
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 26 June 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Single Equality Bill

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many staff are currently working on the Single Equality Bill. (AQW 7774/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): We continue to legislate in order to provide legal protection against discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. As no policy decisions have been taken with regard to a single Equality Bill, there are no staff currently dedicated to working on such a Bill.

Commissioner for Older People

Mr K Robinson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Commissioner for Older People will be established. (AQW 8174/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: In order to appoint a Commissioner for Older People we need to bring forward primary legislation.

It is our intention to consult with the OFMDFM Committee and Executive prior to issuing policy proposals together with a draft Bill for public consultation in autumn 2009.

After careful consideration of all the consultation responses, we will seek the agreement of the Executive to introduce the Bill. Once the Bill has completed the various stages within the legislative process, a Commissioner can be appointed and an office established.

Link Family and Community Centre, Newtownards

Mr D McNarry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on local concerns raised with the Community Relations Council (CRC) about a successful application to the International Fund for Ireland for funding for the Link Family and Community Centre, Newtownards. (AQW 8310/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: In all aspects of this matter the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was acting as the agent of the International Fund for Ireland. The International Fund for Ireland is an independent international body and your question should be directed to the Chairman of the Fund – Mr Denis Rooney, Chairman, International Fund for Ireland, PO Box 2000, Belfast, BT4 1WD.

Child Poverty

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the levels of child poverty present in all constituencies for the past three years. (AQW 8347/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The table below details Northern Ireland child poverty rates based on the relative poverty measure, by parliamentary constituency, for the period 2004/05 to 2006/07.

CHILD POVERTY RATES BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, 2004/05 - 2006/07

Parliamentary Constituency	% of Children In Poverty	Confidence Interval	
Belfast East	13%	+/-	8%
Belfast North	34%	+/-	14%
Belfast South	9%	+/-	8%
Belfast West	34%	+/-	11%
East Antrim	23%	+/-	10%
East Londonderry	25%	+/-	10%
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	33%	+/-	11%
Foyle	33%	+/-	8%
Lagan Valley	12%	+/-	7%
Mid Ulster	30%	+/-	10%
Newry and Armagh	25%	+/-	8%
North Antrim	21%	+/-	7%
North Down	22%	+/-	10%
South Antrim	18%	+/-	7%
South Down	28%	+/-	9%
Strangford	25%	+/-	10%
Upper Bann	24%	+/-	10%
West Tyrone	17%	+/-	7%
Total	24%	+/-	2%

Source: Households Below Average Income, NI
2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 combined

The data source for these figures is the Family Resources Survey for Northern Ireland which is a sample survey of the population and reported on in the Department for Social Development produced annual Households Below Average Income, NI reports. Relative child poverty refers to children living in households whose income is below 60% of the UK median equivalised household income on a before housing cost basis. To generate enough cases in the data to enable the parliamentary constituency analysis to be conducted, it was necessary to combine the data over the three-year period between 2004/05 and 2006/07. The 2007/08 figures have not yet been published; it is expected they will be available in late 2009.

All figures produced from the Family Resources Survey have associated confidence intervals within which the actual population figure will be. In Belfast East, 13% of children experience poverty although, taking the relevant confidence intervals into account, the 'true' figure will lie between 5% and 21%. Given that the confidence intervals around the child poverty rates for each parliamentary constituency are relatively large, these child poverty rates should be viewed as broad indicators of difference between parliamentary constituencies given that the figures are not precise enough to calculate difference between them with a high degree of certainty.

Legislative Measures

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list all legislative measures they intend to bring before the Assembly in 2009 and 2010. (AQW 8348/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We are currently developing proposals to bring forward the primary legislation required to establish the office of Commissioner for Older People and a new Victims and

Survivors' Service. Other legislative requirements may arise, including subordinate legislation, and these will be brought forward as appropriate in consultation with the OFMDFM Committee and with the Executive's agreement.

Civil Service

Mr P McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the procedures and oversight mechanisms in place for the Head of the Civil Service to ensure the consistent and efficient management of all Departments. (AQW 8392/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Permanent Secretaries in their role as Accounting Officers, and acting within the authority of Ministers to whom they are responsible, are responsible for ensuring the economical and efficient management of their respective Departments. The Head of the Civil Service assesses the performance of Permanent Secretaries as part of the annual performance management process.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Slurry Neutralization

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her plans for addressing slurry neutralization. (AQW 8272/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): I currently have no plans to address slurry neutralization through the use of additives to reduce odour when slurry is spread. However, my Department is implementing a series of actions to improve slurry management and promote best practice which contribute to reducing odour from slurry spreading operations.

The use of advanced slurry spreading systems, such as trailing-shoe, is being promoted based on research at the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). The College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) has organised Slurry Efficiency workshops for farmers which focused on trailing-shoe technology. This research and technology transfer is complemented by capital grant support for advanced slurry spreaders which is available through the Manure Efficiency and Technology Sub Programme (METS) of the Farm Modernisation Programme.

Advanced slurry spreading systems such as trailing-shoe technology help to reduce odour. They also offer significant additional benefits including greater nutrient efficiency from slurry, reduced gaseous emissions and increased flexibility in spreading practice.

Comprehensive advice on best practice and statutory requirements relating to slurry management, including minimising odour, is provided in my Department's Code of Good Agricultural Practice.

Anaerobic digestion of slurry results in a reduction of slurry odour when the digestate is spread. Research by AFBI on anaerobic digestion is ongoing at the Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence, Hillsborough. Future uptake of anaerobic digestion technology would contribute to reducing odour from slurry management in addition to other potential benefits including renewable energy, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved nitrogen efficiency.

Review of Inshore Fisheries Stakeholder Advisory Group

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to implement the recommendations of the 2007 Review of Inshore Fisheries Stakeholder Advisory Group and to outline the time-scale involved. (AQW 8415/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department will issue a formal response to the review of the Stakeholder Advisory Group's (SAG) Report on inshore fisheries to state what actions it has taken and proposes to take to address specific recommendations in the Report. This will be issued to the members of the SAG by 30th June 2009.

I have asked the Fisheries Forum to consider the need for an inshore fisheries strategy taking account of the recommendations of the Stakeholder Report, the actions taken since the report was published and the potential impact on inshore fisheries of pressures facing the off shore fleet. I expect to receive the Fisheries Forum report in early autumn and I will consider carefully its recommendations and the resourcing of the way forward.

Bee Health Strategy

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what are (i) the differences between the Contingency Plan for Exotic Pests and Diseases of Honey Bees and the proposed Bee Health Strategy; and (ii) the different areas they will each cover. (AQW 8540/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) While the Contingency Plan for Exotic Pests and Diseases is specifically concerned with DARD's plan of action in the case of the introduction of a new, non-native (hence 'exotic') threat to honeybees, the Bee Health Strategy will be a wide ranging strategic approach to support bee health here.
- (ii) The Contingency Plan covers the potential threats posed by the Small Hive Beetle and the four species of the Tropilaelaps mite. It is envisaged that the Bee Health Strategy will address issues such as: challenges facing honeybee health here; DARD support to the sector; research; and the roles of all stakeholders. The strategy will also likely have a North/South dimension.

The strategy will be subject to consultation in due course

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Child Protection Policies

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what services are available, from his Department or its agencies, to sporting associations and clubs to assist them in developing child protection policies and education within their organisations. (AQW 8297/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including providing advice to sporting associations and clubs on sport and physical recreation matters. SNI has entered into partnership with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Child Protection in Sport Unit. Through this arrangement SNI provides a number of services to sporting associations, sports governing bodies and clubs. These include:-

- Child protection awareness and designated officer training courses
- Direct child protection training
- Advisory services
- Auditing services

Departmental Spend on Languages

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much his Department will spend on (i) the Irish language; (ii) Ulster Scots; and (iii) British and Irish Sign Language over the next three years. (AQW 8309/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Current opening position for my Department's spend on Irish, Ulster-Scots and Sign Language is as follows:

		2009-2010	2010-2011	Totals
Irish	Gaeltacht Quarter	£133,000	£133,000	£4,548,000
	Foras na Gaeilge	£4,282,000	N/A	
Ulster-Scots	Ulster-Scots Academy	£4,295,000	£2,738,000	£9,688,000
	Ulster-Scots Agency	£2,655,000	N/A	
Sign	Sign Language	£100,000	£100,000	£200,000

2010/2011 figures are currently not available for the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge as indicative budgets for 2010/11 have not yet been approved.

We are unable to provide anticipated spend for Irish, Ulster-Scots and Sign Language for 2011/2012, as this is outside the current Comprehensive Spending Review period and will be subject to the next Spending Review bidding process.

Sports Clubs

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the amount of money available for sports clubs to run summer courses for children; and (ii) where this money has been allocated. (AQW 8390/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the provision of funding. SNI does not currently provide funding to sports clubs specifically to run summer courses for children. However, it is currently developing two new programmes, Awards for Sport and an Active Communities Programme, from which assistance in this area may be obtained. It is envisaged Awards for Sport will be launched in September 2009 providing grants from £1,000 to £10,000. The budget for the first year of the programme will be £250,000. Thereafter, £500,000 will be available per annum.

The Active Communities Programme proposed by SNI would be a five year investment programme designed to employ, deploy and train a network of full time and part time sports coaches and leaders to deliver activities in community and club settings. This programme is at formal approval stage.

Sports Clubs

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money is available to sports clubs to assist them in buying new equipment, especially for children. (AQW 8391/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the provision of funding. SNI is currently developing a new small grants programme, Awards for Sport, which will make funding available to sports clubs to assist them in buying new equipment. It is envisaged the programme will be launched in September 2009 providing grants from £1,000 to £10,000. The budget for the first year of the programme will be £250,000. Thereafter, £500,000 will be available per annum.

