIFHA facilities cease production.

### Divisional Veterinary Office Premises in Larne

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her estimate of the costs involved in any closure of the Divisional Veterinary Office premises in Larne; and if her Department will continue to incur costs if there is a closure. (AQW 8052/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** As you are likely to be aware, I have decided that the successful DARD Direct one stop shop approach will be rolled out to 12 locations across the north of Ireland. I have confirmed 11 of these locations (Omagh, Dungannon, Armagh, Newry, Downpatrick, Newtownards, Ballymena, Coleraine, Claudy, Magherafelt and Enniskillen) but, I have yet to decide on the location of the final office which will provide services in South and East Antrim. Stakeholders have provided views on a location Option analysis for South and East Antrim but cost estimates have not been finalised. I am currently unable to provide you with estimates until this work has been completed.

### Kilmourne Dredger

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority's dredger "Kilmourne", (i) what she is doing to address the current difficulties with the dredger; (ii) for her assessment of the NIFHA's maintenance of "Kilmourne"; (iii) what the timetable for the return of the dredger to operations is; and (iv) how much is being paid by NIFHA to charter a dredger from Dundalk. (AQW 8086/09)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Dredging of navigational channels is an operational matter for the NI Fishery Harbour Authority. I understand that as part of the business case for an extensive upgrade of the MD Kilmourne a strategic review of the Authority's in-house dredging operation was carried out during 2008-09. This review concluded that the Authority should carry out a trial for a one or two year period using an external dredging contractor. An external contractor may be able to provide a more effective and better 'value for money' service to the Authority compared to operating its own in-house dredger. The Authority put out a public tender in April 2009. The appointment of a dredging contractor is expected to be made during June 2009. The Authority has retained the MD Kilmourne pending the outcome of the trial.

A Dundalk dredger was used in the latter half of 2008-09 to carry out essential dredging of the Kilkeel Harbour entrance pending the launch of the tender exercise. The cost of the operation cannot be released as it may prejudice commercial interests.

## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (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 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 7906/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell):** My Department does not issue credit cards to its staff. Instead, it uses the Government Procurement Card (GPC) which is sponsored by the Office of Government Commerce and HM Treasury.

There is no cost to the Department for using GPC.

### Regional and Minority Languages

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure the current position on his input into the UK's 3rd Periodical Report on Regional and Minority Languages and to outline the position on the reports of the other devolved regions. (AQW 7951/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The European Charter is an international convention designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage. The Charter does not establish any individual or collective rights for the speakers of regional or minority languages.

The Northern Ireland input to the UK's Third Periodical Report is a factual record of relevant actions implemented between July 2005 and July 2008 in relation to Ulster-Scots and Irish. Issues that were not taken forward and events that occurred outside the timeframe are beyond the scope of this report.

The Northern Ireland input is still being considered by the Deputy First Minister. I raised this issue at the Executive Meeting on Thursday 23 April but agreement has still not been achieved. At this stage I am unable to specify when the report might be finalised.

The UK Report issued to the Council of Europe, without the Northern Ireland input, on Tuesday 26 May 2009. All other devolved administrations provided input to the report.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7965/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Within DCAL the cleaning in all areas of the Department is carried out by a contractor appointed by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) in the Department of Finance & Personnel, through competitive tender.

DCAL has no input into the cleaning, household or toiletry products used by the contractor as these are supplied as an inclusive cost within the contract.

Cleaning contractors appointed by CPD are contracted to use cleaning products that are fit for the purpose intended, and environmentally friendly.

The contract does not refer to animal testing.

### Ulster Scots Agency

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps he is taking to ensure that East-West funding could be made available through the Ulster Scots Agency. (AQW 8076/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Ulster-Scots Agency has protocols in place which allow the Agency to consider funding for East-West projects providing the criteria are met.

The Agency has revised its Financial Assistance Scheme to include the possible provision of travel arrangements to outside the island of Ireland but implementation is subject to the necessary approvals.

### Windsor Park Football Stadium

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) when all elements of the Sports Grounds Order 2006 will be implemented fully; and (ii) to give his assessment of the impact this legislation will have on crowd capacity at Windsor Park football stadium. (AQW 8087/09)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Subject to the normal statutory processes, including the approval, by the Northern Ireland Assembly, of relevant subordinate legislation, all the elements of The Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 will be commenced fully in the 2009 calendar year.

The impact The Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 will have on crowd capacity at any sports ground, including Windsor Park, will, under the legislation, be a matter for the relevant district council to assess and determine. The safety certificate the relevant council issues will set the approved safe capacity limit for the venue.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Irish-Medium Schools

**Mr D O'Loan** asked the Minister of Education (i) how many Irish-medium schools in the last ten years have been unable to claim interest expenses after the sites of the schools were transferred into the school trustees' names so that the school site could be vested by the Department; and (ii) what were the costs incurred by the school trustees. (AQW 7021/09)

**Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane):** Tá ceithre Ghaelscoil a léirigh inmhharthanacht agus a bhí dílsithe don eastát scoile le deich mbliana anuas. Aisíoctar iontaobhaí ar dhílsiú an tsuímh do chuidiú deontas caipitil nuair a fhaigheann mo Roinn na sonraise admháilte d'oibreacha chaipitil chomhaontaithe a rinneadh.

There are four Irish medium schools which have demonstrated viability and been vested in the schools' estate in the last ten years. Trustees are reimbursed on vesting of the site for capital grant aid after receipted invoices are received in my department for agreed capital works carried out. The payment of interest charges is not included. Interest costs incurred by trustees are not known to my department.

The most recent Chief Inspector's report for the school's estate highlights the need to address the issue of poor accommodation in the Irish medium sector and my officials are working to resolve this situation.

### Crumlin Integrated College

**Mr M McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Education if a grant has been allocated for building work for Crumlin Integrated College; and if so, how much the grant was and what was its purpose. (AQW 7041/09)

**Minister of Education:** Tá Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt freagrach ar an scoil seo. Tá tugtha le fios ag an Bord nach bhfuil a fhios acu faoi leithdháileadh deontais chuig an coláiste fá choinne obair tógála ach gur cuireadh tús le scéim a sholáthroidh seomraí Eacnamaíocht Baile, páirceáil agus oibreacha chóiríochta eile ag beidh costas £446,558 ag baint leis an scéim seo.

This school is the responsibility of the North Eastern Education and Library Board. The Board has advised that it is not aware of the allocation of a grant to the college for building work but that it has commenced a scheme costing £446,588 to provide a Home Economics suite, car parking and other accommodation works.

### Voluntary Grammar Schools

**Mr J O'Dowd** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 6453/09, (i) if the Financial Audit Arrangements Manual for Voluntary Grammar Schools includes a requirement for public and other funds to be kept in separate bank accounts; and (ii) if her Department is informed or copied the audit for funds raised by Voluntary Grammar Schools such as 'voluntary fees' applied to pupils. (AQW 7246/09)

**Minister of Education:** The Financial Audit Arrangements Manual for Voluntary Grammar Schools does not include a requirement for public funds and other funds to be kept in separate bank accounts, however, the manual requires that arrangements for financial control within voluntary grammar schools should be consistent with the principles of good practice. These arrangements are subject to both internal and external audits by professionally qualified auditors with the results of these audits submitted for analysis and evaluation by the Department.

I dtaca leis an iniúchadh ar chistí a thiomsaíonn scoileanna gramadaí deonacha, faigheann an Roinn cóipeanna de Ráitis Cuntais iniúchta (Foirm S40) ó gach Scoil Ghramadaí Dheonach gach bliain agus áirítear iontu sonraí de chistí poiblí agus neamhphoiblí a fuair na scoileanna, mar shampla táillí saorálacha a iarrtar ó dhaltáí.

In terms of the audit for funds raised by voluntary grammar schools, the Department receives copies of all Voluntary Grammar Schools' annual audited Statement of Accounts (Form S40) which include details of public and non-public funds received by the schools such as voluntary fees applied to pupils.

This provides sufficient detail to enable all grant funding provided by the Department to be traced to the school's full annual audited accounts. This reconciliation is also sufficient to determine the overall financial status of the school. However, there are currently eight voluntary grammar schools who do not prepare annual audited accounts and I have asked these schools to have a full set of audited accounts prepared.

The Audit Office (NIAO) have acknowledged the strengthening of the accountability arrangements for voluntary grammar schools and have commented that this signifies an 'improvement to the current procedures as previously audited by them' and that it sees the work 'as a means of addressing previous reservations about accountability'.

### Grammar Schools Entrance Testing

**Ms C Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister of Education how many primary schools are preparing children for entrance testing for grammar schools. (AQW 7526/09)

**Minister of Education:** Sonraítear i dtreoir na Roinne ar Aistriú 2010 gur chóir do bhunscoileanna a thabhairt faoi deara nach féidir a éileamh orthu go n-ullmhófaí páistí do theisteanna iontrála agus sonraítear go soiléir sa treoir go molann an Roinn go láidir nach ndéantar é.

The Department's Transfer 2010 guidance states that primary schools should note that preparation of children for entrance tests cannot be required of them and makes clear that the Department strongly recommends against it.

Primary schools must abide by their statutory duty to deliver the revised curriculum, something which is monitored through the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate. Parents also have a right to question the decision of any primary school to deviate from the revised curriculum through teaching to a test. Where the Board of Governors of a primary school is found to have failed to discharge its statutory duty to deliver the curriculum, it can be required to do so, ultimately, if necessary, by a direction from the Department.

I have written to all primary schools reminding them of their statutory duties.

I note also that the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) has written to the Chairpersons of Board 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."



## Child Poverty

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister of Education what her Department is doing to raise awareness among teachers of the impact of poverty on children's school experience. (AQW 7643/09)

**Minister of Education:** Bíonn formhór na múinteoirí ag gach céim den oideachas feasach ar thionchar na bochtaineachta ar pháistí, tríd na heispéiris a bhíonn acu ó lá go lá. Féachann scoileanna go ginearálta, tríd an teagasc agus tríd na córais tacaíochta agus tréadchúraim a bhíonn acu, féachann siad le dul i ngleic leis na baic a bhíonn ar chuid mhór páistí óga, lena n-áirítear iad siúd ó theaghlaigh atá ag maireachtáil faoi bhochtaineacht.

Through their daily experience, most teachers in all phases of education are aware of the impact of poverty on children. Schools generally, through their teaching and their support and pastoral care systems, attempt to deal with the barriers that many young children face, including those where families experience poverty. The Targeting Social Need (TSN) factor within the Common Funding Formula provides additional funding to assist schools in addressing the problems arising from social deprivation and educational underachievement, in line with the principles of directing resources at those most disadvantaged in our society.

I believe, however, that the structures of our system are fundamentally inequitable. In my period as Minister, I have raised the issues around barriers to learning, including those related to socio-economic circumstances, continually through my policies, my presentations to teachers and my visits to schools and teachers. These issues are at the heart of all my work on SEN and Inclusion, newcomer pupils, school standards and the curriculum.

I will continue to press the case for greater equality throughout the education system. I will ensure that TSN issues are central to my review of school funding. On Transfer 2010, I will seek to ensure that fair and equitable admission arrangements are in place that give all children from whatever background, opportunities for access to good quality education.

## St Bernard's Primary School, East Belfast

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the provision of a new school building for St Bernard's Primary School, Wynchurch, East Belfast. (AQW 7742/09)

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

The planning of the maintained schools estate is a matter for the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) in the first instance. A potential capital major works scheme for St Bernard's Primary School is one of a number of schemes that CCMS has indicated it intends to pursue with the Department in the next number of months.

## Middletown Centre for Autism

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many people have had professional training relating to Autism Spectrum Disorder provided by the Middletown Centre; (ii) the place and dates on which these training courses took place; (iii) the duration in hours of each course; (iv) how many people attended each course; and (v) the specific subject title of each course. (AQW 7883/09)

**Minister of Education:** Bhí seacht gcéad agus seasca duine san iomlán a d'fhreastail ar chúrsaí um neamhord speictrim uathaigh a soláthraíodh trí Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin. Sonraítear an t-eolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos.

There have been a total of seven hundred and sixty attendees at training courses relating to autism spectrum disorder provided by the Middletown Centre for Autism. The breakdown of the information requested is detailed on the table over.

**MIDDLETOWN CENTRE FOR AUTISM: INFORMATION REGARDING TRAINING PROVIDED TO PROFESSIONALS****DECEMBER 2007- MAY 2009**

<b>Course Date</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Course Location</b>	<b>Duration of Course (Hours)</b>	<b>Numbers Who Attended Course</b>
12 -16 November 2007	5 Day TEACCH	Omagh	40 Hours	25
10th December 2007	Psycho-Educational Profile (3rd edition) (PEP-3)	Middletown	6 hours	12
14th December 2007	Asperger's Syndrome and Mental Health Issues	Middletown	6 hours	9
29th July 2008	PEP-3	Strabane	6 hours	22
16 September 2008	PEP-3	Strabane	6 hours	11
26 September 2008	Asperger's Syndrome and Mental Health Issues	Middletown	6 hours	35
7 November 2008	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	Athlone	6 hours	28
8 November 2008	Sensory Processing Disorder and ASD	Stranmillis	6 hours	20
10-11 November 2008	TEACCH-Transition Assessment Profile	Middletown	14 hours	32
13-14 November 2008	TEACCH-Transition Assessment Profile	Athlone	14 hours	21
5 December 2008	Meeting the sensori-motor needs of children with ASD within the curriculum framework	Middletown	6 hours	34
12 December 2008	Asperger's Syndrome and Mental Health Issues	Bangor	6 hours	21
7 January 2009	Meeting the sensori-motor needs of children with ASD within the curriculum framework	Belfast	6 hours	34
8 January 2009	PEP-3	Donegal	6 hours	10
15 January 2009	PEP-3	Middletown	6 hours	7
16 January 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in ASD	Middletown	6 hours	7
21 January 2009	PEP-3	Portlaoise	6 hours	19
28 January 2009	PEP-3	Dublin	6 hours	17
4 February 2009	PEP-3	Limerick	6 hours	16
5 February 2009	ASD Training	Middletown	2 hours	8
11 February 2009	PEP-3	Middletown	6 hours	10
16 February	TEACCH	Glenveagh	6 hours	20
17 February	TEACCH	Glenveagh	6 hours	20
20 February 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in ASD	Middletown	6 hours	20
25 February 2009	ASD and Co-morbidities	Dublin	6 hours	17
26 February 2009	TEACCH Practice and Research	Middletown	6 hours	15
4 March 2009	ASD and Co-morbidities	Limerick	6 hours	6
6 March 2009	ASD and Co-morbidities	Belfast	6 hours	32
11 March 2009	ASD and Co-morbidities	Middletown	6 hours	10
13 March 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in ASD	Dublin	6 hours	29
20 March 2009	ASD and Co-morbidities	Portlaoise	6 hours	12
23rd-27th March	5-day TEACCH training course	Banbridge	40 hours	25
24 April 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives	Limerick	6 hours	29
30 April 2009	Asperger's Syndrome and Mental Health Issues	Middletown	6 hours	18

Course Date	Course Title	Course Location	Duration of Course (Hours)	Numbers Who Attended Course
6 May 2009	Social & Life Skills Training for Primary School Pupils with ASD	Middletown	6 hours	32
12 May 2009	Applied Behaviour Analysis in the Classroom	Middletown	6 hours	22
13 May 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in ASD	Strabane	6 hours	22
14 May 2009	Sensory, Motor & Relationship Perspectives in ASD	Belfast	3 hours	33

## Epilepsy

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) what specific training is given to teachers on dealing with epilepsy; (ii) if this training is provided on an ongoing basis; (iii) if there is any co-operation with agencies or charities in providing this training and; (iv) how many children within the education system have been diagnosed with epilepsy, broken down by council area. (AQW 7908/09)

**Minister of Education:** I dtéarmaí leathan, soláthraítear múinteoirí atá cáilithe go ginéarála tríd an oideachas múinteoirí tosaigh (ITE). Laistigh de gach cúrsa ITE, áfach, faigheann micléinn an oideachais oiliúint ar an Chód Cleachtais um Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais agus caithfidh siad a léiriú go bhfuil siad tuisceanach air seo. Clúdaítear aithint ar riachtanais speisialta na ndaltaí agus diriú ar straitéisí a ndéanfaidh freastal ar na riachtanais sin, mar phríomh-oiliúint ar riachtanais speisialta oideachais sna cúrsaí ITE. Bíonn rogha ar leith a bhaineann le riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SEN) glactha ag roinnt micléinn an oideachais i rith a gcláir oiliúna agus caitheann roinnt acu cuid dá gcleachtadh teagaise i scoileanna speisialta.

In broad terms, initial teacher education (ITE) produces generally qualified teachers. However, within all ITE courses, student teachers are educated in and expected to demonstrate understanding of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Training in special educational needs in ITE courses mainly covers the recognition of pupils' special needs and focuses on strategies to meet those needs. Some student teachers choose a special educational needs (SEN) specific option during their training programme and some spend part of their teaching practice in special schools.

During the induction and early professional development stages of a beginning teacher's career, teachers are further educated in and expected to demonstrate their competence in the recognition of pupils' special educational needs. With regard to continuing professional development, those wishing to focus on areas such as special education should have in-service training made available to them through the Education and Library Boards.

In this connection the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that while there is no specific training offered to teachers dealing with epilepsy, schools can request training from the ELBs when a particular special need, including epilepsy, is identified for specific pupils. When a request for training is made the ELB would secure this from the most appropriate provider which in the case of epilepsy would most likely be the local Health and Social Care Trust. This ensures that the training delivered is appropriate to the needs of the individual child.

Furthermore, following the issue of the Department of Education's document "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs" in 2008, a training programme for school principals was offered to all schools to ensure that all pupils with medical needs, including epilepsy, could have their needs met in schools.

The diagnosis of children with epilepsy is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety. However the number of children recorded as having SEN as a result of epilepsy, in the 2008 school census is as follows:-

Primary, post primary and special pupils who are recorded as having epilepsy 2008/09					
District Council Code	District Council Name	Primary	Post primary	Special	Total
Postcode Not Provided/ Unknown / Not Recognised	Postcode Not Provided/ Unknown / Not Recognised	5	12	7	24

Primary, post primary and special pupils who are recorded as having epilepsy 2008/09					
District Council Code	District Council Name	Primary	Post primary	Special	Total
95AA	Antrim	8	5	15	28
95BB	Ards	5	7	16	28
95CC	Armagh	*	#	11	26
95DD	Ballymena	*	*	14	19
95EE	Ballymoney	*	*	7	#
95FF	Banbridge	*	*	12	18
95GG	Belfast	36	48	57	141
95HH	Carrickfergus	*	*	13	19
95II	Castlereagh	9	8	15	32
95JJ	Coleraine	#	*	14	21
95KK	Cookstown	*	*	17	22
95LL	Craigavon	7	11	10	28
95MM	Derry	10	22	26	58
95NN	Down	10	11	19	40
95OO	Dungannon	7	14	13	34
95PP	Fermanagh	5	6	10	21
95QQ	Larne	*	*	#	19
95RR	Limavady	*	*	9	14
95SS	Lisburn	10	16	43	69
95TT	Magherafelt	#	*	8	16
95UU	Moyle	0	*	0	*
95VV	Newry & Mourne	8	16	22	46
95WW	Newtownabbey	10	10	9	29
95XX	North Down	*	#	15	22
95YY	Omagh	6	6	17	29
95ZZ	Strabane	*	#	8	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>173</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>836</b>

Source: School census 2008/09

**Note:**

1. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.

\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils

# denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

## School Attendance

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Education to outline the current policy within the education community on taking children out of school mid term. (AQW 7950/09)

**Minister of Education:** Since September 2006, a new standardised system of recording absences has been used in schools, following an update of the attendance module of the Classroom 2000 (C2k) system. This

enables schools to electronically record pupils' absences, the reasons for the absence and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Cuimsíonn Imlitir Uimh 2006/14 de chuid na Roinne ar Fhreastal Scoile: Taifeadadh Neamhláithreachta i Scoileanna, cuimsíonn sí treoir ar na cóid neamhláithreachta atá le húsáid ag scoileanna. Tá cóip den imlitir seo ar fáil ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne ag

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/revised\\_circular\\_2006\\_14\\_-\\_school\\_attendance\\_\\_absence\\_recording\\_by\\_schools\\_-\\_6\\_october\\_2008.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/revised_circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance__absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf)

The Department's Circular No 2006/14 - "School Attendance: Absence Recording by Schools" includes guidance on the absence codes to be used by schools. A copy of this is available on the Department's website at

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/revised\\_circular\\_2006\\_14\\_-\\_school\\_attendance\\_\\_absence\\_recording\\_by\\_schools\\_-\\_6\\_october\\_2008.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/revised_circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance__absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf)

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Education what plans her Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7978/09)

**Minister of Education:** Dheimhnigh soláthraithe na n-earraí glantacháin, tí agus maisíochta a úsáideann na Conraitheoirí Glantacháin sa Roinn nach dtástáiltear earra ar bith dá gcuid ar ainmhithe.

The suppliers of the cleaning, household and toiletry products used by the Cleaning Contractors in my Department have confirmed that none of their products are tested on animals.

### New Nursery and Primary School in Magherafelt

**Mr B Armstrong** asked the Minister of Education to explain the delay in building the new nursery and primary school in Magherafelt; and (i) if planning permission has been granted; (ii) if the land has been purchased; (iii) when is work due to start; and (iv) when the building is due for completion. (AQW 7982/09)

**Minister of Education:** Planning permission for the new primary and nursery schools has been granted. The acquisition of the land has, however, not been completed. This is currently being worked through by the legal representatives of the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) and OFMDFM and it is anticipated that this will be completed in the near future.

The NEELB has advised that there was a delay in obtaining the planning permission for the new site as a result of the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) requesting significant additional site investigations to be carried out. A detailed method statement for dealing with possible contaminants also had to be submitted. A second delay in progressing the project has resulted from the legal challenge to the Department's Major Construction Framework and the need for the Board to introduce single stage procurement documentation to replace the Framework.

Bunaithe ar an sheasamh reatha Measann an NEELB nach gcuirfeadh tús leis an obair tógála go dtí Deireadh Fómhair \ Samhain 2009 agus go gcuirfeadh i gcrích an obair seo thart fá mhí Mheán Fómhair 2011.

Based on the current position the NEELB has estimated that it will be October/November 2009 before construction work will get underway with a completion date of around September 2011.

### Temporary Contract Teachers

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Education to outline the pay arrangements for temporary contract teachers who are unable to work due to short-term illness. (AQW 7999/09)

**Minister of Education:** Is féidir múinteoirí sealadacha nach bhfuil ábalta bheith ag obair pá breoiteachta reachtúil a fháil má tá siad as láthair ar feadh ceithre lá nó níos mó ná sin, má sholáthraíonn siad fianaise liachta agus má tá meán-thuillimh seachtainiúil acu a bhfuil ar a laghad ag an íostearainn tuilleamh sna hocht seachtain roimh bheith as láthair.

Temporary teachers who are unable to work due to illness qualify for Statutory Sick Pay if they are absent for four or more days, provide medical evidence and have average weekly earnings of at least the lower earnings limit in the eight weeks prior to absence.

### Irish Speaking Primary Schools

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister of Education if there is provision for children who attend Irish speaking primary schools to have tests carried out in Irish, instead of English, if they are suspected as being dyslexic. (AQW 8012/09)

**Minister of Education:** Faoi láthair, níl soláthar ann do pháistí a fhreastalaíonn ar bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge le teist mheasúnaithe don disléicse a fháil ó shíceolaí oideachais trí Ghaeilge seachas trí Bhéarla.

There is currently no provision for children who attend Irish speaking primary schools to have an educational psychologist's assessment test for dyslexia carried out in Irish rather than English.

The Review of Irish Medium Education Report published earlier this year does, however, make recommendations to strengthen support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Irish Medium Education. These include increasing capacity to meet needs through the medium of Irish, through the development of SEN support staff with high-quality Irish-language skills and investigating the development of high-level diagnostic tools. A feasibility study will be undertaken in the near future to consider options for developing these tools.

I have also been advised that the Principal Educational Psychologists Group, representing the Education and Library Boards, is currently in contact with their colleagues in the south in order to gain an insight into the issues and practicalities associated with the assessment of pupils' special educational needs in Irish.

### Admissions Criteria

**Mr D Kennedy** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQO/2782/09, to provide an example of how selective admissions criteria for post-primary schools could fail to identify the exact number of applicants that their admissions number, as set by her Department, permits. (AQW 8075/09)

**Minister of Education:** Má ghlacann scoil le páistí bunaithe ar chritéir iontrála acadúla, rud a sháraíonn Treoir Aistrithe 2010 na Roinne, is dócha go mbeadh ar an scoil sin úsáid a bhaint as cuid nó iomlán dá critéir foilsithe iontrála eile le daltaí a roghnú go dtí an áit dheireanach atá ar fáil laistigh de líon iontrála faofa na scoile.

A school that admits pupils on the basis of an academic admissions criterion, in contravention of the Department's Transfer 2010 guidance, is likely to be an oversubscribed school which will need to apply some or all of its other published admissions criteria in order to select pupils down to the last available place within the school's approved admissions number.

The application of an academic admissions criterion generally produces groups of applicants with the same test grade. To illustrate the point, and with reference to the outgoing Transfer Test arrangements, a school may have 50 places available and receive applications from 30 pupils with A grades and 30 pupils with B1 grades. Those with A grades are allocated the first 30 places. In order to identify which 20 out of the 30 with B1 grades should be admitted to the remaining places available, non-academic admissions criteria need to be applied.

Care must be taken to ensure that these non-academic admissions criteria are framed in such a way as to enable the school to distinguish between individual pupils who qualify for the final criterion that needs to be applied in order to admit precisely the number of pupils indicated by the approved admissions number.

## DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

### Modern Languages Strategy

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to develop a modern languages strategy at further education level. (AQW 7934/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey):** The joint University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies is considering language learning at all levels and across a broad spectrum of educational activity. They have submitted near final recommendations which will inform the development of a Languages Strategy, including at Higher and Further Education level. I will consider the recommendations when they are finalised.

### Student Complaints

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of official complaints made by students against institutions of higher education; (ii) the nature of these complaints; and (iii) the number of these complaints that were upheld, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7970/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Information provided by Queen's University, the University of Ulster, St. Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College shows that, in the last five years, collectively;

- (i) there were thirty-six complaints made by students against those institutions, four of which are ongoing;
- (ii) the nature of those complaints is detailed in the tables attached at Annex A; and
- (iii) four of those complaints were upheld.

#### ANNEX A

##### UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Year	Nature of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld
2007/08	1. Lack of academic support 2. Failure of student support processes 3. Access to student residences	3	1
2006/07	1. Issue regarding placement	1	1
2005/06	No complaints reached final stage	0	
2004/05	1. Decision to require student to withdraw 2. Timing of examinations	2	0
2003/04	No complaints reached final stage	0	

##### ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Year	Nature of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld
2007/08	No complaints	0	
2006/07	No complaints	0	
2005/06	No complaints	0	
2004/05	No complaints	0	
2003/04	1. Unsatisfactory academic progress	1	0

**STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

Year	Nature of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld
2008/09	1. Student placement error 2. Complaint regarding no evening library facilities 3. Complaint about delay in processing Student Loan Application	3	0
2007/08	No Complaints	0	
2006/07	1. Review of assessment decision – unfair treatment in the marking of a module	1	0
2005/06	1. Complaint against fourth year teaching practice grade on medical grounds 2. Complaint against awarding a fail grade in final teaching practice for PGCE and the College insisting on the undertaking of an additional school-based work assignment	2	0
2004/05	1. Complaint against decision to make students attend an extra class (as they failed a PE module due to insufficient attendance, which they claimed they had not been timetabled)	1	0

**QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY**

Year	Nature of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld
2008/09	1. Degree failure/ Classification 2. Quality of teaching and learning support 3. Mitigating circumstances	3	0 (2 ongoing)
2007/08	1. Harassment 2. Harassment 3. Quality of teaching and learning support 4. Quality of teaching and learning support 5. Termination of studies 6. Termination of studies	6	0 (2 ongoing)
2006/07	1. Harassment 2. Harassment 3. Discrimination 4. Degree failure/ Classification 5. Module failure 6. Module range 7. Use of religious symbols	7	1



Year	Nature of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld
2005/06	1. Harassment 2. Discrimination 3. Admissions 4. Degree failure/ Classification	4	1
2004/05	1. Harassment 2. Module range	2	0

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals.

(AQW 7977/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) award the cleaning and catering contracts on behalf of the NICS Government Departments and are responsible for agreeing the terms and any requirements to be met by the service provider.

It is my understanding that in relation to cleaning products the current contract stipulates that “all products used in the provision of the service shall be fit for the purpose intended, and environmentally friendly.” There is no specific requirement to compel the contractor to purchase products that have not been tested on animals.

### Graduate Courses in the Republic of Ireland

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline what provision there is for funding for students who want to take up graduate and post graduate courses in the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 7985/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** EU undergraduate students, including those from Northern Ireland, attending a Higher Education Institution in the Republic of Ireland are charged a registration fee (up to €1,500 in academic year 2009/2010) per annum. However, Northern Ireland domiciled students benefit from special student support arrangements in that the cost of their registration fee is currently met in full by my Department.

Northern Ireland domiciled undergraduate students are also eligible to apply for a maintenance loan (up to £4,745 for academic year 2009/2010) and a means-tested higher education bursary of up to £2,000 from their local Education and Library Board.

There is no postgraduate funding available from my Department for Northern Ireland domiciled students attending postgraduate courses in the Republic of Ireland.

### Professional Careers Advisers

**Mr R Newton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people at risk of redundancy, or who have already lost their jobs have been seen by professional careers advisers, in the past five months.

(AQW 7995/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** During the period 1 January to 27 May 2009 a total number of 555 adults have been interviewed by my Department’s professionally qualified Careers Advisers. Statistics on adults who are at risk of redundancy, or who have already lost their jobs cannot be separated from the figures detailed above.

### Apprenticeship Courses

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures have been taken to identify new skills and apprenticeship courses, that will meet the needs of the construction industry in providing zero carbon homes by 2016.

(AQW 8034/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The Department works closely with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), whose role it is to work with employers to identify current and future skills needs, develop training solutions to meet those needs, and suggest and bring forward new apprenticeship frameworks to meet the needs of industry. The Department has funded the Northern Ireland Sector Skills Council Cross Sector Renewables Group to carry out research, review training provision, and develop courses in sustainable development and renewables technology.

The Department will fund training under any new approved apprenticeship framework which has been developed and sanctioned by the appropriate Sector Skills Council.

### Belfast Metropolitan College

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students have been enrolled at Belfast Metropolitan College campuses at (i) Dunlewey Centre; and (ii) St Thomas's Whiterock, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8060/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Belfast Metropolitan College has advised that the number of enrolments at the Dunlewey Centre and Whiterock Centre, over the last 5 years, is as follows:

Academic Year	Whiterock	Dunlewey
2004/05	644	933
2005/06	720	1,010
2006/07	582	1,048
2007/08	426	811
2008/09	715	582

### Belfast Metropolitan College

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many staff have been employed at Belfast Metropolitan College campuses at (i) Dunlewey Centre; and (ii) St Thomas's Whiterock, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8061/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) has informed me that the location of College staff at any given time is determined by the College's business needs.