Another SNI programme, Places for Sport, is due to be launched on 6 July 2009. This will provide grants from £10,000 and upwards for larger pieces of equipment.

Irish Language

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many Irish language or bi-lingual publications have been produced by his Department in the last two years. (AQW 8453/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has not produced any Irish language or bilingual Irish-English publications in the last two years.

Marine Issues

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will provide details of (i) the number of staff, and their relevant grade, in his Department who have responsibility for marine issues, and (ii) the annual total cost of marine-specific work to the Department. (AQW 8493/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department is not responsible for marine issues. However, DCAL is responsible for conservation and protection of salmon and eels which are migratory fish which live in both freshwater and the ocean.

A DCAL official at Grade 7 level sits on the DoE Marine Bill Steering Group to represent DCAL's interests in the development of policy and legislation to implement the Bill in Northern Ireland. DCAL has no financial commitments under this legislation at this stage.

DCAL operates a patrol boat off the North Coast of Northern Ireland to help prevent and detect illegal fishing for salmon in the sea. The boat is operated by two Fisheries Protection Officers. The boat's running costs in 2008 totalled £3,454.54.

Windsor Park

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what safety improvements have taken place, or will be in place, at Windsor Park before the commencement of the 2009/10 soccer season. (AQW 8529/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for making safety improvements at Windsor Park rests with Linfield Football Club and the Irish Football Association (IFA). However, I have recently agreed that some remedial work at the ground should be undertaken. Sport Northern Ireland will be engaging with Linfield FC and the IFA to take this work forward as a high priority with the aim of having the work completed by September 2009.

Ulster-Scots Academy

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (a) how much money was originally designated for the Ulster-Scots Academy (b) how much of that money was spent and how it was spent (c) and how much of that money has been surrendered to date to the Department of Finance and Personnel. (AQW 8537/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:

- (a) £12m was originally designated for the Ulster-Scots Academy.
 (b) Expenditure towards the Ulster-Scots Academy, used to fund the Ulster-Scots Academy Implementation Group (USAIG), was as follows:

05/06:	£134,413.00
06/07:	£392,412.29
07/08:	£405,189.44
08/09:	£289,157.63
09/10 (year to date):	£300.00
Total	£1,222,472.36

The USAIG was tasked with making recommendations for the establishment of an Ulster-Scots Academy as well as progressing activities on an education programme and a language development programme. Projects in respect of the latter include a tape-recorded survey of native speakers, a textbase of Ulster-Scots literature, a bilingual Ulster-Scots to English dictionary, and a Bible translation.

- (c) £5,965,000 has been surrendered from the Ulster-Scots Academy Budget. It is my intention that this money will, however, be spent in future when an Ulster-Scots Academy has been established in accordance with good governance and best practice guidelines. Work on the Academy has been and is being undertaken with this in mind.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education how much was paid in bonuses to the Department's Permanent Secretary, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8126/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education is currently provided through Resource Accounts in £5k bands, available from the Department's website.

Tá fearg forleathan ar mhuintir an phobail mar gheall ar na bónais atá á n-ioc chuig fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí a bhfaigheann ioncaim substaintiúla cheana féin. Mar Aire, tá mé buartha faoi seo fosta agus tá mé ag iarraidh go ndéanfar athbhreithniú ar an cheist.

There is widespread public anger at the large bonuses being paid to public servants who are already in receipt of substantial incomes. As Minister I share this concern and want a review to be undertaken on the matter.

Epilepsy

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education to outline what improvements she plans to introduce within the education system to ensure that pupils with epilepsy achieve their full educational potential. (AQW 8239/09)

Minister of Education: Tá creatlach riachtanas speisialta oideachais ag an Roinn Oideachais (DE) a leagann amach go soiléir na dualgais reachtúla a bhíonn ar scoileanna agus ar Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) le páistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SEN) acu a aithint, a mheasúnú agus soláthar speisialta oideachais a dhéanamh le freastal ar a riachtanais i gcásanna nuair is cuí.

The Department of Education (DE) has in place a special educational needs framework setting out clear statutory duties on schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to identify, assess and in appropriate cases make special educational provision to meet the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN). The framework applies to support for all children with SEN, including those diagnosed with epilepsy. In addition DE issued a Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational needs in 1998 to provide detailed guidance to schools and ELBs on the framework and the various statutory duties that apply. A Supplement to this Code was issued in 2005, which updated the previous guidance following the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005.

As the diagnosis of children with epilepsy is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, Education and Library Boards (ELBs) rely on co-operation from health professionals in this area. In addition ELBs work directly with their local Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) on an ongoing basis to ensure that the specific needs of children with epilepsy are met to maximise their educational potential. Many special schools have school nurses provided by their HSCT to support the medical needs of those children with more complex epilepsy and a recent improvement in services has seen most ELBs appoint Health Care Assistants, who are jointly funded by ELBs and HSCTs, to work with children with more complex medical needs, including those with epilepsy.

As advised in my response to your recent AQW 7908/09 the Chief Executives of the 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 HSCT. This ensures that the training delivered is appropriate to the needs of the individual child. The medical and education needs of children with epilepsy will vary greatly from child to child depending upon their individual circumstances, the severity and nature of the epilepsy and their assessed special educational needs.

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 medication needs, including epilepsy, could have their needs met in schools.

Schools Three Year Financial Plans

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 7396/09, to detail (i) those schools that her Department required to produce a three year financial plan, setting out how they intended to reduce the surpluses and deficits greater than 5% of their annual delegated budget to within acceptable limits; and (ii) what deficits those schools had, whether over or under the 5% limit. (AQW 8267/09)

Minister of Education: Is í an bhliain airgeadais is déanaí dá bhfuil eolas ar fáil do scoileanna deonacha gramadaí ná 2007/2008. Mionsonraítear in Iarscríbhinn 3 liosta de na scoileanna deonacha gramadaí a n-éiligh mo Roinn orthu pleananna trí bliana a sholáthar.

The latest financial year for which this information is currently available for the voluntary grammar schools is 2007/08. The list of voluntary grammar schools that my Department has required to produce 3 year plans is detailed at Annex A.

There are 18 voluntary grammar schools which have reported a surplus in excess of 5% of the available delegated budget at the end of the 2007/08 financial year. All of these schools have provided the requisite 3 year plans.

These plans detail reasons for the accumulated surpluses, for example, budgeting for planned expenditure programmes (ICT equipment, maintenance programmes); contingency planning for unforeseen expenditure costs (eg older buildings requiring emergency maintenance); or lower than forecast maintenance requirements, for example new builds starting later than planned.

These plans also include details of planned expenditure in order to bring surpluses within acceptable limits, for example, employment of technical/teaching staff; purchase of equipment; planned maintenance programmes; or forecast changes to salary profiles.

To date, I have met with voluntary grammar schools from the Southern, South Eastern, Belfast and the Western Education and Library Board areas and have a further meeting planned with voluntary grammar schools in the North Eastern Education and Library Board area on 29 June. Key issues on the agenda for all of these meetings have been financial and non-financial accountability (including effective management of surpluses and deficits); raising educational standards; and equality issues. I have emphasised to all at these meetings the importance of managing surpluses and ensuring that the money goes to the frontline for the benefit of all of the children in the school at that time.

In relation to deficits, I would wish to draw your attention to the response provided to AQW 7396/09 in which I advised that analysis has confirmed that no voluntary grammar schools overspent or operated a cumulative financial deficit during the 2007/2008 financial year when taking into account the balances of their public and non-public school funds.

ANNEX A

VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOLS – SURPLUSES AS AT 31 MARCH 2008

	Accum Surpluses 2007/08 £	As % of Delegated Budget 2007/08
St Mary's CBS	288,840	6.22%
Methodist College	950,487	13.10%
Rathmore Grammar	1,069,587	20.79%
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	919,110	25.50%
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen	201,584	9.49%
Omagh, Loreto Grammar	213,688	5.55%
Ballymena Academy	280,336	5.84%
Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt	282,891	9.75%
Dominican College, Portstewart	183,930	9.04%
Bangor Grammar School	279,545	7.68%
Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch	554,392	15.08%

	Accum Surpluses 2007/08 £	As % of Delegated Budget 2007/08
St Patrick's Grammar, Downpatrick	187,883	6.36%
Our Lady & St Patrick's Grammar	514,500	10.35%
St Louis' Grammar, Kilkeel	243,251	10.32%
St Colman's College, Newry	507,331	14.11%
Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	505,994	14.53%
Royal School, Dungannon	144,798	5.54%
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	501,089	8.10%

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 7246/09, how much money was received by each school under non public funds as listed on the statement of accounts form S40, in the last financial year. (AQW 8268/09)

Minister of Education: Is í an bhliain airgeadais is déanaí dá bhfuil eolas ar fáil do scoileanna deonacha gramadaí ná 2007/2008. Tá an t-eolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos.

The latest financial year for which this information is currently available for the voluntary grammar schools is 2007/08. The information requested is provided in the table below.

VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOL SECTOR - 2007/2008 NON-PUBLIC FUNDS

	£
Bloomfield Collegiate (i)	273,542
Campbell College (i) (ii)	2,180,666
St Mary's CBS, Belfast	18,108
Methodist College, Belfast (i) (ii)	3,831,220
RBAI (i)	632,352
BRA (i)	718,102
St Dominic's High, Belfast	42,234
St Malachy's, Belfast	108,509
Dominican College, Belfast	33,191
Strathearn Grammar, Belfast (i)	528,063
Rathmore Grammar, Belfast	102,265
Victoria College, Belfast (i) (ii)	1,202,003
Hunterhouse College, Belfast	306,714
Aquinas Grammar, Belfast	23,736
Mount Lourdes Grammar, Enniskillen	43,643
Portora Royal, Enniskillen	131,754
St Michael's Grammar, Enniskillen	16,008
Thornhill College, Derry	75,354
St Columb's College, Derry	73,327
Omagh CBS	134,481

	£
Omagh, Loreto Grammar	78,377
Foyle & Londonderry College	204,176
Lumen Christi College, Derry	28,270
St Louis' Grammar, Ballymena	67,546
Ballymena Academy	245,847
Dalriada School, Ballymoney (i)	387,974
Coleraine Academical Institute	242,972
Loreto Convent Grammar, Coleraine	118,988
Larne Grammar School	116,401
Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt	159,343
Dominican College, Portstewart	38,987
Belfast High School	199,722
St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	48,305
St Macnissi's College, Garron Tower	118,087
Bangor Grammar (i)	664,756
Sullivan Upper, Holywood (i)	823,720
Friends School, Lisburn (i)	728,344
Wallace High, Lisburn (i)	732,763
Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch	201,474
St Patrick's Grammar, Downpatrick	29,912
Our Lady & St Patrick's Grammar, Belfast	69,271
St Louis' Grammar, Kilkeel	12,037
St Michael's Grammar, Lurgan	107,870
Abbey Grammar, Newry	86,799
Our Lady's Grammar, Newry	57,951
St Colman's College, Newry	93,231
St Joseph's Grammar, Donaghmore	12,608
Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	64,682
Royal School, Dungannon (ii)	636,003
Royal School, Armagh (i) (ii)	760,197
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	64,973
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	91,274

(i) Includes Prep Dept Non-Public Funds

(ii) Includes Boarding Dept Non-Public Funds

Data Source: 2007/08 S40 Statement of Accounts

For the purposes of responding to this request, it should be noted that non public funds in relation to Preparatory Departments and Boarding Departments are included in the funding data provided for a number of the schools and these schools are identified via the footnotes to the table in the response.

Common Entrance Assessments

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Education to detail the primary schools that are teaching or tutoring children for the Common Entrance Assessments developed by the Association for Quality Education and/or the GL Assessment English and Maths Special Access tests, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 8328/09)

Minister of Education: Scriobh mé chuig Príomhoidí agus Cathaoirligh Bhoird Ghobharnóirí gach bunscoile ar 11 Bealtaine 2009 leis an seasamh ar an cheist seo a leanan amach:

I wrote to the Principals and Chairpersons of Boards of Governors of all primary schools on 11 May 2009 setting out the position on this issue:

- (1) Primary Schools have explicit obligations within primary legislation (Articles 4-9 of the Education Order, 2006) to deliver the revised curriculum;
- (2) Primary schools are not legally required to prepare children for a post-primary school's Entrance Test and the Department strongly recommends against it;
- (3) No legislation provides primary schools with any explicit obligation to participate in any arrangements necessary to the operation of a post-primary school's Entrance Test.

The Education and Library Boards have also written to all controlled primary schools, and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has written to all Catholic maintained primary schools outlining the statutory duties of principals and Boards of Governors in relation to the revised curriculum.

I expect all primary schools to fulfil their statutory duties, and act responsibly in dealing with any pressure that may be applied by schools operating an entrance test. Parents also have a right to question the decision of any primary school to deviate from the revised curriculum. If 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.

The information requested is not routinely collected by the Department of Education. I am confident however, on the basis of the support evident at the five regional conferences that I have hosted for primary school principals, that there is a widespread determination within the primary sector to concentrate on delivering the revised curriculum to children.

Independent Selection Tests

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Education what assurances she has received from primary schools that they are continuing to teach the revised curriculum and are not teaching or tutoring pupils for the independent selection tests being implemented by some grammar schools.

(AQW 8329/09)

Minister of Education: I wrote to the Principals and Chairpersons of Boards of Governors of all primary schools on 11 May 2009 setting out the position on this issue:

- (4) Primary Schools have explicit obligations within primary legislation (Articles 4-9 of the Education Order, 2006) to deliver the revised curriculum;
- (5) Primary schools are not legally required to prepare children for a post-primary school's Entrance Test and the Department strongly recommends against it;
- (6) No legislation provides primary schools with any explicit obligation to participate in any arrangements necessary to the operation of a post-primary school's Entrance Test.

I expect all primary schools to fulfil their statutory duties, and act responsibly in dealing with any pressure that may be applied by schools operating an entrance test. Parents also have a right to question the decision of any primary school to deviate from the revised curriculum. If 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.

Bunaithe ar an tacaíocht a léiríodh ag na cúig chomhdháil réigiúnach a bhí agam le príomhoidí bunscoileanna, tá mé muiníneach go bhfuil diongbháilteacht fhorleathan in earnáil an bhunoideachais chun díriú ar an churaclam athbhreithnithe a sholáthar do pháistí.

I am confident, on the basis of the support evident at the five regional conferences that I have hosted for primary school principals, that there is a widespread determination within the primary sector to concentrate on delivering the revised curriculum to children.

Transfer 2010

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education to outline the costs accrued in (i) the Transfer 2010 consultation process; (ii) the process of monitoring the implementation of Transfer 2010; and (iii) the cost of assessing school compliance with Transfer 2010. (AQW 8356/09)

Minister of Education: Is iad na costais a fábhraíodh go dtí seo le linn an phróisis chomhairliúcháin ar Aistriú 2010 ná £14702.14. Níl fáil go fóill ar na costais a bhainfidh le monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm Aistriú 2010 agus ar an chostas a bhainfidh le measúnú a dhéanamh ar an mhéid a chloíonn scoileanna le hAistriú 2010.

Costs accrued in the Transfer 2010 consultation process so far are £14702.14. Costs in respect of monitoring the implementation of Transfer 2010 and the cost of assessing school compliance with Transfer 2010 are not yet available.

Common Entrance Assessments

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail all the primary schools in the catchment area of each of those post-primary schools which will be implementing the Common Entrance Assessments developed by the Association for Quality Education and/or the GL Assessment English and Maths Special Access tests to transfer pupils; and (ii) to list by Education and Library Board area all the post-primary schools which will be using (a) the Common Entrance Assessments developed by the Association for Quality Education and (b) the GL Assessment English and Maths Special Access tests to admit transferring pupils in 2010. (AQW 8360/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sé faoi chúram Bord Gobharnóirí na hiarbhunscoileanna scoilcheantar a bhunú dá scoil, mar shampla, trí thagairt a dhéanamh ar bhunscoil fhriothalach nó ar pharóiste. Ní bhunaíonn an Roinn scoilcheantar le haghaidh gach iarbhunscoil.

It is for the Board of Governors of each post primary school to establish the catchment area of their school by reference to, for instance, feeder primary school or parish. The Department does not establish a catchment area for each post primary school.

Information relating to the admissions criteria of post primary schools will not be known until post primary schools publish their admissions criteria in the Education and Library Board's 'Guide for Parents' Transfer booklets in autumn 2009.

School Meals

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8036/09, to detail the percentage of children currently in receipt of free school meals in post primary schools, broken down by school. (AQW 8363/09)

Minister of Education: Athraíonn líon na bpáistí a fhaigheann béilí scoile ó seachtain go seachtain. Tugann an t-eolas a bhailítear ar bhonn bhliantúil tríd Áireamh na mBéilí Scoile pictiúr dúinn ar na líonta atá ag tógáil béilí ar an lá a bhailítear eolas an áirimh.

The number of children taking school meals varies from week to week. However, information collected annually from the School Meals Census provides a snapshot of the numbers taking meals on the day on which census information is gathered.

On the date of the most recent School Meals Census, 10 October 2008, the proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, in post-primary schools, broken down by school is as follows:

BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	2
Ashfield Boys' High School	11
Ashfield Girls' High School	11
Belfast Boys' Model School	26
Belfast Model School For Girls	14
Belfast Royal Academy	5
Bloomfield Collegiate	3
Campbell College	1
Castle High School	45
Christian Brothers' Secondary School	55
Coláiste Feirste	27
Corpus Christi College	47
De La Salle College	25
Dominican College	6
Grosvenor Grammar School	5
Hazelwood College	32
Hunterhouse College	3
Little Flower Girls' School	20
Malone Integrated College	33
Methodist College	1
Orangefield High School	35
Our Lady of Mercy Girls' School	28
Rathmore Grammar School	1
St Dominic's High School	16
St Gemma's High School	58
St Genevieve's High School	30
St Joseph's College	22
St Louise's Comprehensive College	27
St Malachy's College	7
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	16
St Patrick's College	36
St Rose's High School	35
Strathearn School	1
The Royal Belfast Academical Institution	1
Victoria College	4
Wellington College	1

NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Antrim Grammar School	2
Ballee High School	39
Ballycastle High School	13
Ballyclare High School	1
Ballyclare Secondary School	7
Ballymena Academy	2
Ballymoney High School	16
Belfast High School	1
Cambridge House Grammar School	4
Carrickfergus College	8
Carrickfergus Grammar School	3
Coleraine Academical Institution	2
Coleraine College	23
Coleraine High School	3
Cross and Passion College	13
Crumlin Integrated College	6
Cullybackey High School	11
Dalriada School	1
Dominican College, Portstewart	8
Downshire School	8
Dunclug College	9
Dunluce School	14
Edmund Rice College	29
Garvagh High School	22
Glengormley High School	13
Larne Grammar School	4
Larne High School	19
Loreto College	3
Maghera High School	28
Magherafelt High School	11
Monkstown Community School	11
Newtownabbey Community High School	30
North Coast Integrated College	21
Our Lady of Lourdes High School	29
Parkhall College (Junior)	15
Parkhall College (Senior)	11
Rainey Endowed School	3
Slemish College	11

School	%
Sperrin Int College	18
St Aloysius' High School	38
St Benedict's College	21
St Colm's High School	14
St Comgall's High School	17
St Joseph's College	18
St Louis Grammar School	4
St Macnissi's College	4
St Mary's College, Clady	18
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	5
St Patrick's Co-Ed Comp. College, Maghera	9
St Patrick's College, Ballymena	17
St Paul's College	20
St Pius X College	20
Ulidia Integrated College	10

SOUTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Assumption Grammar School	3
Bangor Academy and 6th Form College	10
Bangor Grammar School	2
Ballynahinch High School	8
Blackwater Integrated College	16
De La Salle Secondary School	23
Donaghadee High School	16
Down High School	1
Dundonald High School	24
Dunmurry High School	26
Fort Hill College	5
Friends' School	1
Glastry College	8
Glenlola Collegiate	1
Knockbreda High School	24
Lagan College	10
Laurelhill Community College	10
Lisnagarvey High School	41
Movilla High School	17
Nendrum College	23
Newtownbreda High School	15
Our Lady and St Patrick's College	0

School	%
Priory Integrated College	22
Regent House School	1
Saintfield High School	4
Shimna Integrated College	11
St Colman's High School	17
St Colm's High School	30
St Colmcille's High School	11
St Columbanus' College	18
St Columba's College	12
St Malachy's High School	21
St Mary's High School	19
St Patrick's Grammar School	4
St Patrick's High School	18
Strangford Integrated College	7
Sullivan Upper School	1
Wallace High School	1

SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	8
Armagh Integrated College	30
Aughnacloy College	13
Banbridge Academy	2
Banbridge High School	12
Brownlow Integrated College	28
City of Armagh High School	19
Clounagh Junior High	15
Cookstown High School	11
Craigavon Senior High School (Lurgan)	15
Craigavon Senior High School (Portadown)	16
Drumcree College	36
Dromore High School	6
Fivemiletown College	8
Holy Trinity College	21
Integrated College Dungannon	22
Killicomaine Junior High School	8
Kilkeel High School	3
Lismore Comprehensive School	26
Lurgan College	2
Lurgan Junior High School	10

School	%
Markethill High School	3
New-Bridge Integrated College	9
Newry High School	12
Newtownhamilton High School	2
Our Lady's Grammar School	7
Portadown College	1
Rathfriland High School	9
Sacred Heart Grammar School	7
St Brigid's High School	36
St Catherine's College	16
St Ciaran's High School	11
St Colman's College	4
St Columban's College	26
St Joseph's Boys' High School (Newry)	39
St Joseph's Boys' High School (Coalisland)	43
St Joseph's Boy's High School (Crossmaglen)	32
St Joseph's Grammar School	10
St Louis Grammar School	9
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	22
St Mary's High School, Newry	29
St Mary's High School, Lurgan	16
St Michael's Grammar School	8
St Patrick's Academy	10
St Patrick's College, Dungannon	21
St Patrick's College, Banbridge	27
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	9
St Patrick's High School, Keady	13
St Paul's High School (Bessbrook)	23
St Paul's Junior High (Lurgan)	17
Tandragee Junior High School	12
The Royal School Armagh	3
The Royal School Dungannon	3

WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Castleberg High School	21
Christian Brothers' Grammar School	7
Lisneal College	19
Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar School	2
Dean Maguirc College	17

School	%
Devenish College	10
Drumragh College	26
Erne Integrated College	17
Foyle and Londonderry College	5
Holy Cross College	27
Immaculate Conception College	41
Limavady Grammar School	5
Limavady High School	15
Lisnaskea High School	14
Loreto Grammar School	10
Lumen Christi College	6
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	8
Oakgrove Integrated College	29
Omagh Academy	3
Omagh High School	10
Portora Royal School	3
Sacred Heart College	23
St Aidan's High School, Derrylin	7
St Brigid's College	55
St Cecilia's College	42
St Columb's College	18
St Comgall's High School	29
St Eugene's College, Castlederg	51
St Eugene's College, Roslea	23
St Fanchea's College	19
St John's High School	36
St Joseph's High School, Creggan	27
St Joseph's High School, Enniskillen	16
St Mary's High School, Brollagh	25
St Mary's College, Irvinestown	26
St Mary's High School, Limavady	26
St Mary's College, Creggan	60
St Michael's College	7
St Patrick's and St Brigid's High School	24
St Patrick's High School, Dungiven	26
St Peter's High School	41
Strabane Grammar School	11
Strabane High School	32
Thornhill College	17

Nursery Places in East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8040/09, what action has she taken to address the shortfall in nursery places in East Belfast. (AQW 8383/09)

Minister of Education: The process for admission to pre-school provision is a preference based application system and parents are advised to list, in order of preference, a number of centres on the application form as it is not always possible to meet parents' first choice preferences. Funded places are available in both statutory nursery and voluntary/private settings.

The Belfast and South-Eastern Education and Library Boards have now provided revised figures which indicate that the number of applications which listed a statutory nursery setting in the East Belfast Westminster parliamentary constituency as a preference and which were not facilitated was 402. Of these, 237 were subsequently offered a place by other providers that they had listed as a preference. 165 children were unplaced at the end of the admissions process of which 90 were in their final pre-school year and 75 in their penultimate pre-school year. As at 1 May, 46 children in their penultimate pre-school year (i.e. aged under 3) had been admitted to statutory nursery settings in the East Belfast Westminster parliamentary constituency. If the parents of children in their final pre-school year had applied for any of these 46 places they would have received priority in the admissions process over the younger children and would have gained the place. In addition there were 37 places unfilled in the East Belfast constituency.

Both the BELB and SEELB Pre-School Education Advisory Groups will continue to review the uptake of funded places in the voluntary/private sector for the 2009/10 school year and reallocate places between providers as necessary.

Tá mé sásta go bhfuil leibhéal foriomlán an tsoláthair réamhscoile cistithe i mBéal Feirste Thoir leordhóthanach.

I am satisfied that overall the level of funded pre-school provision in the East Belfast constituency area is adequate.

Teacher Redundancy

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education whether she could confirm that every teacher facing redundancy on 30 June 2009 will receive their redundancy payment by that date; and can she give an assurance that all redundancy payments will be in keeping with the full amounts due. (AQW 8399/09)

Minister of Education: Ní bhfuair an Roinn aon fhógra maidir le hiomarcaíocht mhúinteoirí faoin dáta 30 Meitheamh. Gheobhaidh múinteoirí a chaillfidh a bpostanna de bharr na hiomarcaíochta ag deireadh na bliana scoile i mí Lúnasa 2009, a n-íocaíocht iomarcaíochta mar chuid den tuarastal i mí Lúnasa má fhaigheann Foireann um Phá agus Pinsin na Múinteoirí an páipéarachas cuí faoin 6 Lúnasa. Beidh méid an íocaíocht iomarcaíochta ar aon dul leis an ráta cúitimh ceadaithe ag fostóir an mhúinteora agus is ar a shon a dhéanann an Roinn an íocaíocht.

The Department has not been notified of any teacher redundancies at 30 June. Teachers' who are being made redundant at the end of the school year, in August 2009, will receive their redundancy payment in their August salary provided the appropriate paperwork is received in Teachers' Pay and Pensions Team by 6 August. The amount of redundancy payment will be in line with the compensation rate authorised by the teacher's employer on whose behalf the Department makes payment.

School Uniform Allowances Policy

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Education to outline the rules governing the School Uniform Allowances policy. (AQW 8409/09)

Minister of Education: Article 60 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 places a duty on each Education and Library Board to make a scheme for the provision of, or contribution towards the cost of, clothing for certain categories of pupils at grant-aided schools or institutes of further education. The scheme applies to post-primary schools, further education colleges and day pupils at special schools and from the 2009/10 school year I have introduced a new primary school uniform allowance. Assistance is available towards the cost of

school uniform and appropriate clothing suitable for physical education. Eligible students who attend FE colleges may be assisted with the cost of PE clothing. Normally only one clothing allowance per pupil will be paid during the school year.

A pupil is entitled to a clothing allowance where:

- he/she or the parent is in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance; or
- the parent receives the Child Tax Credit; and is not receiving Working Tax Credit because he/she works less than 16 hours per week and has an annual taxable income of £16,040 or less; or
- the parent receives the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or
- he/she is the child of an Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

The Clothing Allowances Scheme is not intended to cover the full cost of a uniform, rather it is designed to assist those in need with the cost of purchase.

The primary school allowance for 2009/10 will be £35. The post-primary/special school rates are:

Under 15 years old	£50.00
PE	£21.50
Total	£71.50
15 years old and over	£55.00
PE	£21.50
Total	£76.50

Ní bhaineann caitheamh éide scoile le reachtaíocht oideachais ar bith ach déanann na scoileanna an socrú faoi. Baineann bainistíocht na scoileanna ar bhonn laethúil le Príomhoidí agus cuirtear aon rialacha faoi éide na ndaltaí san áireamh leis seo, faoi réir treoir ar bith a thugtar dóibh ón Bhord Gobharnóirí.

The wearing of a school uniform is not governed by any education legislation but falls to schools to determine. The day-to-day management of schools, including any rules regarding the dress of pupils, is a matter for school Principals, subject to any directions that might be given by the Board of Governors.

Class Sizes in Primary Schools

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education when she intends to bring forward proposals to the Executive to increase funding to levels that would allow a reduction in class sizes in primary schools. (AQW 8427/09)

Minister of Education: Mar chuid den phróiseas cáinainseise oideachais, tá mar thosaíochtaí agam méadú maoinithe chuig seirbhísí tosaigh scoile agus méadú cion an mhaoinithe atá ar fáil agus atá á thabhairt do bhunscoileanna, agus ag an am céanna ag cosaint na daltaí sin atá ag céimeanna eile oideachais.

As part of the education budget process, I have given priority to increasing funding to front-line school services and to increasing the proportion of available funding going to primary schools, whilst protecting pupils in the other phases of education.