The table below provides a break-down of staff located in the Dunlewey Centre and the Whiterock Centre in each of the last 5 years.

Year	Dunlewey		Whiterock	
	Academic	Support	Academic	Support
04/05	12	4	47	11
05/06	13	4	35	11
06/07	13	4	50	11
07/08	11	4	47	11 (reduced to 9 in March 08)
08/09	11	4	46	9

### Belfast Metropolitan College

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning which courses or programmes provided by Belfast Metropolitan College on campuses at (i) Dunlewey Centre; and (ii) St Thomas's Whiterock, have been transferred or await transfer to another campus, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8062/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Belfast Metropolitan College has informed me that no course has been transferred from either the Dunlewey Centre or the Whiterock Centre to an alternative campus during the last five years.

However, I understand that the courses listed at Annex A, which are currently offered at the Dunlewey Centre, will transfer to the Whiterock Centre during the 2009/10 academic year.

**Annex A**

- Needlecraft - patchwork, quilting & soft furnishings
- Needlecraft – Dressmaking
- Public First Aid
- GCSE English
- GCSE Maths
- Beauty - Making the Most of Yourself
- Needlecraft
- Needlecraft - Patchwork & Quilting
- Arts & Crafts
- Yoga
- Painting
- Calligraphy
- Cookery - Cooking on a Budget
- Cookery - Flavours of the World Demo
- Craft skills - Woodwork
- Flower Arranging
- Exercise - Keep Fit
- Reading for Pleasure
- Investigating your family tree
- Pilates
- Creative Writing
- Painting – Portraiture
- Family Learning - Understanding Linguistic Phonics
- Drawing and Painting
- Nail Art
- Mixed Media Drawing and Painting
- Introduction to Counselling Skills
- Local History
- GCSE Sociology
- Improving your Self Confidence
- Customer Service Skills
- Preparation for Work
- Money Saving Tips
- Intro to Holistic Therapy
- Arts & Crafts - Special Needs
- Computers - Clait 1 unit OCR
- Computers - Computers for Fun
- Computers - Introduction 1 unit
- Computers - Wordprocessing OCR
- Photoshop for Fun

- French Step 1 – CCEA
- Irish Step 1 – CCEA
- Italian Step 1 – CCEA
- Essential skills literacy
- Essential skills Numeracy

### Belfast Metropolitan College

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the discussions his Department has had with Belfast Metropolitan College about the future of its campuses at (i) Dunlewey Centre; and (ii) St Thomas's Whiterock. (AQW 8063/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** Following a review of its provision in the area, Belfast Metropolitan College will be closing the Dunlewey Centre in July 2009. Courses currently offered at Dunlewey will transfer to the Whiterock centre. Planning for the transfer, which is intended to strengthen the delivery of programmes, has been completed and the staff and programmes will relocate from September 2009. There have been no other discussions regarding the future of the Whiterock building.

The College has been asked to update its Estate Strategy following the sector's re-structuring in August 2007 and in light of the developments underway at Springvale and Titanic Quarter.

### Post Graduate Certification in Education

**Ms D Purvis** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why decisions on intake allocations for Post Graduate Certification in Education placements are more than four months late and when he expects these decisions to be made. (AQW 8189/09)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The determination of the number of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) places is a matter for the Minister of Education. I understand that the Department of Education has now reached a decision on numbers for the 2009/10 academic year, including the number of Post Graduate Certificate in Education places. These were notified to all five ITE providers on 2 June 2009.

## DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

### InterTrade Ireland

**Dr A McDonnell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the operation of InterTrade Ireland, to detail (i) cut backs in funding; (ii) changes to recruitment, including for maternity cover; and (iii) any other resource changes. (AQW 7657/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):** There have been no cut backs in the funding made available to InterTradeIreland in the five years from 2004 to 2008.

Funding for InterTradeIreland for 2009 remains subject to consideration by Sponsor and Finance Departments. No cut backs in funding to InterTradeIreland have been agreed by the NI Executive.

Similarly, going forward, no changes to the arrangements for recruitment, including maternity cover or other resource changes within InterTradeIreland have been agreed by the NI Executive.

### Invest NI

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail; (i) the cost and investment breakdown of Invest NI's overseas offices in 2007/08; and (ii) any provisional figures for same in 2008/09. (AQW 7811/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Invest NI has a network of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) offices located outside Northern Ireland which focus on promoting Northern Ireland to potential investors. The cost of these offices, number of financial assistance offers and planned investment by region are as follows:

Region	2007-08	2007-08	2007-08	2008-091	2008-091	2008-091
	FDI office cost2	No. of offers	Planned investment	FDI office cost2	No. of offers	Planned investment
	£'000	No.	£'m	£'000	No.	£'m
Continental Europe	422	3	36	380	6	80
Great Britain5	1,207	7	12	1,437	12	17
North America	1,991	14	120	2,288	11	575
Republic of Ireland	343	7	40	405	13	107
India	135	2	20	142	-	-
Asia Pacific	191	2	28	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,289</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>4,652</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>780</b>

**Notes:**

1. Figures for 2008-09 are provisional and are subject to change.
2. FDI office cost comprises staff costs, office running costs and in-market activities attributed to that office.
3. Office costs do not include cross-market sectoral support. This cost is attributed to Invest NI HQ, is for the benefit of multiple overseas offices and cannot therefore be broken down by office. This totalled £914k in 2007-08 and £1,549k in 2008-09 (includes cost of USNI conference).
4. Breakdown of investment: Inward investment is the culmination of a process involving the participation of many Invest NI teams, often from across different offices. As such, it is not possible to align each investment with a particular office. The above table details the region of origin of number of offers and planned investment during 2007-08 and 2008-09.
5. Great Britain includes Isle of Man.

### Departmental Spend on Consultants

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7839/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department's expenditure on internal and external consultants in each of the last three years is set out below. The 2006/07 and 2007/08 figures are based on accounting information that has been subject to audit. The 2008/09 accounting information has not been subject to audit.

**EXPENDITURE ON INTERNAL CONSULTANTS**

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
£225,000	£187,000	£135,000

**EXPENDITURE ON EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS**

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
£3,232,000	£2,867,000	£3,115,000

### Businesses in Fermanagh/South Tyrone

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the support being offered by banks to businesses in Fermanagh/South Tyrone, since the economic downturn. (AQW 7871/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Through discussions with Invest NI, and directly with companies, I am aware that an increasing number of businesses are experiencing difficulties in securing affordable credit, given the current economic climate. This is a problem across all parts of Northern Ireland.

Along with the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Minister from the Department of Finance and Personnel, I have been meeting with representatives of local banks, to discuss the impact of the downturn and how the banks are responding to the credit crunch in Northern Ireland. We have received positive messages from the banks that credit is available for businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

Additionally, I have invited senior representatives of the main banks in Northern Ireland to meet with me to discuss how greater use can be made of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme which is one of a number of current UK measures designed to address the cash flow, credit and investment needs of SMEs.

I will continue to work with my Ministerial colleagues to encourage the banks in Northern Ireland to continue to lend to viable businesses.

### Unemployment Benefit

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of people claiming unemployment benefit, together with the associated unemployment rate for Craigavon Borough and Banbridge District Council areas, for the month of April, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7886/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The numbers of people claiming unemployment benefit, together with the associated unemployment rates for Craigavon and Banbridge District Council areas, for the month of April in each of the last five years are given in the following table:

	Craigavon		Banbridge		Northern Ireland	
	Number	Rate <sup>#</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>#</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>#</sup>
April 2005	1,006	1.9	380	1.4	28,609	2.7
April 2006	1,076	2.0	361	1.3	28,204	2.6
April 2007	1,003	1.8	305	1.0	25,183	2.3
April 2008	1,142	2.1	346	1.2	24,768	2.3
April 2009	2,394	4.3	848	2.9	46,857	4.3

# Percentage of the working age population

For information, corresponding data for Northern Ireland are also given in the above table.

### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (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 7904/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** No credit cards have been issued to Departmental staff for work purposes in the last five years.

### US/NI Investment Conference

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the inward investment secured from the US/NI Investment Conference in May 2008. (AQO 2843/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** In addition to securing first time visits to Northern Ireland, the conference provided the opportunity to advance or accelerate a number of projects that were already in the

pipeline prior to the event. There is clear evidence of this as supported by the following investment projects announced during the USNI Conference period:

- NYSE Euronext (75 new jobs)
- CyberSource (56 new jobs)
- Independent News and Media (53 new jobs)
- Bombardier (safeguarding over 1,000 jobs)

To date, Invest NI has received over 40 expressions of interest in discussing what Northern Ireland can offer. A series of follow up programmes in the US and GB has taken place. No further investment projects have been announced as yet as a direct result of the conference and Invest NI continues to pursue all potential opportunities.

Invest NI is conscious of the impact of global economic conditions. The growing uncertainty and the economic downturn since the conference means many companies are increasingly focusing on cost containment and as a result are deferring investment decisions. Furthermore the pipeline of new Foreign Direct Investment prospects is not as strong as at this period last year.

### **Nortel Redundancies**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her Department's assessment of the redundancies announced by Nortel. (AQW 7923/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** On 14 January 2009 Nortel Networks Corporation successfully petitioned the courts in the United States, and Canada, for protection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy Code. In conjunction with Nortel operations across 15 other European countries Nortel Networks UK Limited petitioned the UK High Court, Chancery Division, to enter a UK Administration process under the Insolvency Act 1986.

Nortel's actions in this respect were a coordinated global action to facilitate a global restructuring of the business and whilst regrettable, were understandable given the prevailing challenging international economic climate, reduced infrastructure spending by international customers and general tough trading conditions.

While the company today remains in Administration, it continues to trade, and is not in liquidation. Company management have stated that the company has sufficient cash on hand to fund ongoing operations.

As part of the global restructuring process, Nortel's Executive management team and its Administrators determined that a world-wide workforce reduction was necessary to realign the company's cost-base. In conjunction with an earlier announcement during late November 2008 announcing some 1,800 job losses globally, a further 3,200 job losses world-wide were announced during late February 2009. Specific job losses were not at that time attributed to specific Nortel sites. However it was communicated to staff that all operations around the world would be effected, that Nortel was a complex global business, facing a global slowdown in demand for its products, and was undergoing a major global restructuring process. The job losses were therefore widely anticipated by employees.

On 30 March 2009 Nortel announced that its UK operations would suffer a total of 228 job losses with 87 attributed to the Monkstown campus, and whilst highly regrettable, were unavoidable. The job losses actioned by Nortel's UK Administrators were affected under the provisions of the UK Insolvency Act 1986. The Administrators, as court appointed officials, were also required to give consideration to UK employment legislation.

Today Nortel Networks UK Limited continues to provide high quality, hi-tech jobs for over 380 employees at the Monkstown site in addition to supporting a further 80 jobs through its supply chain needs. The company has and continues, to make a valuable contribution to the local economy. At today employment levels wages and salaries for Nortel staff at Monkstown are in excess of £10 million per annum.

Nortel's decision to down-size its global operations is based on the commercial challenges it faces and was taken as a direct response to the global slowdown in demand for telecoms products. It is in no way a reflection on the skills / capabilities of the Monkstown site or Northern Ireland's capabilities as Region. Nortel's Monkstown site continues to occupy a key position as Nortel's Europe Middle East Africa supply chain management centre; managing the flow of Nortel product orders worth over US\$2 billion annually.

Officials from Invest NI, the Department for Employment and Learning and other Government agencies have worked together to deliver a practical programme of help for those employees affected with the aim of managing their transition to new skills and job opportunities.

Nortel's restructuring planning is ongoing and includes efforts to attract buyers for certain parts of the business. Invest NI continues to work towards retaining and attracting new Foreign Direct Investment that can best utilise the valuable telecommunications and ICT skills present within the Northern Ireland workforce.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7984/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment cleaning services and all of its cleaning, household and toiletry products are provided within the terms of the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) contract for cleaning services within the NICS.

The NICS contract requires of the contractors who provide these services that 'All products used in the provision of the service shall be fit for the purpose intended, and environmentally friendly.' The contract does not require that these products have not been tested on animals.

### Renewable Energy Grant

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the organisation Linergy and B9 Energy received any money from her Department in terms of the Renewable Energy grant. (AQW 8025/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** While an offer has been made to Granville Eco-Park Ltd, a subsidiary of B9 Organic Energy,

no funding has been distributed as yet but the promoters remain confident that the project will proceed.

While an offer has been made to Linergy Power Ltd, the company has not yet accepted this offer. Invest NI continue to work with the company to resolve outstanding issues and it is expected that the project will proceed in due course.

### Pilot Broadband Fibre Trial

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she will take to ensure the continuation of the pilot broadband fibre trial, which supports businesses in Mid-Tyrone, including Greencastle, beyond 30 June 2009. (AQW 8035/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** In January 2007 BT began fibre trials in 6 exchange areas. These trials were outside the remit of the Broadband Local Access Contract awarded to BT in 2004 and no DETI funding was made available.

I am advised that the trials were scheduled to run for a period of 6 months, but have, in fact, been in operation for almost 2½ years. BT has advised my Department that at no time did it give a commitment to operate a commercial service on conclusion of the trials and that it is now discontinuing them for commercial reasons.

That is entirely a matter for BT and my Department has no remit to influence commercial decisions in what is a privatised market.

Under the Broadband Fund DETI is supporting the deployment of an extensive fixed wireless network across the rural west which will deliver a range of residential and business broadband packages of up to 100Mbps, with services expected in July 2009.

My Department also has in place a contract with Avanti Communications, with access to broadband services delivered by satellite and offering products of up to 3Mbps.



For users in the Greencastle area, these may offer suitable alternative options for those affected by the discontinuation of the fibre trials.

## Invest NI

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much Invest NI has given to (i) foreign companies; and (ii) local indigenous businesses, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8069/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Table 1 shows the amount of assistance Invest NI has offered to both indigenous and foreign companies between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2009. This represents the value of support which is expected to be paid towards business-related investment during the life-time of assisted projects. The amount of investment that these projects plan to stimulate is also included.

Table 1: Invest NI Assistance Offered and Associated Planned Investment by Ownership (2004/05 to 2008/09)

Financial Year	Externally-Owned				Locally-Owned				Total	
	Assistance Offered (£m)	% of Total in Year	Total Planned Investment (£m)	% of Total in Year	Assistance Offered (£m)	% of Total in Year	Total Planned Investment (£m)	% of Total in Year	Assistance Offered (£m)	Total Planned Investment (£m)
2004/05	63.8	48%	268.1	54%	69.9	52%	228.9	46%	133.7	497.0
2005/06	84.8	63%	432.5	70%	48.9	37%	183.9	30%	133.7	616.4
2006/07	48.7	50%	233.6	51%	48.2	50%	220.3	49%	96.9	453.9
2007/08	54.6	47%	320.3	46%	60.6	53%	369.1	54%	115.2	689.4
2008/09	68.5	46%	827.2	70%	81.5	54%	351.0	30%	150.1	1,178.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>320.4</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>2,081.7</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>309.2</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>1,353.1</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>629.7</b>	<b>3,434.8</b>

### Notes:

1. 2008/09 figures include the Bombardier C Series project - £21m assistance, £520m planned investment.
2. Total Planned Investment includes Assistance Offered.
3. 2008/09 figures are provisional and may be subject to change.
4. External figures include GB-owned projects.

Locally-owned businesses accounted for around half (49%) of the total assistance offered by Invest NI during the period (this figure rises to 54% since the inception of Invest NI). The vast majority (91%) of Invest NI interventions were on behalf of indigenous businesses.

In addition to the assistance offered directly by Invest NI to local businesses, 15,844 offers totalling over £7m were made indirectly through the Start A Business programme to individuals intending to set up a business. This programme is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland and provides guidance to new businesses, reliant on the local Northern Ireland market.

## Project Kelvin

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on Project Kelvin. (AQW 8071/09)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Work on Project Kelvin is progressing well and construction of the new International telecommunications link should be completed, as originally scheduled, before the end of this year.

The construction phase of the project includes both terrestrial and submarine elements. The design of the terrestrial elements is ongoing and is due to be completed by the end of the year. The submarine element is progressing very well and the cable laying ship is expected, weather permitting, to complete the installation of the new submarine cable before the end of June.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Death Threats to Belfast City Council Staff

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7392/09, to outline what remit his Department has in relation to its responsibility for local government. (AQW 7956/09)

**Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson):** My Department's remit is defined in statute, most notably in the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. It has a general oversight role and is responsible for policy and legislation in relation to local government administration, financing and audit. In addition, the Department has responsibility for a miscellany of local government functions such as burial grounds and crematoria, entertainment licences, emergency planning etc. and is also taking forward the reform of local government.

### Death Threats to Belfast City Council Staff

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7392/09, to outline why his Department feels it needs a 'power' to issue guidance to councils on dealing with threats to staff, given that any guidance would not be binding in law, but that a uniformity of approach would ensure that threats to staff are dealt with in all local council areas. (AQW 7957/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** My Department has no direct responsibility for staffing matters in local government. This is a matter for individual councils and the Local Government Staff Commission. The issuing of guidance by the Department relating to what is a staffing matter does not, therefore, arise.

### Death Threats to Belfast City Council Staff

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 7393/09, to outline why he maintains that threats, in particular death threats, are human resources matters, given that when the Chief Executive of Craigavon Borough Council received a death threat and a Council worker had previously been the victim of sectarian murder, and the Minister's party colleague raised the issue with PSNI officers in the Westminster Parliament, rather than leaving the matter with the human resources section of the PSNI. (AQW 7958/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Local councils are employing entities in their own right. Dealing with death threats to council workers and staff is a human resources issue for each individual council to address in liaison with the PSNI.

### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of the Environment (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 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 7969/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** My Department has issued six Government Procurement Cards (GPC) within the last five years to staff for work purposes. The GPC is a form of credit card. No punitive bank charges have been incurred in respect of these cards.

### Planning Service

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the supply of data to Planning On-line and the application of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (a) is the Minister aware that (i) on the 25 March 2009, Planning Service stopped supplying Planning On-line with up-to-date data on the grounds that the data had been reclassified as 'official statistics' under the provisions of the Act; (ii) the alternative is for organisations to visit Planning Offices and request the data in hard copy, an exercise that effects the quality of

their service; and (b) what action is he proposing to resolve this matter and when will the service be restored.  
(AQW 8100/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I am aware that at a meeting held on 25 March 2009, commercial customers were informed that the requirements of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the associated Code of Practice prevented Planning Service from continuing to provide them with raw un-validated planning information from a 'live' planning database.

I will be meeting representatives of Planning On-line to discuss this issue.

### Planning Service

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment (a) if he is aware (i) that Planning Service has re-classified most electronic planning data as 'official statistics' that cannot be released until the statistics for the relevant period have been published, which will result in delays for on-line access; and that data about new applications that are required for immediate on-line publication on the Planning Service website has been excluded from the general re-classification; and (b) when and by whom was the decision taken to exclude this data from the re-classification process.  
(AQW 8101/09)

**Minister of the Environment:**

- (a) (i) I am aware that a review of information provided on planning application forms and the codifications by Planning Service was undertaken by the N I Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This review concluded that all information provided with a planning application falls within the definition of Official Statistics.
- (a) (ii) Information on planning applications posted on the Planning Service website has not been affected by the provision of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the Code of Practice because the information provided on individual planning applications is considered to be principle application details which are already in the public domain and not covered by pre-release access rules.
- (b) In August 2007 my Senior Statistician reviewed all the information provided on planning application forms and codifications provided by Planning Service and confirmed that all statistics on planning disseminated from Planning Service are classified as Official Statistics.

### Planning Service

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) if any staff within the Planning Service have been held responsible for the significant delays and cost overruns in the management of the e-PIC project; and (ii) have any staff involved with the project been disciplined, demoted, transferred, or dismissed, in connection with the failure to meet targets for the implementation of the project.  
(AQW 8102/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The e-PIC procurement process strictly followed DFP Supply rules and regulations. This included advertising the tender in the European Journal.

### Planning Service

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) if he is aware that the Planning Service letter to Planning On-line dated 11 May 2009 stated that the proposal by Planning On-line to continue releasing data, could not be implemented by the Planning Service because the terms of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 prevented it from doing so; and (ii) for his assessment of the application of this Act to planning data that is already in the public domain.  
(AQW 8104/09)

**Minister of the Environment:**

- (i) My Planning Service officials have kept me fully informed and updated on the situation in relation to the release of data to commercial customers. I will continue to liaise with Senior Officials within Planning Service on the situation.

- (ii) The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the associated Code of Practice sets out protocols for pre-released access to official statistics, therefore the Act has no implication for planning information that is already in the public domain.

### Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to review the performance and structure of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. (AQO 2852/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Arlene Foster announced NIEA with its modern, risk-based approach to regulation on May 27 last year. The Agency was launched on July 1.

It is less than a year old. It has an excellent record and continues to develop and modernise the way it works. For these reasons I have no plans for a review.

### Plastic Bags

**Mr A Maskey** asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he will take to reduce the use of plastic bags. (AQO 2854/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I am already taking steps to reduce the use of all single use carrier bags handed out to shoppers and I can confirm that carrier bag numbers are coming down. I have given my support to the current voluntary agreement with leading supermarkets across the United Kingdom, represented by the British Retail Consortium, to achieve a 50% cut in numbers of carrier bags given out against 2006 levels by the end of May 2009, working towards a reduction of 70% over the longer term. The agreement should result in around 5 billion fewer bags being handed out in the UK. As I said at the time the agreement was announced it aims to significantly reduce the number of carrier bags without hitting people in the pocket.

I warmly welcome the increasing efforts by retailers to reduce numbers of bags handed out to customers. Many people who shop in our major supermarkets and also in smaller shops will have noticed that they are being asked by the shop assistant or checkout person "Do you need a bag?" Some shops have chosen to charge for their bags to encourage shoppers to reuse bags and to promote "bags for life". Some shops award bonus loyalty card points to shoppers who reuse bags. Together all of these initiatives are working to reduce the numbers of carrier bags handed out to shoppers.

I have also called on people in Northern Ireland to change their shopping habits to help to reduce the numbers of carrier bags. Simple things can be very effective and if more of us bring our own reusable carrier bags with us and refuse to take new carrier bags at the checkout we can expect to see greater reductions in carrier bag numbers in the future.

In April we also encouraged people in Northern Ireland, through local radio advertisements, to reuse their carrier bags whenever they can. These advertisements were part of the "get a bag habit" publicity campaign organised by DEFRA and the Waste & Resources Action Programme. Further information on reducing bag numbers is also available on Government websites and through the Waste & Resources Action Programme.

There are no easy answers to the carrier bags problem. However, I am satisfied that we are making good progress and that many shoppers and retailers are now playing their part to reduce the numbers of carrier bags.

### Electric Cars

**Mr C Boylan** asked the Minister of the Environment if he would consider meeting with car manufacturers to discuss the introduction of electric cars as a way of reducing the carbon footprint. (AQO 2855/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I have no plans to meet with car manufacturers to discuss the introduction of electric cars as a way of reducing the carbon footprint.

The lead responsibility for the usage of electric cars does not rest with my Department but rather cuts across a number of Ministerial portfolios. I am not aware of any proposals by Executive colleagues to set targets for such usage.

In the Programme for Government PSA 22 sets a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2025. This target is the collective responsibility of all Northern Ireland Executive Ministers and it is up to us all to consider how we can best contribute to its achievement.

### National Parks

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of the Environment what assurance he can give that the creation of National Parks will not involve any alteration to the current arrangements for access to private lands. (AQO 2858/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I can assure the Member that regardless of any proposals for national parks, I have no intention of amending the legislation governing access to private land.

### Ministerial Papers

**Mr K McCarthy** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline which of his papers are awaiting approval from the Executive. (AQO 2859/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business is confidential and I am therefore unable to provide the information you require.

### Climate Change

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with Ministers in other parts of the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland on climate change. (AQO 2860/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** At the recent British Irish Council meeting, held in Jersey on 17 April, I had discussions on climate change with Ministers responsible for the environment in England, Wales, Scotland, Guernsey, Isle of Man, the Republic of Ireland and Jersey.

I made a statement on the British Irish Council meeting, to the Assembly, on 5 May.

### Road Safety Strategy

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of the Environment when he intends to publish the revised road safety strategy. (AQO 2861/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The new Road Safety Strategy is planned for publication in November 2010 and work is progressing in line with the project plan to allow that to happen.

My Department has been taking stock and a review of the current strategy and assessment of road safety problems in Northern Ireland have been provided to the Environment Committee and will shortly be publically available. My officials are currently engaging with road safety partners to consider possible new measures and this will continue with other interested parties over the summer. A draft strategy will be prepared by the autumn to allow formal consultation to begin early next year when I will be seeking the widest possible input from the whole community to produce a strategy we can all support.

### Illegal Dumping

**Mr T Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment, since his Department took responsibility for prosecutions for illegal dumping, how many convictions have been secured and what level of fines have been imposed by the courts. (AQO 2863/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Department of the Environment assumed responsibility for the enforcement of illegal dumping in December 2003. Since then, it has secured 360 convictions against illegal waste offenders, generating a total of £952,615 in fines.

## National Parks

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of the Environment, following his visit to the Cairngorms, for his assessment of the economic opportunities which may accrue from the creation of national parks. (AQO 2864/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Under the Scottish legislation, National Parks have an economic aim as well as environmental aims. I learned about practical steps the Cairngorms National Park Authority along with the Chamber of Commerce, businesses and other partners was taking to further the economic development aim. Examples include branding of quality products and services produced in the Park, joint marketing of the area and its businesses, improving destination management, and organising training to meet identified local need.

My assessment was that the locally focused, joined-up approach brought by the Cairngorms National Park Authority was facilitating the creation of vital economic opportunities in the area.

## Carbon Emissions

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the work of his Department in the development of a low carbon future. (AQO 2865/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Programme for Government commits the NI Executive collectively to reduce GHG emissions by 25% on 1990 levels by 2025.

My Department is contributing towards these targets by inputting Northern Ireland relevant aspects to policy developments relating to EU climate and energy, and UK policy development. We are currently progressing policies relating to the EU European Trading Scheme and the UK Carbon Reduction Commitment. On planning policy, Planning Policy Statement 18 on renewables has been issued for consultation and I am committed to publish it before summer recess.

## Planning Applications

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister of the Environment how his recent statement on the weight to be given to economic considerations on planning applications will be given operational effect. (AQO 2866/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** My statement on the weight that is to be accorded to economic aspects of development proposals is a material consideration which must be taken into account in the determination of planning applications. If a development proposal has a particular economic benefit, this may be detailed and submitted in support of a planning application. However, other relevant policies are also material considerations as are the comments of consultees to the planning process and the comments of third parties, all of which must be taken into account in arriving at a final decision.

Where necessary Planning Service will consult with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Invest Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Tourist Board or other Department with the relevant expertise to provide comment on information provided in support of the application.

## Local Government Bill

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of the Environment when he expects to introduce Local Government Bills. (AQO 2867/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** I intend to introduce the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (formerly the Local Government (Contracts and Compulsory Purchase) Bill) before the summer recess.

The Local Government (Finance) Bill will be introduced by January 2010 and the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill will be introduced in May 2010.

## Policy Planning Statement 5

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of the Environment if the Court Service has indicated when a decision is expected in the case which is preventing PPS 5 regarding Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments from being implemented. (AQO 2868/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** There is no indication as to when a decision will be made on this case.

## Minister of the Environment

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of the Environment for the number and percentage of Wednesdays when the House of Commons was sitting, on which he carried out duties as Environment Minister, since taking up office. (AQO 2869/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Since taking up office, I have had 2 Wednesday meetings which equates to 6%. Both of these were held in London. To save costs these were doubled up with parliamentary business when I was in Westminster.

## Planning Application Fees

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the reasons for the proposed increase in planning application fees. (AQO 2870/09)

**Minister of the Environment:** Planning costs recoverable through fees are identified in line with the statutory authority in Article 127 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, as amended, and policy. Planning fees were last increased by approximately 12% in May 2005 by the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

The costs incurred in determining planning applications and the income from fees are reviewed annually and it has been determined that the costs likely to be incurred in 2009/10 are greater than the anticipated income from fees. The number of planning applications received by the Agency fell by roughly a quarter in the 2008/09 year compared to the previous year. This has resulted in a shortfall of around £4.4 million in the Agency's planning fee income for the 2008/09 financial year and only 81.4% of relevant costs being recovered. The proposed fee increase is therefore an essential measure towards ensuring that Planning Service has adequate resources to sustain and improve further its current level of performance and service delivery.

## DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

### Aggregates Levy

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, for each of the last five years, (i) how much has been raised through the Aggregates Levy; and (ii) how much has been returned to his Department as part of the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, under the Barnett formula. (AQW 7743/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds):** The Aggregates Levy was introduced in 2002 and is a tax on the commercial exploitation in the UK of rock, sand and gravel. The aim of the Aggregates Levy is to ensure that the price of aggregates better reflects the environmental costs of quarrying. The Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme provides for 80% relief from the full rate of Aggregates Levy in respect of aggregate extracted in Northern Ireland.

Over the last five years £0.3 billion per annum has been collected nationally through the Aggregates Levy.

The funding received through the Barnett formula is unhypothecated, which means that it is available for allocation by the Northern Ireland Executive in line with local needs and priorities.

### Civil Service

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Civil Service equal pay claim, why it is necessary to begin a review of the TG1 and TG2 grades at this stage, and how many staff will be affected by this review. (AQW 7769/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue. A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review.

### Civil Service

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Civil Service equal pay claim, to outline the timetable for the review of TG1 and TG2 grades to its conclusion, and when the subsequent payments will be made. (AQW 7770/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of both the unions and staff. Discussions with the Trade Union are on-going in order to establish whether a negotiated settlement is possible. This will inform consideration by me, in conjunction with my colleagues in the Executive, as to how the matter should be taken forward. I am unable to provide any further specific details at present as regards when this matter will be resolved but I am keen that it is brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

### Civil Service

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the interest accrued on the £100 million received from Treasury last year, to facilitate a settlement in the Civil Service equal pay claim, will be dispersed. (AQW 7771/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** No interest will accrue in respect of the £100 million facility I negotiated with the Prime Minister in November 2008 to address cost pressures faced by the Executive.

### Civil Service

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the progress with the equal pay claim for Civil Servants and when this is likely to be completed. (AQW 7797/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I understand that NIPSA has lodged in excess of 4,500 equal pay claims with the Industrial Tribunal on behalf of female members, which are now the subject of legal processes. Departments have not yet been served with these claims but will have to respond to them in due course.