School Boards of Governors have flexibility, afforded to them under the Local Management of Schools arrangements, to take decisions on class sizes and pupil-teacher ratios, in view of their responsibilities for determining the school's staffing complement and for managing the school's education budget. This allows the schools' Boards of Governors to determine how they use their delegated funding to maximum effect in accordance with their school's specific needs and priorities.

Decisions, by schools, on class sizes must also be taken in certain cases in accordance with specific statutory limitations and educational and health and safety policy considerations.

The quality of teachers and the instruction they provide is the key influence on learning outcomes, whilst there is also evidence that smaller class sizes in early years learning can have a positive impact on outcomes.

I recognise the need for teachers in schools with significant proportions of disadvantaged pupils to have smaller classes so that they can deal with the barriers to learning; give individual help to pupils; or work in small groups.

Since coming into office, I have initiated work to develop policies to tackle underachievement and ensure that every child has equal opportunity to achieve to her or his full potential – ‘Every School a Good School’, the new school improvement policy has recently been published and the revised Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is being finalised following the public consultation.

Looking ahead, I have asked my officials to review schools funding, with a particular focus on examining the disparity in funding between the primary and post-primary sectors.

Class Sizes in Primary Schools

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education if her Department has prepared draft proposals, including economic and financial planning, to increase the pupil element of the common funding formula in primary schools, with the aim of reducing class sizes and the pupil-teacher ratio. (AQW 8429/09)

Minister of Education: Mar chuid den phróiseas cáinainéise oideachais, tá mar thosaíochtaí agam méadú maoinithe chuig seirbhísí tosaigh scoile agus méadú cion an mhaoinithe atá ar fáil agus atá á thabhairt do bhunscoileanna, agus ag an am céanna ag cosaint na daltaí sin atá ag céimeanna eile oideachais.

As part of the education budget process, I have given priority to increasing funding to front-line school services and to increasing the proportion of available funding going to primary schools, whilst protecting pupils in the other phases of education.

School Boards of Governors have flexibility, afforded to them under the Local Management of Schools arrangements, to take decisions on class sizes and pupil-teacher ratios, in view of their responsibilities for determining the school’s staffing complement and for managing the school’s education budget. This allows the schools’ Boards of Governors to determine how they use their delegated funding to maximum effect in accordance with their school’s specific needs and priorities.

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Looking ahead, I have asked my officials to review schools funding, with a particular focus on examining the disparity in funding between the primary and post-primary sectors.

Educational Psychologists

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to detail whether or not educational psychologists will be permitted to assist maintained, controlled and voluntary grammar schools with tribunals, given that the funding is already allocated to Education Library boards to provide this service. (AQW 8456/09)

Minister of Education: Ní bhíonn Siceolaithe Oideachais ag cuidiú le scoileanna gramadaí faoi láthair i gcás Binsí Achomhairc Iontrála, agus mar sin de ní leithdháiltear aon chistiú ar Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne chun na críche sin.

Educational Psychologists do not currently assist grammar schools with Admission Appeal Tribunals, therefore there is currently no funding allocated to Education and Library Boards for this purpose.

Youth Clubs and Services

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education what formula or method the Belfast Education and Library Board uses to distribute money for youth clubs and services in Belfast. (AQW 8470/09)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn an Roinn Oideachais maoiniú don Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste le seirbhísí don aos óg a sholáthar sa cheantar.

The Department of Education provides funding to the Belfast Education and Library Board for the provision of youth services in its area.

It is the responsibility of the Boards to decide how to distribute their budgets and resources taking account of the need to ensure that resources are allocated on an equitable basis and based on an assessment of objective need.

The Chief Executive of the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) has provided the following information on the methods used to distribute money for youth clubs and services in Belfast –

Each Education and Library Board has a support scheme for voluntary youth groups. The Belfast Education and Library Boards (BELB) scheme is based on a registration process which is followed through by the Area Youth Officer based on their detailed knowledge of their designated area. I have placed a copy of the BELB Support Scheme in the library for your convenience.

As the youth service works within a finite budget, any new bids for funding have to be balanced within available resources. Where required, an assessment process is undertaken within the BELB to consider new bids for funding or ‘gaps’ in youth service provision that are identified by area youth officers.

The 5 Education and Library Boards youth services’ have recently completed an Equality Impact Assessment of their ‘Schemes of assistance for voluntary youth groups’. This has resulted in the formation of a new common policy and guidance. It is intended that this new scheme will be implemented by the Education and Skills Authority.

Youth Clubs and Services

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education how much of the core funding allocated to the Belfast Education and Library Board for youth clubs and services is spent on provision of services on the ground, compared to salaries and administration costs, in the last year. (AQW 8471/09)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn an Roinn Oideachais maoiniú don Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste le seirbhísí don aos óg a sholáthar ina cheantar.

The Department of Education provides funding to the Belfast Education and Library Board for the provision of youth services in its area.

It is the responsibility of the Boards to decide how to distribute their budgets and resources taking account of the need to ensure that resources are allocated on an equitable basis and based on an assessment of objective need.

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

	Expenditure 2008/09
HQ Youth Development - Salaries	342,972
HQ Administration- Salaries	118,957
HQ Miscellaneous	27,043
Youth Workers Salary & Contributions (Controlled/Voluntary)	1,903,885
Statutory Youth Club Costs (Controlled YC)	396,524
Grants to Voluntary Youth Clubs	338,554
Youth Worker Misc Costs	9,065
Total Youth Expenditure	3,137,000

Teaching Staff with Disabilities

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of teaching staff with disabilities who taught at (i) primary schools; and (ii) post primary schools, in the academic year 2008/09, broken down by Education and Library Board area. (AQW 8474/09)

Minister of Education: Thug Príomfheidhmeannaí na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne le fios don Roinn nach bhfuil an t-eolas a iarradh acu agus nach bhfuil siad faoi aon oibleagáid dhlíthiúil an t-eolas seo a bheith acu.

The Department has been advised by the Chief Executives of the 5 Education and Library Boards that they do not hold the requested information and are under no legal obligation to do so.

Pupils with Disabilities

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education how many pupils with disabilities attended (i) primary schools; and (ii) post primary schools, in the academic year 2008/09, broken down by Education and Library Board area. (AQW 8481/09)

Minister of Education: Comprehensive information on pupils recorded as having been assessed as having a disability is not currently available for children in schools.

Tá eolas ar líon na bpáistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SENanna) acu sa tábla thíos.

Information on the number of children with special educational needs (SENs) is provided below.

PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY PUPILS RECORDED AS BEING ON THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CODE OF PRACTICE (STAGE 1 – 5) 2008/09

School type	ELB					Total
	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	
Primary	6,259	6,138	6,466	6,475	6,988	32,326
Post primary	6,181	4,423	3,466	3,918	4,106	22,094
Total	12,440	10,561	9,932	10,393	11,094	54,420

Source: Annual School Census.

Note:

- Figures for primary schools include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- A child has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made.
- Children at Stages 1 – 5 of the SEN Code of Practice have been included. The details of each of the Stages of assessment are as follows:
 - Stage 1 – Teachers identify and register a child's special educational needs and, consulting the school's SEN co-ordinator, take initial action.
 - Stage 2 – The SEN co-ordinator takes lead responsibility for collecting and recording information and for co-ordinating the child's special educational provision, working with the child's teachers.
 - Stage 3 – Teachers and the SEN co-ordinator are supported by specialists from outside the school.
 - Stage 4 – The Board considers the need for a statutory assessment and, if appropriate, makes a multi-disciplinary assessment.
 - Stage 5 – The Board considers the need for a statement of special educational needs; if appropriate, it makes a statement and arranges, monitors and reviews provision.

Epilepsy

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 7908/09, if she intends to introduce a training programme for teachers on dealing with children who have epilepsy. (AQW 8507/09)

Minister of Education: Mar a d'fhreagair mé sna AQW's ar thitmeas a d'ardaigh tú le déanaí, is dualagas reachtúil na scoileanna agus na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) é le riachtanais pháistí, a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SEN) acu, a aithint, a mheasúnú agus i gcásanna áirithe le soláthar speisialta oideachais a dhéanamh a bhfreastalóidh ar na riachtanais sin. Is é atá i gceist leis an creatlach ná

tacaíocht a thabhairt do gach páiste a bhfuil SEN acu agus tá na páistí a bhfuil diagnóis titimis orthu curtha san áireamh leis seo.

As advised in my response to your recent AQWs on epilepsy it is the statutory duty of schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to identify, assess and in appropriate cases make special educational provision to meet the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN). The framework applies to support for all children with SEN, including those diagnosed with epilepsy.

The Chief Executives of the ELBs have advised that while they have no plans to introduce a training programme for all teachers on dealing with children who have epilepsy, schools can request such training from the ELBs when a particular special need, including epilepsy, is identified for specific pupils. It is appropriate that teachers receive training in epilepsy when required.

Classroom Assistants

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what the total salary bill for classroom assistants in the SELB area represents as a percentage of the total salary bill for teaching staff in the SELB, in each of the last three years. (AQW 8508/09)

Minister of Education: I ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas (2006-07, 2007-08 agus 2008-09), is é 11.6%, 9.0% agus 11.3% faoi seach an bille tuarastail iomlán a bhaineann le cuntaí ranga agus é sonraithe mar chéatadán den bhille tuarastail iomlán na bhfoirne teagaisc ó cheantair Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt.

The total salary bill for classroom assistants expressed as a percentage of the total salary bill for teaching staff in the Southern Education and Library Board area in each of the last three years (2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09) was 11.6%, 9.0% and 11.3% respectively.

Classroom Assistants

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education how many classroom assistants were employed by the SELB in the last three years. (AQW 8509/09)

Minister of Education: Ba é líon na gcúntóirí ranga a bhí fostaithe ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas (2007, 2008 agus 2009) ná 1,574, 1,727 agus 1,819 faoi seach.

The number of classroom assistants that were employed by the Southern Education and Library Board in the last three years (2007, 2008 and 2009) was 1,574, 1,727 and 1,819 respectively.