I met with representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance NIPSA on 7 May to discuss the equal pay claims. The meeting provided me with the opportunity to hear at first hand the issues of concern to NIPSA and to assure them of my commitment to resolving the Civil Service equal pay issue, if possible, through a negotiated settlement and without the need for litigation. Discussions between officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel and NIPSA are ongoing in an effort to establish as clearly as possible the parameters within which a negotiated settlement might be reached so that I, in conjunction with my Ministerial colleagues in the Executive, can consider how the matter should be taken forward.

The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before they will be finally resolved. However, if there are unlawful inequalities in pay in the NICS, I am determined that these should be put right.

### Civil Service

**Dr A McDonnell** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to NI Civil Service equal pay claim, (a) why his Department has not progressed the matter; and (b) to detail (i) if his Department deemed it necessary



to initiate a comprehensive grading review for staff in the TG1 and TG2 grades and his reasons for this; (ii) the total number of staff affected in this latest review; (iii) when this review will conclude; (iv) when the subsequent payments will be made to NI Civil Service employees; (v) where the interest accrued on the £100 million one year ago to settle the pay claims will go and if it will be allocated to NI Civil Service employees; and (vi) if he will resume negotiations with the Trade Union immediately. (AQW 7798/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Discussions between officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel and NIPSA are ongoing in an effort to establish as clearly as possible the parameters within which a negotiated settlement might be reached so that I, in conjunction with my Ministerial colleagues in the Executive, can consider how the matter should be taken forward.

I met with representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance NIPSA on 7 May to discuss the equal pay claims in respect of female members of the NICS. The meeting provided me with the opportunity to hear at first hand the issues of concern to NIPSA and to assure them of my commitment to resolving the Civil Service equal pay issue, if possible, through a negotiated settlement and without the need for litigation.

A review of Technical Grades across NI Departments is a necessary part of that process. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of the Trade Union and staff. A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review.

No interest will accrue in respect of the £100m facility I secured access to as a result of negotiations with the Prime Minister in November 2008 to address cost pressures facing the Executive.

The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before they will be finally resolved. However, if there are unlawful inequalities in pay in the NICS, I am determined that these should be put right.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) the reasons for carrying out a comprehensive grading review of the TG1 and TG2 grades; (ii) the number of staff affected by the review; and (iii) why the commitment from a year ago, to discharge equal pay claims for Civil Servants, has not yet been honoured. (AQW 7805/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Discussions with NIPSA are on-going in an effort to establish the parameters within which a negotiated settlement to the NICS equal pay issue might be reached. The review of TGI and TGII posts is a necessary part of that process and will involve the examination of a representative sample of between 100 and 150 of the posts concerned.

It has been and remains my intention to ensure a resolution to this issue as soon as possible. However, the issues are complex and it is still too early to be certain of when matters will be resolved.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Attwood** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to confirm (i) how long the proposed comprehensive grading review of TG1 and TG2 will take; and (ii) when will Civil Servants receive monies due in relation to their equal pay claim. (AQW 7806/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer. It is still too early to say when this matter will be resolved as discussions with the Trade Union are on-going in order to establish whether a negotiated settlement is possible.

### Civil Service

**Mrs C Hanna** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Civil Service equal pay claim, (i) the reasons for a review of the TG1 and TG2 staff grades; (ii) how many staff will be affected by the review; (iii) when the back payments will be made; and (iv) to clarify how the interest accrued on the £100 million received from Treasury to facilitate a settlement will be used. (AQW 7817/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue.

A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of both the unions and staff.

It is still too early to say when this matter will be resolved as discussions with the Trade Union are on-going in order to establish whether a negotiated settlement is possible.

No interest will accrue in respect of the £100 million facility I negotiated with the Prime Minister in November 2008 to address cost pressures faced by the Executive.

### Civil Service

**Mr A Maskey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to the Civil Service equal pay claim, (i) to detail the rationale for implementing a review of the TG1 and TG2 pay grades; (ii) how many staff are affected by the review; and (iii) for a time frame for the conclusion and report of this review. (AQW 7822/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue.

A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff, which is expected to take around 3 months once the analysts commence their work, with the cooperation of both the unions and staff.

### Civil Service

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many staff are involved in the Civil Service equal pay claim. (AQW 7864/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** NIPSA has lodged in excess of 4,500 equal pay claims with the Industrial Tribunal on behalf of female members, which are now the subject of legal processes; Departments have not yet been served with these claims but will have to respond to them in due course.

### Civil Service

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a timetable as to when payments will be made to resolve the Civil Service equal pay claim. (AQW 7865/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** As discussions with NIPSA have yet to be concluded and the equal pay claims already lodged are now the subject of legal processes in the Industrial Tribunal, I am unable to provide any further specific details at present. The equal pay issues in the Civil Service are of a very significant scale and complexity and therefore it may yet take some time before I can confirm how they will be finally resolved. However, I am keen that it is brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

### Civil Service

**Mr D McClarty** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) the reasons for a delay of over a year in settling the Equal Pay claims; (ii) the reasons for a grading review of TG1 and TG2 grades; (iii) how many staff will be affected by the review; (iv) when it will be completed; (v) when staff will receive the money owed to them; and (vi) if the Minister can give an assurance that the interest on £100 million which was banked over a year ago will be paid to Civil Servants. (AQW 7875/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before I can confirm how it will be finally resolved.

The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue. A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of both the unions and staff.

It is still too early to say when this matter will be resolved as discussions with the Trade Union are on-going in order to establish whether a negotiated settlement is possible.

No interest will accrue in respect of the £100 million facility I negotiated with the Prime Minister in November 2008 to address cost pressures faced by the Executive.

### Government Vehicles

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the tendering for the supply of vehicles for the government / ministerial fleet (i) how many tenders were received and from whom; (ii) what short listing criteria if any was used in the selection process and what criteria was used in making the final decision on selecting a supplier; (iii) how many vehicles were supplied and have any vehicles been supplied since this tendering process was put in place; and (iv) when the Department expects another procurement exercise will be undertaken. (AQW 7888/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** There were 6 tenders received from John Mulholland Motors, Mervyn Stewart, DFC, Isaac Agnew, Honda UK and Wilson's & Co.

There was no short listing stage in the tender process and so no short listing criteria were specified. All tenders received were evaluated using the following criteria:

- Compliance with specification – 30%;
- Delivery period – 40%; and
- Whole life cost – 30%.

The supplier with the highest overall score was awarded the contract.

The outcome of the process was that 6 vehicles were supplied in May 2007 and a further 8 vehicles were supplied in June 2007. No further vehicles have been purchased since then.

Our current policy is to procure new vehicles every 3 years or sooner if required. It is expected that the next tender process will commence in early 2010.

### Departmental Spend on Consultants

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7898/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The total expenditure for the Department of Finance and Personnel over the last three years on external consultancy is set out in the table below.

External Consultancy			
2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
£4.37m	£6.63m	£4.90m (prov)	£15.9m

The Department has not incurred any expense for internal consultants in the last three years.

### Civil Service

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when the equal pay claims of Civil Servants will be settled. (AQW 7900/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I would refer you to my answer to AQW 7231/09 issued on 16 May 2009.

### Civil Service

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Civil Service equal pay claim, (i) to outline the reasons for the review of TG1 and TG2 grades; (ii) how many staff will be subject to the review; and (iii) when it will be completed. (AQW 7901/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue.

A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff, which is expected to take around 3 months once the analysts commence their work, with the cooperation of both the unions and staff.

### Ratepayers

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he will ensure that ratepayers have the option of paying their rates bill by debit or credit card. (AQW 7917/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Ratepayers can currently pay their rate bills by debit card through any local shop or garage offering Payzone facilities.

Land & Property Services is currently reviewing the range of payment methods which it offers to ratepayers to pay their rate bill. In carrying out this review, LPS will be consulting with consumer groups and other appropriate organisations. The review will include consideration of the option to pay by credit card. Decisions arising from the review will be made before the issuing of 2010 rate bills.

### Civil Service

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) if he has agreement with Treasury on the use of "shelf money" to settle the Civil Service equal pay claim; (ii) how much money is available to settle the claim; (iii) if he is intending to use this money for other purposes; and (iv) to outline why he is seeking a review of the TG1 and TG2 grades. (AQW 7918/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** In November 2008, I negotiated with the Prime Minister a facility for access to up to £100 million current expenditure for cost pressures facing the Executive. The Executive will consider whether to access this facility in due course.

The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. A review of Technical Grades across NI Departments is a necessary part of that process.

### Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a breakdown, by office, of the religion of staff in all Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices. (AQW 7947/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) does not hold information on the religion of staff.

It does, however, collect information on the perceived community background of staff for the purpose of providing statutory reports to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and also to enable the Service to monitor the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policies. The information is not held or processed in a way that identifies the community background of individual offices.

To provide the information for individual offices would require NICS to further process the data in a way that is not compatible with the reasons for which it is collected.

### Civil Service

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline if civil servants who go away on working trips are allowed to take their children with them during school term. (AQW 7952/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Civil Servants who are required to go on working trips must comply with the relevant policies of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. These policies do not contain any reference to whether children can or cannot be taken with them on such occasions.

### Suicides in East Belfast

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many suicides have been recorded in the East Belfast area over the last five years. (AQW 7959/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The attached table gives the number of deaths registered due to 'suicide and self-inflicted injury'<sup>1</sup> and 'undetermined injury whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted'<sup>2</sup> where the deceased was resident in East Belfast Parliamentary Constituency for each year between 2004 and 2008<sup>P</sup>.

- 1 International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes X60-X84, Y87.0 for years 2004-2008.  
 2 International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes Y10-Y34, Y87.2 for years 2004-2008.  
 P 2008 data is provisional

**TABLE: NUMBER OF REGISTERED DEATHS DUE TO 'SUICIDE AND SELF-INFLICTED INJURY' AND 'UNDETERMINED INJURY WHETHER ACCIDENTALLY OR PURPOSEFULLY INFLICTED' IN EAST BELFAST PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, 2004 - 2008P.**

Registration Year	Number of Suicide Deaths
2004	4
2005	9
2006	9
2007	14
2008 <sup>P</sup>	10

### Deaths from Malnutrition

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people have died from malnutrition in hospitals in each of the last five years. (AQW 7963/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The attached table gives the number of deaths due to malnutrition<sup>1</sup> registered where the place of death was recorded as being in a hospital, 2004 to 2008<sup>P</sup>.

- 1 Deaths are defined as being due to malnutrition using International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes E40 to E46.  
 P 2008 data is provisional

**TABLE: THE NUMBER OF DEATHS DUE TO MALNUTRITION REGISTERED IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHERE THE PLACE OF DEATH WAS RECORDED AS BEING IN A HOSPITAL, 2004 TO 2008P**

Registration Year	Number of Deaths due to Malnutrition
2004	5
2005	-
2006	1
2007	6
2008 <sup>P</sup>	2

## Residential Properties

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the new legislation on sound insulation and ventilation in residential properties and when he expects it to be in place. (AQW 8007/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Officials have recently commenced work on revising the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 to incorporate the new and amended provisions of the Building Regulations (Amendment) Act 2009. Part of this revision will include a technical uplift to Part G (Sound insulation of dwellings) and Part K (Ventilation) of the Regulations to harmonise with standards in GB. It is anticipated that these new regulations will be introduced in 2011.

## Civil Service

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the reasons for the review of TG1 and TG2 Civil Service grades. (AQW 8016/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The proposal to review Technical Grades is considered as a necessary and integral part of the process of establishing a firm foundation for addressing the equal pay issue.

## Civil Service

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many staff are involved in the review of the TG1 and TG2 Civil Service grades. (AQW 8017/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review.

## Civil Service

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) when the review of TG1 and TG2 grades will be completed; and (ii) a timescale for when backdated payments will be made. (AQW 8018/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of the Trade Union and staff.

The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before they will be finally resolved. However, if there are unlawful inequalities in pay in the NICS, I am determined that these should be put right.

## Civil Service

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to clarify for what purposes the interest gained on the £100 million pounds received from Treasury to facilitate a settlement of Civil Service back pay will be used. (AQW 8026/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** No interest is due on the £100 million I secured access to as a result of negotiations with the Prime Minister in November 2008, to address a range of cost pressures facing the Executive.

## Civil Service

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to clarify the total number of Civil Servants who are due to receive back pay and to detail when this will be paid. (AQW 8027/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I understand that NIPSA has lodged in excess of 4,500 equal pay claims with the Industrial Tribunals on behalf of female members, which are now the subject of legal processes. Departments have not yet been served with these claims but will have to respond to them in due course.

Officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel are currently in discussion with NIPSA in an effort to establish as clearly as possible the parameters within which a negotiated settlement might be reached so that I, in conjunction with my Ministerial colleagues in the Executive, can consider how the matter should be taken forward. It is only then that I will be in a position to confirm how many members of the NICS might be affected by any settlement. The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before they will be finally resolved.

### Energy Performance Certificates

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Energy Performance Certificates have been issued, and what is the level of enforcement. (AQO 2873/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** At 27 May 2009, there were 29,934 Energy Performance Certificates recorded on the official Register which, based on available figures for marketed properties, equates to approximately 75% compliance with the requirements of the Regulations.

### Lone Pensioners

**Mr F Cobain** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, following his announcement in May 2008 of assistance for lone pensioners through rate relief and housing benefits, how he will ensure maximum uptake of the £3 million. (AQO 2875/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Since Lone Pensioner Allowance was introduced in April 2008 some 22,776 pensioners have received the 20% reduction on their rates, and current payments exceed £3 million pounds. In addition, there are currently 33,516 pensioners in receipt of full Housing Benefit and/or Rate Relief, and a further 3,823 in receipt of partial Housing Benefit and/or Rate Relief.

My Department continues to work closely with other Government Departments, voluntary organisations and other groups in the community to make sure that all who are entitled to claim reliefs and benefits are encouraged to do so. A dedicated specialist team is in place within Land & Property Services to focus on increasing the uptake of benefits and encouraging pensioners to claim their entitlements.

### Civil Service: Equal Pay

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he would confirm that the financial implications of the Civil Service equal pay claim will not be used to limit the legitimate entitlement of the staff concerned. (AQO 2876/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The Member will appreciate that with a significant number of equal pay claims now lodged with the Industrial Tribunal, I will be limited in what I can say on this matter.

I met with NIPSA on 7th May and re-iterated my commitment to ensure that legal obligations will be met, but it would be irresponsible for me in my role as Minister of Finance not to ensure that this matter is resolved in a manner that is both fair to staff directly affected but which also minimises the consequent adverse impact on public services in general and on NICS staff in particular. The extent of the entitlement of staff is the subject of intensive discussion between my officials and the representatives of the staff concerned.

I stand by my early statements on this issue. I remain committed to reaching a negotiated outcome to the matter, if possible and I believe that is also what NIPSA want.

I consider that a negotiated outcome to this issue is of great importance because of the potential effects not just on those staff but also because of the wider implications.

### Taxation: Conacre System

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to the implications of the recent legal judgement on the Conacre tax issue. (AQO 2879/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I am well aware of this issue and the potential adverse impact of the recent legal case for our local agricultural sector. The agricultural sector is important to our economy and I fully appreciate the relevance of this decision given that a third of our land is let out as Conacre.

As taxation is a Reserved Matter for HM Treasury to determine, I have written to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury strongly urging her to consider amending the tax treatment of land let under Conacre. I have also recently requested a further meeting with the Chief Secretary to discuss in more detail the impact of this legal ruling.

I have also met with senior representatives of the Ulster Farmers' Union to discuss this issue. I will continue to keep the UFU fully informed on my discussions with HM Treasury on this issue.

### Public Sector Employment

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on proposals for the relocation of public sector jobs. (AQO 2881/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I have circulated a draft Executive paper with proposals on the way forward on Professor Bain's independent review of the location of public sector jobs. In doing so I have considered carefully the views expressed by Executive colleagues and the Finance Committee as well as the points raised during the two Assembly debates on the issue. I hope that the paper will be scheduled for discussion by the Executive in the near future. Until then, it would be premature for me to comment further on the proposals.

### NI Direct

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the effectiveness of NI Direct Online. (AQO 2882/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** NI Direct online is an important part of the NI direct programme which is already improving citizen's access to Government information and services.

The idea behind the website is very simple – the information that citizens need is all in one place and not spread across a large number of websites. The information is grouped within a number of recognisable themes such as Education and Learning and Health and Well Being so that the public don't need to know the workings of government to find the information they are looking for.

The website went live at the end of March in line with the PSA target. I am glad to say that already it contains a wide range of information from right across Government and also a number of transactions which research shows more and more people want to do online.

The site is already showing its value – we were able to use it for all the information on swine flu, which previously would have been spread over a number of sites.

I am satisfied that NI Direct represents the future for Government information but it is early days; we are at the beginning of a journey and there is still much to do. To ensure that the site is effective and meeting the expectations of citizens we will be carrying out consumer research and we are also developing a publicity campaign to further promote the site.

### Senior Civil Service: Bonus Scheme

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to report on his review of the Senior Civil Service salary bonus scheme. (AQO 2883/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** No local review of the Senior Civil Service bonus scheme has been commissioned. However, as I stated recently in response to another oral AQ, I have already asked my officials to examine how the recommendations of a fundamental review of the Senior Civil Service workforce and reward strategy in Whitehall, published earlier this year and known as the Normington Review, will be taken forward and to assess their applicability to Northern Ireland. My officials will be engaging with the Cabinet Office on the work required to flesh out the recommendations emerging from the review.



## Monitoring Rounds

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline how anti-poverty considerations are taken into account in the monitoring rounds. (AQO 2885/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The spending proposals put forward by departments as part of the In Year Monitoring process are informed by a broad range of factors including the need to address poverty and social exclusion.

Departments identify and fully consider the anti-poverty and social inclusion implications on individuals, groups or areas and complete a High Level Impact Assessment for any proposed changes submitted in each Monitoring Round.

## Business Rates

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what assessment has been made of the policy on business rates in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. (AQO 2886/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** A fundamental review of policy on business rates was undertaken by my Department, as part of the rating review initiated by the previous Executive in 2001. That review was taken forward under direct rule. It was a fundamental one and included an examination of the relative differences between NI and the rest of the UK.

The overall finding was that the system in NI, which is broadly comparable to that operating in the rest of the UK, was worth retaining. Some changes, however, were made. Direct Rule Ministers decided in 2003 to introduce the rating of empty non domestic properties at 50% liability and to begin the gradual removal of industrial derating. Both measures had the effect of aligning non domestic rating policy more closely with GB.

Although the 2007 review undertaken by this Executive following restoration was focused on the domestic system a number of important policy decisions concerning the non domestic system have been made by me and my predecessor, fully endorsed by the Executive.

The first of these was to give the go ahead for a revaluation of the non domestic sector in 2010, which will harmonise with the rest of the UK for the first time. [optional: Incidentally, a rolling rating revaluation of non domestic property is underway in the Republic of Ireland]. Secondly, to halt the removal of industrial derating. Thirdly, to introduce a rate relief scheme for our smaller businesses along the lines of the original Welsh model.

All of these measures will be given effect through the forthcoming Rates Amendment Bill, and I am currently engaged in the process of securing Executive approval to introduce it into the Assembly.

[I, and my officials, will continue to do all that we can to bring the draft Bill forward to the Assembly as quickly as possible. However, even with smooth Assembly passage, there is now a major risk that the legislation may not be in place by next April.]

In terms of my overall position with developing policy on non domestic rates, it is not one of automatic harmonisation with the rest of the UK. I will only do so where I think it is in the best interests of NI, particularly in terms of business impact but also taking into account the needs of government in NI, both this Assembly and our District Councils, who depend on the system for a substantial portion of their income. I hope I have the support for this measured approach from all sides of this Assembly.

## Budget 2009-2010

**Mr D Ford** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to report on the implications for Northern Ireland of the UK Budget, delivered in April 2009. (AQO 2887/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the 2009 Budget statement to Parliament on 22 April 2009. The main implications for Northern Ireland (NI) are in relation to changes in the NI Executive Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) over the period 2009-11.

In particular, the Executive received £116.3 million in additional funding over the years 2009-10 and 2010-11 as a consequence of the allocations announced for Whitehall departments in Budget 2009. However, this was

offset by the NI Executive share of the additional efficiency savings expected of UK Departments in 2010-11. The overall impact on the NI Executive DEL is a net reduction of £6.4 million.

Budget 2009 also provided some early indications regarding the overall growth in UK public expenditure over the medium term. There is likely to be a marked slowdown in the growth of current expenditure while the level of capital investment will decline.

In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a number of UK wide measures which will benefit NI citizens and businesses, including increases to Winter Fuel Allowance and Child Tax Credit as well as the introduction of a Vehicle Scrappage scheme.

### Stormont Estate

**Mr A Bresland** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the policy on the use of the grounds of the Stormont estate by outside groups and bodies. (AQO 2888/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** In recognition that the Stormont Estate is considered to be public grounds the Department seeks to accommodate requests for use of the grounds where possible.

Any request to hold an event in the grounds of the Stormont Estate by an outside group or body is considered with respect to a number of factors, such as the impact on the normal business of the Estate, the impact on the grounds and the likely impact on local residents.

The organisers of all large events must seek my approval and must be able to demonstrate that they have the ability to organise and successfully manage such an event. Furthermore they must have adequate liability insurance and have in place appropriate health and safety procedures.

Approval is not normally required for smaller events where the impact on the surroundings is likely to be much lower e.g. wedding photographs, local primary school sponsored walks.

### Account NI

**Lord Browne** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the roll-out of Account NI. (AQO 2889/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Account NI has been providing a 'live' service to nine NICS departments.

The latest departments - DE, DCAL, and DARD (including AFBI) - migrated to the Account NI system on 6 April. Account NI remains on schedule for implementation of the remaining departments - DRD (including Roads Service) and DOE - in July 2009.

Since going live with the new system, Account NI has processed over 200,000 payments valued in excess of £1.7 billion. Currently some 4,000 payments are being processed every week.

Account NI has been working with departments in support of my directive for invoices to be paid within 10 working days. Since this announcement in November over 36,000 invoices have been paid within 10 days, releasing over £117 million to suppliers. In April the average

performance across all departments on Account NI was 58% (7,229 invoices) paid within the target.

### Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit

**Ms D Purvis** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the cost of setting up the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit; and to give an assessment of the amount of efficiencies it has delivered. (AQO 2890/09)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** PEDU was launched with a statement to the Assembly on 15 April 2008. In its first year of operation, the expenditure within PEDU has been:

Salaries	GAE	Total
£145,753	£112,743	£258,496

Included in the above are the costs related to the reviews of the Planning Service and Land and Property Services, and also costs associated with the Ministerial advisory panel linked to PEDU.

In relation to efficiencies, both reviews carried out to date have been focused on delivery. However, Efficiency will be a natural consequence

of the reviews, since improved delivery will ultimately lead to a better and more efficient use of resources.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### Public Health Agency

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost for the establishment of the new Public Health Agency. (AQW 7025/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey):** It is not possible to disaggregate the project costs associated with the creation of the new Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being from the overall expenditure on the programme to implement all of the Health and Social Care reforms. However, the Department is able to identify a cost of approximately £26,700 specifically associated with the establishment of the new Agency.

### Public Health Agency

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many administration staff are employed in the new Public Health Agency broken down by grade. (AQW 7026/09)

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

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATION STAFF BY GRADE EMPLOYED BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY AS AT APRIL 2009.

Grade	Administration Staff	
	Headcount	WTE
Chief Executive / Director / Band 8	6	6.00
Band 7	6	5.90
Band 6	27	24.15
Band 5	13	13.00
Band 4	24	22.02
Band 3	25	22.82
Band 2	6	4.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>98.31</b>

**Source:** Public Health Agency.

**Notes:**

- Figures include staff mapped to the Public Health Agency from the former HSS Boards, Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI) and the Healthcare associated Infection Surveillance Centre (HISC) as at 1 April 2009.
- Figures include Operations staff involved in Information / Knowledge Management, Communications, and Business & Administrative Support roles, as well as Senior Management (Chief Executive and Directors).
- WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

### Capitation Formula Review Group

**Mr R Beggs** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 2456/08, to detail the amount of (i) under funding; and (ii) over funding, for each Health and Social Care Trust area, in the (a) previous; and (b) current financial year; and to advise when the recommendations of the Fourth Report from the Capitation Formula Review Group will be fully implemented. (AQW 7157/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Under or overfunding is calculated at commissioner level. For 2008/09, the commissioners were the previous four Health and Social Care Boards and their over and underfunding levels based on the Fourth Report of the Capitation Formula were as follows:

#### LEVELS OF OVER OR UNDER FUNDING £M

HSSB	2008/09 £m over /(under) from target share
EHSSB	20.0
NHSSB	-8.3
SHSSB	-8.3
WHSSB	-3.4

Figures are not yet available for the 2009/10 year as allocations are still being confirmed.

The Fourth Review of the capitation formula recommended that the component elements of the formula relating to Acute Services and Elderly Care be updated. This has now taken place and the revised formula was implemented on 1st April 2009.

### Foster Carers

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many registered foster carers are providing foster care placements in excess of the 'usual fostering limit' of three, broken down by Health & Social Care Trust area. (AQW 7479/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** In response, Health & Social Care Trusts provided information in the table below for the position as at 8 May 2009.

HSC Trust	2007/2008
Belfast HSC Trust	15
Northern HSC Trust	6
South Eastern HSC Trust	3
Southern HSC Trust	13
Western HSC Trust	4
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>41</b>

### Brain Angiogram Appointments

**Mr T Buchanan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many brain angiogram appointments have been cancelled at the Royal Victoria Hospital in the last 12 months because of bed shortages in the Neurology Department. (AQW 7499/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There were 78 brain angiogram appointments booked for examination during 2008/2009 of which 51 were initially cancelled.

These cancellations were due to unavailability of beds within Ward 4e in the Royal Victoria Hospital, which should not be defined as neurology bed shortages.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have sufficient neurology beds, but due to volumes of emergency medical admissions, these will at times be prioritised for emergency admissions. Consequently, some electively booked patients will have their appointments cancelled and re-scheduled to accommodate emergency admissions.

### Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in his Department in (i) 2003/04; (ii) 2004/05; (iii) 2005/06; (iv) 2006/07; and (v) 2007/08. (AQW 7539/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The information requested is outlined below.

Year	No of Bonuses Paid	Total Amount of Bonuses Paid
2003/04	20	£93,150
2004/05	26	£118,250
2005/06	26	£156,500
2006/07	24	£166,000
2007/08	20	£160,750

It should be noted that the number and rate of bonus payments which can be paid to Senior Civil Service staff in DHSSPS and in all NI Departments is set by the Department of Finance and Personnel. The Department has no discretion to change the number and the rate of bonus payments made.

### Management Consultants

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent by the Health Service on management consultants who were not directly involved in delivering frontline services, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7628/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The following table shows approximate amounts of money spent by HSC Trusts and Boards from 2004/05 to 2007/08 on external consultancy services, as reported annually to DHSSPS, which were not directly involved in the delivery of front line services.

Year	Amount (£)
2004/05	167,000
2005/06	149,000
2006/07	270,000
2007/08	96,000

Figures for 2008/09 are not available yet.

### Female Problem Drinkers

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all voluntary and statutory services and programmes that provide support for problem female drinkers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 7772/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There is a range of voluntary and statutory services in place for female problem drinkers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area as set out below:

#### Voluntary and Community:

- Neighbourhood renewal project worker appointed and about to start in next few weeks in partnership with Trust in Omagh.

- Foyle Haven for both men and women outreach and drop in facility in Londonderry area.
- Solace for both men and women outreach and drop in facility in Irvinestown area.
- Northlands Treatment Centre for men and women.
- Hurt (Have All Your Tomorrows) for the user and the families of the user in Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane area.
- Foyle Valley House (North and West housing association).
- First Housing has a project worker in Enniskillen providing an outreach and drop in facility for both male and female.

**Statutory:**

- Alcohol liaison nurse in acute A&E in Altnagelvin and soon to be appointed in Erne Hospital for both male and female.
- Hidden Harm Social Workers in recruitment presently for Trust addiction services and childcare interface work for families.
- Alcohol and Drug Service for Limavady, Londonderry and Strabane area for both male and female.
- Community Addiction Teams in Tyrone and Fermanagh area for both male and female.
- Addictions Treatment Unit for residential care in Omagh (7 Beds for both male and female).

### Fostering Regulations

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Fostering Regulations Implementation plan has not been implemented. (AQW 7789/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There is no specific implementation plan in place. The consultation process highlighted a number of issues with the Standards which underpin the Regulations. As a consequence the Standards and Regulations will be revisited. It is not anticipated that the Fostering Regulations will be made before April 2010.

### Fostering Regulations

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Fostering Regulations will only apply to the Independent sector. (AQW 7790/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 provides specifically for the regulation of independent and voluntary fostering agencies whilst statutory providers remain subject to the provisions of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

### Royal Victoria Hospital Client Liaison Office

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety pursuant to AQW 7330/09, the number of written harassment complaints, made by hard copy and electronic mail to the Royal Victoria Hospital Client Liaison Office against uniformed security staff during April and May 2008. (AQW 7820/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Management at the Trust have informed my officials that during the stated time period one written harassment complaint of this nature was made.

### Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Protestant applicants within the Fire Service have been given positions at watch command level, in the Western command area in each of the past six years. (AQW 7831/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The total number of Watch Commanders appointed in the Western Area Command in the past 6 years with a perceived Protestant religious affiliation is shown in the table.

Year	Wholetime Watch Commander Appointees	Retained Watch Commander Appointees
2003	0	2
2004	2	1
2005	0	1
2006	0	0
2007	0	0
2008	0	0

There are currently 28 Watch Commanders within Western command area, 11 of which are perceived to be Protestant.

Of the 184 Watch Commanders currently employed by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service 110 are perceived to be Protestant. I am advised that a Watch Commander competition is currently taking place.

### Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many fire fighters at watch command level are currently employed in the Western command area. (AQW 7832/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The total number of Watch Commanders currently employed in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Western Area Command is 28.

### Swine Flu

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of purchasing additional (i) anti-viral drugs; and (ii) vaccines, in relation to recent swine flu outbreak. (AQW 7844/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The procurement of stockpiles of antivirals is currently ongoing at UK level and precise quantities to be disbursed across the regions and associated costs have not yet been finalised. However the disclosure of these costs is being exempted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 43(2) Commercial Interests.

The vaccine has not yet been produced for swine flu but an agreement has been signed at UK level to produce a pre-pandemic vaccine. I have given agreement that Northern Ireland will pay for its share of the costs of the production of this specific vaccine once it is produced. I cannot provide figures on costs as this is also commercially sensitive and the agreements are still being finalised.

### Action Cancer Bus

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQO 2412/09 (i) why his Department was unable to provide information on cancer detection by the Action Cancer Bus; (ii) if his Department liaises with Action Cancer in relation to the work undertaken by staff on the bus. (AQW 7879/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** My Department does not hold information on cancer detection by the Action Cancer Bus, as Action Cancer is an independent charity.

In implementing cancer preventative measures, my Department works with all main stakeholders. Action Cancer and the Ulster Cancer Foundation are currently working collaboratively with my Department and the new health organisations, to prepare for the introduction of a bowel cancer screening programme from December 2009.