These figures reflect the number of classroom assistants in post on 1st January each year, and do not include the number of vacant posts.

School Meals

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what action she has taken to improve the quality of school meals and the diet of schoolchildren in the last three years. (AQW 8510/09)

Minister of Education: The Department of Education (DE) began the process of improving food in schools by implementing a pilot project in around 100 schools during 2004 to test the reaction to the introduction of compulsory nutritional standards for school meals. As a result the Department, in conjunction with the Education and Library Boards and other school authorities, began to introduce the standards to schools during the autumn 2005 term and they are now in place in all schools here.

The aims of the Standards are to help pupils make healthy choices by providing a range of healthy meals, to convey the meaning and importance of a healthy diet, and to contribute to a reduction in levels of child obesity.

The Department is also making available additional funding of over £3 million per annum to ensure that the food content value of school meals is a minimum of 50p in nursery, primary and special schools and a minimum of 60p in post-primary schools.

From September 2007 the Standards programme was extended to include other sources of food in schools, such as tuck shops and vending machines. Only healthy choices should be provided in vending machines, tuck shops, and other sources of food within the premises of each school.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has appointed two Nutritional Associates to evaluate the nutritional quality of meals in schools and examine schools' general approaches to promoting healthy eating as part of the school inspection process.

In addition, DE and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have also jointly funded the appointment of a Food in Schools Co-ordinator based in the Public Health Agency who is responsible for developing guidance on food in schools and for providing specialist support to Education Boards and Health partners. The "School Food – Top Marks" programme providing an essential guide for teachers, pupils, professional caterers and others in promoting and implementing healthier eating and drinking in schools was launched in March 2009.

Tá dréachtbheartas maidir le Bia i Scoileanna faofa ag an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin le déanaí a leagann amach aidhmeanna agus cuspóirí an bheartais ó thaobh chúrsaí bia i scoileanna agus a dhéanann cur síos ar réimse straitéisí agus pleananna atá á gcur i bhfeidhm le cothú feabhsaithe a sholáthar do na páistí scoile. Eiseofar an dréachtbheartas le haghaidh comhairliúcháin poiblí san Fhómhair 2009.

The Executive has recently approved a draft Food in Schools policy which sets out the overall aims and objectives of the policy in relation to food in schools and describes the range of strategies and plans that are being put in place to deliver improved nutrition for our school children. The draft policy will be issued for public consultation in the autumn 2009.

Primary Schools Languages Programme

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to outline in detail the procedure which she followed in selecting Spanish as the language used in the Primary Schools Languages Programme and to give details of the decision making process in the selection of Spanish in the Primary Languages Programme. (AQW 8511/09)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar na freagraí a thug mé ar a cheisteanna, AQWanna 5187/09 agus 8166/09, a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 20 Feabhra agus ar 12 Meitheamh faoi seach, áit a leag mé amach go soléir an seasamh maidir le Spáinnis agus é san áireamh sa Chlár Phríomhtheangacha.

I refer the member to my answers to his previous questions AQWs 5187/09 and 8166/09 published in the Official on 20 February and 12 June respectively, where I clearly set out the position regarding the inclusion of Spanish in the Primary Languages Programme.

Buddy Bear Trust

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education (i) for an update on actions resulting from the motion passed by the Assembly in support of the Buddy Bear Trust of 19 February 2008; (ii) to outline what assistance her Department intends to lend the Trust; and (iii) to outline what engagement she has had with the chairman of the Trust in the past 12 months. (AQW 8521/09)

Minister of Education: Bhuail mé le Cathaoirleach an Buddy Bear Trust (BBT) agus toscaireacht thuismitheoirí, pháistí agus ionadaithe eile BBT ar 23 Eanáir 2008 le moltaí maoinithe ó thaobh todcháil Scoil Buddy Bear de a phlé.

I met with the Chairperson of the Buddy Bear Trust (BBT) and a delegation of parents, children and other BBT representatives on 23 January 2008 to discuss funding proposals in relation to the future of the Buddy Bear School.

At this meeting I was presented with a proposals document setting out several options and, on 12 June 2008, I responded to those proposals, comprehensively setting out the Department of Education's (DE) position in relation to them, and concluding that they were unviable.

On 28 November 2008, the BBT presented further proposals to DE in a different format from those previously presented. DE has consulted both in the north and south of Ireland. Following detailed consideration of the funding options, DE again concluded that the proposed funding options continue to be unviable. I wrote to the Chairperson of the Buddy Bear Trust setting out my response on 2 April 2009.

The Buddy Bear School is an independent school and DE does not directly fund schools in the independent sector. DE has, however, provided support to this school by granting approval under Article 26 of the Education (NI) Order 1996, as suitable for the admission of children with special educational needs. ELBs can, therefore, place a child in the school without the need for specific Departmental approval. Should an ELB place a child with a statement of special educational needs in any independent school they –

- (a) shall pay the fees payable in respect of the education provided for the child at the school;
- (b) may pay any fees payable in respect of board and lodging provided for the child at the school; and
- (c) may provide transport for the child to facilitate his or her attendance at the school.

In addition to meeting with the BBT, I have received correspondence from the Chairperson of the Trust on 23 June 2008, 8 July 2008, 28 November 2008 and 10 June 2009 seeking to meet with me to discuss funding and support for the Buddy Bear School. As I have clearly set out my position with regard to the funding proposals, I was unable to agree to the requests since meeting would have been of no benefit.

The Department has also dealt with a very substantial body of correspondence raised by various Government Departments, the Committees for Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Parliamentary and Assembly representatives both in the north and south of Ireland, local councils and private citizens as a result of the campaign being conducted by the Chairperson of the BBT and on each occasion I have responded fully setting out the Department's conclusions on the proposals presented, on behalf of the BBT.

School Admissions

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education if she can give an assurance that all Year 8 pupils living in North Down will be allocated to schools in North Down in September 2009. (AQO 3015/09)

Minister of Education: Ligeann beartas an rollaithe oscailte do thuismitheoirí a roghanna a thabhairt maidir leis na scoileanna ar mian leo a bpáistí a bheith ag freastal orthu.

The policy of open enrolment enables parents to state their preferences for the schools they wish their children to attend. Not every pupil resident in North Down will apply to be admitted to schools in North Down.

There are currently fewer than 5¹ children resident in North Down who have not gained admission to any of the schools listed on their Transfer Form, however, the majority of these pupils did not apply to a school situated in North Down.

All of these pupils, in consultation with the Education and Library Boards, will be placed in a school within a reasonable travelling distance from their home.

This year, the Department has not been approached by any post primary school in the North Down area to provide additional places for local children.

Primary Schools: Language Teachers

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Education to outline her plans to introduce full-time teachers of French and Spanish into primary schools. (AQO 3017/09)

Minister of Education: Níl plananna ar bith agam le múinteoirí Fraincise agus Spáinnise lánaimseartha a thabhairt isteach chuig bunscoileanna.

I have no plans to introduce full-time teachers of French and Spanish into Primary Schools. It is up to Primary Schools to decide on the teachers they use to deliver the revised curriculum, including the modern language provision which they offer.

I am however supporting Primary Schools through my Primary Languages Programme. It is already providing over 320 primary schools with tutors who can work alongside classroom teachers to deliver lessons in Spanish and Irish and, shortly, in Polish as well to support the integration of newcomer languages. Around 13,000

¹ The exact number of children has not been specified in order to prevent the identification of individual children.

primary pupils each week benefit from participating in this programme which is making a great contribution to language learning for our young people.

As well as this, schools are already encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages, and the revised curriculum provides them with greater flexibility to do so. This includes scope for schools wishing to offer language learning at primary level, before it becomes a statutory requirement at Key Stage 3, and a qualification choice at Key Stage 4 and sixth form.

We know from experience in other European countries and our own Irish Medium sector that an early start to learning a second language is a key way of ensuring success in language learning at post primary and into adulthood.

There is a range of existing support for the delivery of an additional language in Primary Schools available through CCEA and the Education and Library Boards.

There are so many languages in our schools now. There is already a lot of “good work” going on in primary schools and on hearing about this and of the success of the Primary Languages Programme re-enforces my commitment to promoting an additional language in schools here.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Education what additional difficulties she has identified resulting from the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority three quarters of the way into a financial year. (AQO 3018/09)

Minister of Education: Cé go mbeidh an tÚdarás um Oideachas agus Scileanna oibríoch ar 1 Eanáir 2010, tá rialacha cuntasáíochta an Rialtais ann a chuireann in iúl go mbeidh an tÚdarás cuntasach faoin Roinn Oideachais le haghaidh gach gníomh airgeadais le linn na bliana airgeadais iomlán 2009-10 mar gur bunaíodh le linn bliana airgeadais é.

Government accounting rules dictate that although the Education and Skills Authority will become operational on 1 January 2010, because it is being established part way through a financial year, the Authority will be accountable to the Department of Education for all of the financial activities during the full 2009-10 financial year. This will include the financial activities undertaken by the Education & Library Boards and the other DE funded bodies during the period 1 April to 31 December 2009 prior to the establishment of ESA.

In light of this, my Department has reviewed the governance arrangements for the existing bodies and put in place a number of processes to oversee the transition to ESA.

One such change is the appointment of the Chief Executive (designate) of the Education and Skills Authority as an additional Departmental Accounting Officer for the period to 31 December 2009. This is to ensure effective oversight of the management and utilisation of all of the resources for which the new Authority will be accountable in 2009-10.

Post-Primary Transfer

Mr D O’Loan asked the Minister of Education what assessment she has made of the potential for legal challenges being taken as a result of unregulated transfer. (AQO 3019/09)

Minister of Education: Sa treoir ar Aistriú Dhá Mhíle is a Deich a foilsíodh le haghaidh comhairliúcháin ar an dara lá de mhí Feabhra Dhá Mhíle is a Naoi, leagtar amach polasaí ginearálta na Roinne ar iontrálacha iarbhunscoile.

The Transfer 2010 guidance published for consultation on 2 February 2009 sets out the Department’s policy on post-primary admissions generally. It confirms that there will not be a state sponsored test, and sets out a number of areas where breakaway grammar schools intending to operate entrance tests may be vulnerable to challenge on equality grounds if their arrangements are not as robust as those previously in place when the Transfer Test was in use.

I strongly recommend that schools do not operate breakaway entrance tests and urge any that are proposing to do so to reconsider their decision.

I am currently considering responses to consultations on the Department's Transfer 2010 guidance with a view to finalising this guidance as soon as possible.

Grammar School Admissions

Mr F Brolly asked the Minister of Education if she will support parents who feel that their children are entitled to attend a state-funded grammar school without having to endure a non-state sanctioned entrance test. (AQO 3020/09)

Minister of Education: Creidim gur chóir go mbeadh páistí ábalta freastal ar an scoil oiriúnach is cóngaraí dóibh, más é sin a dtoil, agus creidim nár chóir go mbeadh ar pháiste ar bith teist iontrála a dhéanamh chun áit a fháil in iar-bhunscoil, is cuma cén earnáil ina bhfuil siad.

I believe that children should be able to attend their nearest suitable school, if they so desire, and I do not believe that any child should have to sit an entrance test in order to gain admission to a post-primary school, of whatever type.

If all schools adhere to the Department's Transfer 2010 guidance, which is being finalised following a period of consultation, testing would not be a factor in any child's application to a grammar school.

Youth Services: East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education what steps she is taking to address the detached youth provision in east Belfast, when benchmarked against the detached youth provision provided in north, south and west Belfast. (AQO 3021/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste (BELB) freagrach go príomha ar sholáthar do dhaoine óga i gceantar Bhéal Feirste Thoir, cé go bhfuil an Bord Oideachas agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt freagrach ar cheantar an Chaisleáin Riabhach, a bhfuil bardaí lasitigh den toghcheantar Bhéal Feirste Thoir mar chodanna de.

The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) is primarily responsible for youth provision in the East Belfast area, although the South Eastern Education and Library Board has responsibility for the Castlereagh area, which includes wards which lie within the Belfast East constituency.

It is the responsibility of the relevant Boards to decide how to distribute their budgets and resources, taking account of the need to ensure that resources are allocated on an equitable basis and based on an assessment of objective need.

I have been provided with the following information by the Chief Executives of the Belfast and South Eastern Education and Library Boards.

The BELB has filled two Youth Outreach posts for the East Belfast area for 2009/10. This represents an increase in provision in the East Belfast area from last year, when these posts were vacant.

An additional Youth Outreach post is funded by the South Eastern Education and Library Board in the Castlereagh area.

Following the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority on 1 January 2010, decisions about resource allocations for youth provision across the north of Ireland will be made by the ESA, within parameters set by the Department of Education. The ESA will operate at a sub-regional level and will take into account needs at that sub-regional level.

Portadown College

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for Portadown College. (AQO 3022/09)

Minister of Education: Chríochnaigh an Roinn an measúnú a bhí á dhéanamh aici ar an leagan nua den bhreithmheas eacnamaíochta le haghaidh Portadown College a chuir Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Dheiscirt isteach.

The Department has completed its assessment of a revised economic appraisal for Portadown College, which was submitted by the Southern Education and Library Board. The Board has agreed to undertake further work on the option for a replacement school on the playing fields on the lower part of the existing school site.

School Buildings: SEELB Area

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education, if an inspection reports states that a building is unfit for purpose, what criteria the South Eastern Education and Library Board should follow in relation to undertaking new school projects or major renovations to schools. (AQO 3023/09)

Minister of Education: Caithfear aon thionscadal scoile nua a mholtar faomhadh a fháil ón Roinn Oideachais agus measúnú bheith déanta air faoi chomhthéacs pleanála bunaithe sa cheantar agus faoi chreat an bheartais. Tá an Beartas um Scoileanna Inbhuanaithe, Aistriú 2010, ‘Gach Scoil Ina Scoil Mhaith’ agus Athbhreithniú ar an Ghaelscolaíocht curtha san áireamh leis seo.

Any proposed new school projects must be approved by the Department of Education and considered in the context of area-based planning and the policy framework.

Proposals will be brought forward by the South Eastern Education and Library Board and the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). ESA will be operational from 1 January 2010.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Claims for Statutory Redundancy

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of claims for statutory redundancy and related payments made to his Department by employees of businesses which have gone bankrupt or into administration; (ii) the number of these claims which have been approved; and (iii) the total cost to his Department of meeting these payments, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8314/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The Department for Employment and Learning records the number of application forms and associated claims¹ from employees of businesses that have become legally insolvent. Claims which are not approved for any reason are not separately recorded but the decision not to approve can be challenged by the claimant at an Industrial Tribunal and if successful, would subsequently appear in the value of claims paid from the National Insurance Fund.

The tables below provide a break-down of application forms received in each of the last five years, the number of associated claims and the value of payments made to employees as a result of claims being processed as well as the administrative costs associated with processing those claims.

¹ An application form (RPI) can comprise of between 1 & 4 claims in respect of Redundancy, Arrears of Pay, Holiday Pay and Compensatory Notice Pay

Year	Applications for payment from the National Insurance Fund		Value of Claims Paid
	Application Forms	Claims	From National Insurance Fund
04/05	1,013	2,897	£2,615,576
05/06	1,016	2,925	£2,229,530
06/07	948	2,651	£2,269,396
07/08	827	2,355	£1,902,010
08/09	1,758	4,738	£3,821,751

Year	Administration costs recovered from National Insurance Fund
04/05	£374,000
05/06	£357,000
06/07	£389,000
07/08	£398,000
08/09	£388,000

The payments are made out of the National Insurance Fund, as indeed are the administrative costs. DEL acts as an 'Agent' of HM Revenue & Customs and as such the costs of administering the Redundancy Payments Scheme are fully recovered. Therefore, the value of the claims paid and associated administrative costs are cost neutral and not to the detriment of DEL's overall resource allocation.

Pathways to Work Programme

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the level and quality of service for those with disabilities entering the Pathways to Work programme. (AQW 8495/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Pathways to Work Service has been available throughout Northern Ireland since April 2008, having been introduced in seven phases from October 2005. An early evaluation of Pathways to Work highlighted that the Pathways Advisers were, in many instances, engaging with Incapacity Benefit clients with complex physical and mental health needs. In response, we decided that the Pathways Teams should be led by an expert in the area of disability and in 2007/08 existing Disablement Employment Advisers became Pathways Team Leaders. A further 12 Team Leaders were recruited in a special recruitment exercise and trained to ensure that Team Leaders were available in each of the 35 office areas. In addition, all of the Departments existing 130 Pathways Personal Advisers received specific training in disability issues and the Department's disability provision.

To enhance the range and quality of provision available for this vulnerable client group, new provision such as the Work Preparation Programme, the Condition Management Programme and, for those who meet the eligibility conditions, the Return to Work Credit was introduced. Importantly these initiatives are available to not only those who were mandated to engage with Pathways but also to people with disabilities who seek the Department's services on a voluntary basis.

The Department's Disablement Advisory Service has also established a Pathways Support Model which plays a key role in ensuring that a quality work-focused service continues to be delivered to clients. Resourced with three Disability Programme Managers and three Occupational Psychologists who were recruited specifically for this role, it provides advice and guidance to Advisers on Disability Programmes, programme eligibility and compatibility, disability awareness and on complex disability issues. It also helps to identify and provide any additional training which is required for Advisers.

The progressive roll out of Pathways means that, as with any new initiative, there are varying degrees of expertise within our Pathways Teams, with some teams in place for less than 12 months. However, I am pleased to note that the outcomes from those areas where Pathways has been in operation for a period are positive, with increased numbers of individuals accessing work. To the end of April 2009, over 3,000 people have been helped to find work, and increases of 10% in off-flows from incapacity benefit, measured after 6 months of a claim, have been achieved. In addition the numbers of clients applying for and receiving Return to Work Credit has nearly doubled in the period from autumn 2008 to the spring of 2009.

My Department will continue to evaluate this initiative to ensure that we continue to provide a quality service to this client group. My officials will be also be monitoring the impact that the introduction of the Employment and Support Allowance as the replacement of Incapacity Benefit, has had on this client group.

Construction NVQs

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if there has been a reduction in the number of students enrolling in NVQ courses relating to the construction industry due to the economic downturn. (AQO 3028/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Recent data indicates a decline in Further Education (FE) enrolments in construction related courses and it is likely that this is related to the problems facing the industry as a result of the economic downturn.

A snapshot of enrolment figures shows a drop of 11% (from 10,341 to 9,222) in construction related FE courses (the majority of which are NVQs) in February 2009, compared with February 2008.

STEM Review

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to give an indication of the publication date for the STEM Review co-ordinated by his Department and the Department of Education. (AQO 3029/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Minister Ruane and I commissioned an independent review of STEM policy in Northern Ireland and received the report in April. Both Departments are working closely to consider the report and the launch of the report is anticipated in September 2009. I am absolutely convinced that the importance of STEM to the Northern Ireland economy cannot be underestimated that is why my Department is working closely with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment to support the work of MATRIX.

DEL: Decision-making Process

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an assessment of his Department's involvement in the decision making process resulting in the withdrawal of discounted fees to Regional Colleges, the proposals for the University of Ulster York Street Campus and the proposed merger of Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College. (AQO 3030/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department covers a wide range of policy areas, for which it has overall responsibility for strategy and policy development. In implementing its policies, the Department provides a number of its services directly, for example the Employment Service and the Careers Service, while in other areas it relies on a number of delivery organisations including Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges and Training Organisations.