### Computer Systems in Hospital Wards

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what computer systems are in place in hospital wards when making appointments for patients suffering from mental illnesses. (AQW 7960/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There are a variety of computer systems in place in hospital wards but these are not currently interfaced with computer systems within mental health services in order to provide an electronic appointments system. Each Trust does, however, have procedures in place to ensure that mental health patients who need continuing care have a follow up visit by mental health services within 7 days of discharge from hospital. This process is a requirement of my Department's Priorities for Action 2009/2010.

For individuals presenting at A&E departments with mental health problems and who are assessed as needing ongoing care, a regional protocol has been developed for the issue of follow up appointments before they leave hospital. The protocol is being piloted in South East Trust over the Summer and will be rolled out across all Trusts by the Autumn 2009.

### Complaints Made Against Health and Social Care Trusts

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many complaints have been made against each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts over the last year. (AQW 7961/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the Member to my reply to AQW 4263/09.

### Prescription Drugs

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many deaths have resulted from adverse reactions to prescription drugs issued by the health service in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 7962/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Information on the number of deaths that have resulted from adverse reactions to prescription drugs issued by the health service in each of the last 5 years is not available.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7968/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** My Department uses the cleaning services that are provided under the Department of Finance and Personnel central cleaning contract. All cleaning materials and products that are used by the contractor are subject to the terms stipulated by the Department of Finance and Personnel in relation to the nature of manufacture and to relevant health and safety regulations.

I understand that the contract does not refer to animal testing.

### Health Staff Personnel

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can give an assurance that no member of health staff personnel will be subjected to victimisation or disciplinary action for bringing employment concerns to the attention of a public representative. (AQW 8004/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 gives significant statutory protection to employees who disclose information reasonably and responsibly in the public interest and are victimised as a result. HSC organisations are required to have Whistleblowing policies in place to meet the requirements of the Order.

I am therefore confident that all HSC Organisations have in place robust policies for dealing with whistleblowing in the workplace.



### Family Support Workers

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the reasons for eight non-contracted family support workers based in Armagh and Dungannon being targeted for re-deployment, while their Craigavon counterparts are not. (AQW 8005/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Trust has advised that the Armagh and Dungannon Family Support Workers did not previously have contracts and following a review of the service these workers have been offered contracts.

To ensure equity of service provision across the Southern Trust a number of Family Support Workers from Armagh and Dungannon are being deployed to family support teams in various localities. This is being carried out in consultation with staff.

### Creggan Pre-School Training Trust

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 7190/09, for an update on progress on a Service Level Agreement between the Western Health and Social Care Trust and Creggan Pre-School Training Trust. (AQW 8078/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Western Health and Social Care Trust has met with the Creggan Pre-School Training Trust (CPTT) and is looking to develop a needs lead Service Level Agreement with the CPTT in conjunction with the Trust Family Support Panel. This is being actively explored by the Western Health and Social Care Trust and the Creggan Pre-School Training Trust.

### Dermatology Clinic in Daisy Hill Hospital

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Dermatology Clinic in Daisy Hill Hospital, to outline (i) why people on the review list are having to wait over a year to be seen; and (ii) why people with a recognised and recurring condition are being discharged and not put on the review list. (AQW 8097/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Once a patient has attended their first outpatient appointment it is for clinicians to determine the clinical priority of patients, and no specific targets have been set for review appointments. However, should patients feel that their condition has deteriorated and requires referral back to the dermatology service; they can access treatment through the new nurse led pathway, which operates an open access appointment system on a self-referral basis.

In addition the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has established additional dermatology clinics, which will review 41 patients per week. These clinics started to see patients on 1 June 2009.

### Family Support Workers

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, from 1 April 2009, (i) how many families are receiving assistance from a Family Support Worker; (ii) how many children are involved in these families; and (iii) how many referrals are awaiting assistance from a Family Support Worker, in both the Armagh and Dungannon areas. (AQW 8127/09)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** At 2nd June 2009;

- (i) 32 families in the Armagh and Dungannon area were receiving assistance from a family support worker.
- (ii) Information on the number of children involved in these families is not currently available.
- (iii) 7 referrals were pending allocation to a family support worker.

## DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### NCP Contract

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking tickets issued since the inception of the NCP contract were appealed and how many appeals were successful. (AQW 4982/09)

**Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):** The current parking enforcement contract with NCP Services Ltd commenced at the end of October 2006. My Department's Roads Service has advised that, in the period to the end of December 2008, the total number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued was 327,267. During this time, the number of Challenges received by Roads Service's Parking Enforcement Processing Unit was 38,621, of which 25,484 were accepted.

The number of Representations received following the issue of Notice to Owner, which is sent after 28 days if the PCN remains unpaid, was 10,435. The number accepted was 2,348.

The number of formal appeals to an Adjudicator was 398 and, of these, the number accepted was 85.

### Business Compensation.

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development what compensation is available for businesses which lose revenue or are forced to close due to water blockages and shortages in the system. (AQW 7688/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it is a general principle that there is no entitlement to compensation for general economic loss which results from blockages and shortages in the system.

### Vehicles Damaged by Potholes

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development the number of compensation claims received and the amount paid to owners of vehicles damaged by potholes and rutted surfaces, for each Roads Service section office area within the East Antrim constituency, in the last five years. (AQW 7813/09)

**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 East Antrim constituency extends over three Section Offices. It includes some parts of the Ballymoney and Moyle Section Office near Glenariff, the Larne district within the Ballymena and Larne Section Office and the Carrickfergus district and three Newtownabbey wards within the Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus Section Office. Claims figures for the Glenariff area and the three Newtownabbey wards could only be extracted at a disproportionate cost. The following figures show the number of compensation claims received and the amounts of compensation paid by Central Claims Unit for each of the last five financial years in respect of damage to motor vehicles caused by potholes and rutted surfaces in the Larne and Carrickfergus Section Office areas and also in respect of all of the Newtownabbey Section Office area, which includes the Newtownabbey constituency wards.

2008/09	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Carrickfergus Section Office	12	£569.45
Larne Section Office	15	£757.17
Newtownabbey Section Office	63	£3,770.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>£5,096.85</b>

2007/08	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Carrickfergus Section Office	6	£86.37
Larne Section Office	1	NIL

2007/08	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Newtownabbey Section Office	27	£4,158.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>£4,244.76</b>

2006/07	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Carrickfergus Section Office	9	£1,793.37
Larne Section Office	2	£131.23
Newtownabbey Section Office	26	£391.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>£2,316.49</b>

2005/06	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Carrickfergus Section Office	13	£2,312.05
Larne Section Office	3	£250.00
Newtownabbey Section Office	19	£1,994.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>£4,556.79</b>

2004/05	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
Carrickfergus Section Office	18	£873.60
Larne Section Office	9	£99.87
Newtownabbey Section Office	34	£3,161.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>£4,135.35</b>

### Consultants

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on internal and external consultants, in each of the last three years. (AQW 7838/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** The expenditure incurred by my Department on internal and external consultants in each of the last 3 years is set out in the table below:

Department for Regional Development		
Financial Year	Internal Consultancy (£)	External Consultancy (£)
2006/07	718,842	15,938,362
2007/08	386,186	1,839,078
2008/09	401,363	781,444

### Residents of the Gransha Road, Bangor

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the reasons for residents living on the Gransha Road, Bangor being told that part of their front gardens are now owned by Roads Service. (AQW 7850/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that when houses were constructed along a stretch of the Gransha Road, in or around 1973, the developer encroached onto a strip of Roads Service's land, which was included in the front gardens. This only came to light when some of the

property owners tried to sell their properties. The subject Roads Service land was already registered in Land Registers and is clearly identifiable.

Roads Service is trying to resolve this matter as pragmatically as possible and is in communication with Departmental Solicitor's Office to find the best method of regularising this.

Roads Service would encourage any individuals who may be affected by this encroachment to contact them.

### Residents of the Gransha Road, Bangor

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will be offering payment to residents of the Gransha Road, Bangor for maintaining Road Service property for the last 40 years. (AQW 7851/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** As I advised the Member in my response to his Assembly Question, AQW 7850/09, houses were constructed along a stretch of the Gransha Road, in or around 1973 and a strip of my Department's Roads Service's land was included in the front gardens.

The property owners have had the benefit and enjoyment of this land within the curtilage of their site since they purchased their properties. Roads Service has advised that payment to the property owners for maintaining the subject land would not be appropriate.

If property owners can prove at least 30 years uncontested use of the land, they may be able to claim possessory title to the lands. Roads Service is seeking advice from Departmental Solicitor's Office on the best method of regularising this matter.

### Departmental Consultations

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister for Regional Development 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 7856/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** In response to part one the department has spent the following on consultation in local or regional newspapers for each of the past three years:

Year	Amount Spent
2006/07	£18304.64
2007/08	£7610.82
2008/09	£18438.31

The table above does not include costs incurred by Roads Service as the compilation of this data would incur disproportionate costs.

In response to part two of the question the department submits a nil return.

### Credit Cards

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development (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 7905/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department did not issue any credit cards to staff during the last five years.

## Northern Ireland Water

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development when Main Street, Rasharkin is due to re-open after ongoing NI Water work is completed. (AQW 7914/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it is anticipated the work ongoing within the closed road section of Main Street, Rasharkin will be completed and the road re-opened by Friday 19 June 2009. Work outside of Main Street will continue into the early part of July in order to complete the project which is aimed at reducing the risk of future out-of-sewer flooding.

## Enterprise Service

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) all of the sections of railway track on the Dublin line between Belfast Central and the border which are not certified for 90mph running; and (ii) all of the temporary speed restrictions in place. (AQW 7924/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Translink have provided the attached table which details the sections of the track which are subject to permanent speed restrictions, and gives the specific restriction at each individual location. There is only one temporary speed restriction currently in place and this is also provided. The temporary speed restriction will be removed after bridge repair work is completed. This work is scheduled for completion August/September 2010 under the current programme for repairs.

Permanent Speed Restrictions			
Location	Mileposts	MPH	Comments
Adelaide – Balmoral (DOWN line)	110.75-111.50	60	Curvature, Points & Crossings
Balmoral – Finaghy (DOWN line)	110.00-110.75	80	Curvature
Derriaghy – Hilden	106.75-106.00	80	Curvature
Hilden – Knockmore	106.00-104.75	70	Curvature
Knockmore – Trummery (UP & DOWN line)	104.75-99.00	60	Track condition (Knockmore to Lurgan Relay Project to address)
Trummery – Moira (UP & DOWN line)	99.00-98.00	70	Track condition (Knockmore to Lurgan Relay Project to address)
Lurgan (UP line)	93.75-92.50	70	Track condition (Knockmore to Lurgan Relay Project to address)
Lurgan (DOWN line)	92.00-93.25	70	Track condition (Knockmore to Lurgan Relay Project to address)
Lurgan – Portadown (UP line)	88.75-87.75	80	Curvature
Portadown Station	87.75-87.25	60	Points & Crossings
Portadown Station & Approach	87.25-86.75	40	Curvature
Portadown – Scarva	86.75-85.50	70	Bogland
Portadown – Tandragee	85.50-85.25	60	Curvature
Portadown – Scarva	85.25-84.75	70	Bogland
Portadown – Scarva	84.75-79.75	85	Curvature
Scarva – Poyntzpass	79.75-77.00	70	Curvature
Poyntzpass Curves	77.00-76.50	45	Curvature
Poyntzpass – Newry	76.50-70.75	70	Curvature
Knockanarney – Newry	70.75-70.25	60	Curvature
Newry – Meigh	70.25-65.75	75	Curvature
Newry – Meigh	65.75-64.75	60	Wellington Cutting / Curvature
Advoyle – Border	62.00-61.75	70	Bogland

Temporary Speed Restrictions			
Location	Mileposts	MPH	Comments
Poyntzpass – Newry (UP & DOWN line)	74.75	40	Bridge Condition

### Roads Service

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline (i) what plans Roads Service is proposing on the centralisation of administration staff in Armagh from other areas; (ii) what consultation has taken place with staff; (iii) if all equality issues have been taken into account; and (iv) if he will give an assurance that full consultation will take place prior to any decisions being made. (AQW 7929/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** There are currently no plans for the centralisation of any Roads Service administration staff in Armagh.

### Andersonstown Gateway Study

**Mr G Adams** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline what formal consultation took place between his Department and the Department for Social Development in relation to the publication of the Andersonstown Gateway Study. (AQW 7943/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** In July 2008, the Department for Social Development (DSD) approached my Department's Regional Planning and Transportation Division, requesting a representative to attend the project steering group, which was set up to oversee the Andersonstown Gateway Feasibility Study.

It was agreed that DRD officials would attend the group on an agenda specific basis and receive copies of the steering group minutes. No transport specific agenda items required attendance. I understand that a bilateral meeting took place, on 17 November 2008, with DSD and the consultant conducting the study, Colin Buchanan and Partners Limited, to discuss the Andersonstown rapid transit route. DSD has not requested further input since this meeting.

Neither Translink's Falls Depot District Manager, nor my Department's Division that deals with developments of this nature, have had any approach with regard to the Andersonstown Gateway Study.

My Department's Roads Service was not formally consulted by DSD prior to the publication of the Andersonstown Gateway Study. However, the consultant acting on behalf of DSD, did meet a representative of Roads Service in September 2008, to seek information regarding any Roads Service proposals and strategies for this area, as well as the extent of land under its ownership.

Northern Ireland Water has advised that it was not formally consulted during the preparation of the Andersonstown Gateway Study.

### A2 Road Improvement Scheme

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A2 Road Improvement scheme between Jordanstown and Seapark. (AQW 7944/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that following the publication of the Inspector's Report on the Public Inquiry, into the proposals for the A2 Road Improvement works at Greenisland in September 2008, the Direction Order and the Notice of Intention to Proceed were published in October 2008.

Work is continuing on the scheme development, with the Geotechnical Investigation contract, which was let in January 2009, due to finish in June. Further archaeological investigation work is planned for autumn 2009.

The DRD Investment Delivery Plan for Roads indicates an anticipated date of 2010/11, for the A2 Shore Road Greenisland scheme going out to tender, with an estimated completion by the end of 2012/13 financial year. Roads Service remains committed to this programme, subject to the availability of the necessary finance.

### Andersonstown Gateway Study

**Mr G Adams** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline what formal consultation took place between consultants carrying out the Andersonstown Gateway Study and (i) Translink in relation to the Falls Road Depot; (ii) Roads Service in relation to the proposed bridge at Kennedy Way; and (iii) Northern Ireland Water in relation to the Waste Water Treatment Works in Kennedy Way. (AQW 7948/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Neither Translink's Falls Depot District Manager, nor my Department's Division that deals with developments of this nature, have had any approach with regard to the Andersonstown Gateway Study.

I am advised by Translink, that the Property Department Programme Manager and the Falls Depot District Manager met with Belfast City Council about 18 months ago. However, this was in relation to depot frontage and aesthetic improvements, as opposed to anything more substantial.

My Department's Roads Service has not been formally consulted regarding the proposed bridge at Kennedy Way, prior to the publication of the Andersonstown Gateway Study.

Northern Ireland Water has advised that it was not formally consulted during the preparation of the Andersonstown Gateway Study.

### Northern Ireland Water

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline why Northern Ireland Water was able to restore water pressure at Ballybryan Road, Greyabbey on Thursday 21/05/09 to find a leak, but was not able to increase water pressure to enable householders to carry out normal household duties. (AQW 7953/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the reduction in water pressure in the Ballybryan Road area on 19, 20 and 21 May 2009 resulted from a burst watermain in a field opposite to No 14 Ballybryan Road. NIW did not increase water pressure in order to detect the cause of the problem; the pressure was restored when the burst main was repaired on Thursday 21 May.

Following further technical reviews of the supply system serving the Ards peninsula, NIW has implemented a revised pressure regime in the trunk main system in order to protect the pipework and to increase the security of supply to all of its customers in the area. NIW is investigating the operational viability of installing a small booster station in the vicinity of Ballybryan Road to temporarily alleviate current pressure difficulties while network analysis is continuing to identify the most viable permanent solution. I understand that the investigations will be completed shortly and I have asked NIW's Interim Director of Operations, David Dangerfield, to write to you to inform you of the outcome and any action that NIW proposes to take.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7979/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department is not responsible for letting contracts for cleaning. These are organised centrally through the Central Purchasing Division within DFP.

### Northern Ireland Water

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development to explain why there was poor water pressure on 19, 20, and 21 May at Ballybryan Road, Greyabbey and why the water pressure was not restored until 21 May 2009. (AQW 7981/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that their customer relations centre was informed of a reduction in water pressure in the Ballybryan Road area at approximately 2pm on Tuesday 19 May 2009 and immediately instigated investigations to determine the cause. Unfortunately difficulties were experienced locating the source of the problem because there was no visible physical evidence of

a burst main in the vicinity and a more extensive inspection of the area had to be undertaken. Late on the evening of Wednesday 20 May the source was traced to a burst water main in a field opposite 14 Ballybryan Road. Repair work commenced at 9 o'clock the next morning and water pressure to all affected properties was restored by 3.30pm.

### Road Resurfacing Work

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 1773/09, concerning the Ballyhalbert to Ballywalter road, if he is aware that the road is still unfinished and will he give an assurance that it will be fixed in this financial year. (AQW 8128/09)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that no further major works have been carried out on the A2 Ballyhalbert to Ballywalter Road since my earlier reply to AQW 1773/09.

Allocations for the 2009/10 financial year have recently been received, and work programmes are currently being finalised for presentation to Ards Borough Council at its Co-ordinating Committee meeting on 22 June 2009.

You will appreciate that there are many roads competing for the limited funding available, therefore, it is not possible to give any assurance that resurfacing of this stretch of road will be carried out this financial year.

## DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme (i) to outline the criteria for assistance; (ii) how many applications have been made; (iii) how many applications were approved; and (iv) how much money was made available through the scheme, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 7849/09)

**Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie):** The Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme is statutorily based under the Northern Ireland (Housing) Order 1988 enabling the Housing Executive to acquire homes by agreement where their owners are unwilling or unable to occupy them in consequence of acts of violence or, threats to commit such acts or other intimidation.

In relation to (i) the eligibility criteria for the scheme are:

- the house must be owner occupied and must be the applicant's only or principal home; and
- the Housing Executive must receive a certificate from the office of the Chief Constable of the PSNI stating clearly it is unsafe for the applicant or a member of his / her household residing with him / her to continue to live in the house, because that person has been directly or specifically threatened or intimidated and as a result is at risk of serious injury.

In relation to (ii) – (iv) the table below details the numbers of applications, approvals and the total expenditure with regard to the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme for the period 2006/07 – 2008/09.

Financial Year	Applications Received	Applications approved*	Purchases Completed**	Total Payments
2006/2007	62	46	22	£3,242,200
2007/2008	60	35	22	£4,963,290
2008/2009	100	46	45	£9,394,181
<b>Total for period</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>£17,599,671</b>

\* Approved applications have been defined as those where Chief Constable's Certificates were issued. Not all of these applications would have resulted in the property being purchased.

\*\* This may include applications made in previous financial years.



### Larne Social Security Office

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of customers using Larne Social Security Office (i) whose first language is not English; (ii) have a disability; and (iii) how this compares with the average across all other Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices. (AQW 7946/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is not recorded and is not therefore available. Customers whose first language is not English and need assistance are offered interpreting or translation services. Similarly customers with a disability are offered appropriate help commensurate with their individual needs.

### Cleaning Products

**Mr G McHugh** asked the Minister for Social Development what plans her Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7966/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Department for Social Development does not have any plans to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals.

The Department is required to use the Northern Ireland Civil Service Office Cleaning Contract 2006 for purchasing such products. This contract is managed by the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate, who have advised that the current contract does not contain any guidance on animal testing in relation to cleaning products.

### Social Housing

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development if all new social housing will achieve a minimum Code Level 3, under the Code for Sustainable Homes, and what measures she will take to bring the existing social housing stock up to this standard. (AQW 8009/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** As part of the New Housing Agenda that I launched last year, all new social housing built from April 2008 must now comply with at least level 3 in the Code for Sustainable Housing. In effect this means that this housing will now be 25% more energy efficient than before.

There are however nearly 115,000 social homes across Northern Ireland built before this code was introduced. These homes will comply with the standards applicable at the time they were constructed, such as the previous 'Eco Homes' standard.

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development who was invited by her Department to an inter-agency workshop in September 2008 about the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast. (AQW 8047/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** A statutory sector workshop on lands at the Glen Road was arranged by my Department on 26 September 2008 to consider the need for and interest in taking a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of a number of parcels of land adjacent to the Glen Road. The workshop was jointly chaired by David Ferguson (Deputy Secretary, Department for Social Development) and Peter McNaney (Chief Executive, Belfast City Council) and representatives of a number of relevant government departments and agencies were invited to attend. A list of those who attended is given below. Representatives of two major landowners, Turley Associates and Lagan Homes, were also invited to attend the workshop as observers.

At the workshop, it was agreed that the group should continue to meet at appropriate stages as a 'development co-ordination group,' in order to facilitate a coordinated approach to future work. This 'development co-ordination group' was reconvened on 18 December 2008, primarily to consider the Terms of Reference for a research study proposal into the development potential of the relevant lands. This research has since been jointly commissioned by the Department for Social Development and the Strategic Investment Board, and a further meeting of the 'development co-ordination group' is to be arranged in June, once the final report has been completed.

## LANDS AT GLEN ROAD – STATUTORY SECTOR WORKSHOP, 26 SEPTEMBER 2008

Director of Infrastructure Investment	DHSSPS
Representative (Knockbracken Healthcare Park)	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Director of Improvement	Belfast City Council
Head of Property Solutions Unit	Invest NI
Director of Strategy and Employment Rights	DEL
Head of Tourism, Agency Liaison and Equality	DETI
Head of Development and Infrastructure	DENI
Director of Housing and Regeneration	NI Housing Executive
West Belfast Strategy Manager	NI Housing Executive
Director of Strategic Planning	DOE
Director of Regional Planning and Transportation	DRD
Strategic Advisor	Strategic Investment Board
Director of Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Greater West Team)	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Physical Development)	DSD
2 officials, Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Representative	Turley Associates
2 representatives	Lagan Homes

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the terms of reference for the research commissioned by her Department into the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast. (AQW 8048/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Department for Social Development and the Strategic Investment Board jointly commissioned research into the development potential of a number of parcels of land adjacent to the Glen Road in January 2009. The research proposal was “to explore for the ‘Glen Road Lands’: the extent of plans (current and proposed) of central and local Government and existing landowners for these lands; and the interest in, and ideas and proposals, for the commercial development of the lands.” A copy of the Terms of Reference has been placed in the Assembly library for information.

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the membership of the ‘development co-ordination group’ established by her to discuss the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast (AQW 8049/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** A statutory sector workshop on lands at the Glen Road was arranged by my Department on 26 September 2008 to consider the need for and interest in taking a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of a number of parcels of land adjacent to the Glen Road. The workshop was jointly chaired by David Ferguson (Deputy Secretary, Department for Social Development) and Peter McNaney (Chief Executive, Belfast City Council) and representatives of a number of relevant government departments and agencies were invited to attend. A list of those who attended is given below. Representatives of two major landowners, Turley Associates and Lagan Homes, were also invited to attend the workshop as observers.

At the workshop, it was agreed that the group should continue to meet at appropriate stages as a ‘development co-ordination group,’ in order to facilitate a coordinated approach to future work. This ‘development co-

ordination group' was reconvened on 18 December 2008, primarily to consider the Terms of Reference for a research study proposal into the development potential of the relevant lands. This research has since been jointly commissioned by the Department for Social Development and the Strategic Investment Board, and a further meeting of the 'development co-ordination group' is to be arranged in June, once the final report has been completed.

**LANDS AT GLEN ROAD – STATUTORY SECTOR WORKSHOP, 26 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Director of Infrastructure Investment	DHSSPS
Representative (Knockbracken Healthcare Park)	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Director of Improvement	Belfast City Council
Head of Property Solutions Unit	Invest NI
Director of Strategy and Employment Rights	DEL
Head of Tourism, Agency Liaison and Equality	DETI
Head of Development and Infrastructure	DENI
Director of Housing and Regeneration	NI Housing Executive
West Belfast Strategy Manager	NI Housing Executive
Director of Strategic Planning	DOE
Director of Regional Planning and Transportation	DRD
Strategic Advisor	Strategic Investment Board
Director of Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Greater West Team)	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Physical Development)	DSD
2 officials, Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Representative	Turley Associates
2 representatives	Lagan Homes

**Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road**

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the terms of reference for the 'development co-ordination group' established by her to discuss the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast and to specify how many times this group has met. (AQW 8050/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** A statutory sector workshop on lands at the Glen Road was arranged by my Department on 26 September 2008 to consider the need for and interest in taking a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of a number of parcels of land adjacent to the Glen Road. The workshop was jointly chaired by David Ferguson (Deputy Secretary, Department for Social Development) and Peter McNaney (Chief Executive, Belfast City Council) and representatives of a number of relevant government departments and agencies were invited to attend. A list of those who attended is given below. Representatives of two major landowners, Turley Associates and Lagan Homes, were also invited to attend the workshop as observers.

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Head of Development and Infrastructure	DENI
Director of Housing and Regeneration	NI Housing Executive
West Belfast Strategy Manager	NI Housing Executive
Director of Strategic Planning	DOE
Director of Regional Planning and Transportation	DRD
Strategic Advisor	Strategic Investment Board
Director of Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Greater West Team)	DSD
Deputy Director, Belfast Regeneration Office (Physical Development)	DSD
2 officials, Belfast Regeneration Office	DSD
Representative	Turley Associates
2 representatives	Lagan Homes

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development where her Department has established a group similar to the 'development co-ordination group' that deals with the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast. (AQW 8051/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** A similar approach was taken in Derry in relation to the Clondermot site where a number of statutory organisations required the assistance of DSD in the production of a conceptual master plan.

### Youth Provision in West Belfast

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail what youth provision her Department funds in the Colin area of west Belfast. (AQW 8070/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Department for Social Development, under the Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative funds two youth provision projects in the Colin area.

The Colin Neighbourhood Partnership has been awarded funding of £78,389 for the period 1 September 2008 to 31 March 2011, for the salary of a Community Development Worker whose focus is youth services and providing support for youth providers in the Colin area.

Funding of £67,806 has also been awarded for the same period to Youth Initiatives for the salary of a Youth Project Support Worker and associated running costs.

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department participated in a forum on Land Use convened by the West Belfast MP to discuss the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast. (AQW 8081/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** Representatives of the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive attended 2 forums convened by the West Belfast MP to discuss the development of lands in west Belfast on 11 December 2007 and 26 November 2008.

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Minister for Regional Development made proposals to her regarding the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in west Belfast. (AQW 8082/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department received a submission detailing DRD input to the overall objectives for the lands adjacent to the Glen Road, approved by the Minister for Regional Development, on 16 October 2008. The submission focussed on three issues: water and sewerage; roads; and the proposed rapid transit system.

### Lands Adjacent to the Glen Road

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to state whether she reached agreement with other relevant Ministers on the terms of reference for the research being undertaken into the development of lands adjacent to the Monagh Road and Glen Road in West Belfast; and (ii) in relation to the remit and membership of a 'development co-ordination group'. (AQW 8083/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** Agreement on the Terms of Reference for the research being undertaken into the development of lands adjacent to the Glen Road was reached by discussion among officials from a number of departments. The Terms of Reference were considered and amended by the 'development coordination group' on 18 December 2008.

Permanent Secretaries of DRD, DOE, DETI, DEL, DE and DHSSPS were asked to nominate officials at director level to attend a statutory sector workshop on lands adjacent to the Glen Road on 26 September 2009. Full membership of this group was given in my response to AQW 8047/09. At the workshop, it was agreed that the group should continue to meet at appropriate stages as a 'development coordination group.'

### Jobs and Benefits and Social Security Offices

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Social Development if she will review proposals affecting staff in Jobs and Benefits and Social Security Offices in east Antrim and any planned relocations and reconfigurations arising from the proposals. (AQW 8106/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** I refer the member to my previous response to AQW 4152/09; and would re-emphasise, the proposals set out in the Strategic Business Review (SBR) are currently subject to an ongoing public consultation process which runs until 17 June 2009. I have made it clear previously at the start of public consultation in November 2008, that I will not make any final decisions including any potential relocations and reconfigurations until all the consultation responses have been considered.

### Housing Executive Grant Aided Works

**Mr W Irwin** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7612/09, to outline the total amounts of grant aid outstanding in each of the listed categories. (AQW 8193/09)

**Minister for Social Development:** The tables below contain the following information:

**TABLE 1. DETAILS THE ESTIMATED VALUE OF GRANTS CASES AT SCHEDULE ISSUE STAGE BASED ON THE HOUSING EXECUTIVE'S AVERAGE GRANT COST.**

	Armagh		Newry & Mourne	
	Cases	£	Cases	£
Renovation Grant	53	£722k	232	£3053k
Replacement Grant	17	£535k	48	£1512k
Home Repairs Assistance	84	£215k	499	£1515k
	154	£1,472k	779	£6,080k

\* Not all cases at schedule issue stage will progress to formal approval stage.

**TABLE 2 DETAILS THE ESTIMATED VALUE OF GRANTS CASES AT DOCUMENTS COMPLETE STAGE BASED ON HOUSING EXECUTIVE'S AVERAGE GRANT COST**

	Armagh		Newry & Mourne	
	Cases	£	Cases	£
Renovation Grant	18	245k	16	£210k
Replacement Grant	5	157k	2	£63k
Home Repairs Assistance	3	8k	57	£173k
	26	£410k	75	£446k

\*\* Not all cases at documents complete stage would have progressed to completion and attracted grants payments.

The estimated monetary value is on the basis of the average grant for each category within each area. However the Housing Executive does not anticipate that all of the grants cases referred to will progress through the approval process to eventual grants payment. Consequently the Housing Executive considers that actual grants spend will be somewhat less than the figures indicated.

## NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

### All Party Ethnic Minority Group

**Ms J McCann** asked the Assembly Commission why the all Party Ethnic Minority Group has, on a number of occasions, been allocated a meeting room in Parliament Buildings after prior booking, and then told to relocate to another room without any prior notice. (AQW 8074/09)

**The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson):** Due to the demand on committee rooms within Parliament Buildings it is necessary to operate a system which assigns priority to Assembly Committees in the booking of Committee Rooms.

The Guidance Notes on All Party Groups and All Party Assembly Groups state that absolute priority is given to Assembly Committees in the booking of Committee Rooms. Unfortunately, other bookings, such as those made by All Party Groups and All Party Assembly Groups, are subject to change or cancellation if the rooms for which they are made are required by Assembly Committees.

Since the All-Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities was established on 4 June 2008, it has booked rooms in Parliament Buildings for twelve different meetings. According to Assembly Secretariat records, it has been necessary to change the venue for four of these meetings because the room booked initially was subsequently required for a Committee meeting. However, records also show that on each of these occasions alternative rooms were allocated and notice of at least 5 days was given.

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