In terms of further education, the Department makes grants, loans and other payments to FE colleges under the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. Under the Order, the governing bodies of FE colleges provide or secure the provision of suitable and efficient further education. In carrying out this duty, colleges have regard to the educational needs of industry, commerce and the communities in the areas in which they are situated.

The Department makes grants to Higher Education Institutions under The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993. These are intended to provide for any facilities and activities for education and research as determined by each governing body. The universities themselves are established under Royal Charter with the general objective of advancing learning and knowledge by teaching and research.

Steps to Work

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide an update on the Steps 2 work programme; to detail the numbers placed in employment by each of the primary Steps 2 work contractors to date; and to confirm when inspection reports on the primary contractors will be published. (AQO 3031/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: At 26 May 2009, 12,439 clients had participated on the programme since its roll-out in September 2008. However, it is too early at this stage to provide any meaningful information

on outcomes as participation on Steps to Work can be for up to 52 weeks. The first Education and Training Inspectorate inspection reports will be published on the Inspectorate website before the end of 2009.

Postgraduate Students

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there has been an increase in students entering post-graduate education in the last three years. (AQO 3033/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There has been a 3.6 % increase in the number of students entering postgraduate education at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions from 2005/06 until 2007/08 (the latest academic year for which data are available).

The actual figures are:

4,985 in 2005/06

4,980 in 2006/07

5,165 in 2007/08

Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if the final decision on the proposed merger of Queen's University and Stranmillis University College should be suspended until the Teacher Training Review is published. (AQO 3034/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I acknowledge that the Review of Teacher Education is very relevant to this issue. I have already seen its contents in draft form and passed my comments to the Education Minister. When agreed, it will be passed to both the Department for Employment and Learning and Department of Education Committees prior to a public consultation. The Review will be considered alongside all other relevant factors in any final decision on the proposed merger between Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College.

A final version of the business case for the proposed merger of Queen's University and Stranmillis University College has now been submitted and is currently being considered by officials in my Department. The document has not yet been forwarded to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

The business case will be made available to the Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning once it has received internal approval from my Department, subsequent approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel and from me, as Minister.

A range of factors apart from the business case will need to be taken into consideration before a decision is made on the merger. One of these will be the Review of Teacher Education as I have already mentioned.

Traditional Crafts

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what courses are available to pursue a career in traditional crafts such as stonemasonry and thatching. (AQO 3035/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: ApprenticeshipsNI, provides professional and technical training against frameworks developed by the Sector Skills Councils. The Construction Industry framework includes training in thatching and stonemasonry. There is no specific framework for dry stone walling.

There are 20 Training Suppliers contracted to provide the training at Level 2 and 10 at Level 3.

Local Further Education Colleges continue to offer a wide range of courses, subject to local demand, to encourage individuals to pursue a career in traditional crafts. North West Regional College is currently offering a course in stonemasonry. South West College is an approved centre for the delivery of an NVQ in Stonemasonry and provides a variety of short recreational classes.

I am also advised that Southern Regional College is currently in discussions with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to deliver an NVQ in Stonemasonry and specialist heritage carpentry from September 2009.

There is presently no FE provision being delivered in thatching.

DARD has advised that CAFRE does not offer courses specifically on traditional crafts, however the option to attend a 1-day course on dry stone walling is offered. Attendance at this course has typically been 20-25 per year.

Student Fees

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the interim report on student fees will be completed. (AQO 3036/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The chairperson's interim report on student fees will be completed by the end of this month. This is to ensure that the interim report is as comprehensive as possible, and to allow for outstanding contributions from major stakeholders,

A meeting of the Review's Stakeholder Steering Group has been convened for 23 June to discuss and finalise the chairperson's interim report and I expect to receive it shortly after this date.

Apprenticeships

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to ensure that this year's school leavers will have apprenticeship placements from September; and to outline the discussions held between his representatives and members of the construction industry regarding apprenticeships. (AQO 3038/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In the recent debate on apprenticeships I indicated my intention to introduce a Programme Led Apprenticeship provision from September 2009. This will guarantee an apprenticeship placement for all those school leavers meeting the appropriate eligibility criteria.

In the case of the construction industry, officials are working with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and the Construction Employers' Federation to agree on a structure for a Craft Apprenticeship for construction. Currently CITB and CEF are drawing up a fresh proposal following consultation with their industry.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Incinerator Plant at Glenavy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of providing funding for the Rose Energy incinerator plant at Glenavy. (AQW 8317/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The company originally applied to the DETI administered Environment and Renewable Energy Fund for funding. This application was rejected, however, and the consortium subsequently approached Invest NI for support.

Negotiations between the promoters and Invest NI are ongoing, and until these are finalised I can not give an assessment of providing funding.

Mineral Prospecting Licences

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the mineral prospecting licences currently operational. (AQW 8355/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

CURRENT MINERAL PROSPECTING LICENCES 16/06/09

Licence Holder	Location / Area	Ref No
Antrim Resources PLC	Islandmagee	AR01/08
Bord Gais Eireann	Larne	BG1/08
Conroy Diamonds & Gold	Keady	C1/09
Conroy Diamonds & Gold	Newtownhamilton	C3/09
Irish Salt Mining & Exploration Company	Ballycarry	ISM1/06
Lonmin PLC	Cloughmills	LON1/08
Lonmin PLC	Slievenanee/Cancormick	LON2/08
Lonmin PLC	Glencoy/Glenarm Rivers	LON3/08
Lonmin PLC	Garvagh/Gortnamoyagh	LON4/08
Lonmin PLC	Coleraine/Limavady	LON5/08
Lonmin PLC	North East Lough Neagh	LON6/08
Lonmin PLC	North Lough Neagh	LON7/08
Lonmin PLC	River Bann	LON8/08
Lonmin PLC	Northern stretch of River Bann	LON9/08
Lonmin PLC	Armoy/Cushendun	LON10/08
Lonmin PLC	Maghera/Kilrea	LON11/08
Lonmin PLC	Dromore	LON12/09
Metallum Exploration Limited	South of Strabane	MR1/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	Lisnaskea forrest area	MR2/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	Slieve Beagh	MR3/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	Clogher Valley North to Fintona	MR04/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	Clogher Valley	MR05/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	North and West Cookstown	MR06/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	South and West of lower lough Erne	MR8/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	Slieve Croob and Rathfriland	MR09/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	Hillsborough SE of St Johns Point	MR10/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	SE of Londonderry / Claudy	MR11/07
Metallum Exploration Limited	Armagh	MR12/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	Banbridge	MR13/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	West and South of Mourne	MR14/08
Metallum Exploration Limited	East and South Mourne	MR15/08
Omagh Minerals Ltd	Cavancaw	OM1/03
Omagh Minerals Ltd	Castleberg	OM2/08
Omagh Minerals Ltd	Ervinstown	OM3/08
Portland Gas (NI) Ltd	Islandmagee	PG01/07
Dalradian Gold Ltd	Strabane	DG3/07
Dalradian Gold Ltd	Plumbridge	DG4/07

Licence Holder	Location / Area	Ref No
Ulster Minerals Ltd/ Dalradian Gold Ltd	Curraghinalt	DG1/08
Ulster Minerals Ltd/ Dalradian Gold Ltd	Mountfield	DG2/08

A map of the current Mineral Prospecting Licences can be viewed online via the attached link: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/gsni/minerals/maps/>

Artnz Belting Company

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) if she is aware of indications that Artnz Belting Company is to close two factories; (ii) whether she has any indication that the Pennyburn factory, in the Foyle constituency, may be one of the intended closures; and (iii) if she will be in contact with Artnz Belting Company to ascertain the long-term plans for the Pennyburn factory given that it has been in receipt of sizeable funding from Invest NI. (AQW 8611/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I am aware that Optibelt, the Parent Company of Artnz Belting Company Ltd is considering a number of options as a result of global economic downturn. As yet no decision has been made to close two factories nor specific factories identified.

Invest NI officials have kept me aware of challenges facing the Artnz Belting Company factory at Pennyburn, Londonderry.

On my behalf, Invest NI continue to liaise with the Company in relation to long-term plans for the Pennyburn Factory with a view to intervening if and when appropriate.

The Company have not received any funding from Invest NI since 1997. All obligations under previous offers have been fulfilled. There are, therefore, no clawback issues.

Business: Government Funding

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the level of uptake of government-backed funding schemes by local businesses. (AQO 3042/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There have been a number of government-backed funding schemes introduced over the past 6 months with the primary aim of helping businesses through the economic downturn. These include Invest NI's Accelerated Support Scheme and Short Term Aid Scheme and the UK-wide Enterprise Finance Guarantee.

I am pleased to be able to say that, already, 42 applications for support have been approved under Invest NI's Accelerated Support Fund. This has committed some £1.4 million of grant support and there are a further 45 applications being processed, which should see another £700,000 of support starting to flow to companies.

In relation to the Short Term Aid Scheme, this opened for applications on the 1st of June 2009. There have been over 150 enquiries to date and nine applications for support are currently being processed by Invest NI.

I am, however, concerned that uptake of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee has been much lower in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK and I am embarking on a series of meetings with the main banks in Northern Ireland over the next number of weeks to try and address this.

I would also like to take the opportunity to remind Members that my Department has prepared a detailed compendium of the various support schemes available to business. This can be accessed on the DETI website and has already received favourable comments from the business community.

Invest NI

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures have been taken by Invest NI to deal with the economic downturn. (AQO 3043/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Executive colleagues and I are engaged in ongoing discussions to consider what further we can do to support businesses at this time. The economic downturn is now a standing item on the agenda for Executive meetings.

We are maintaining a sharp focus on those areas we can control, and which will make the biggest difference to our clients and, where possible the wider business community.

Members will be aware of the £44.5 million package of measures to tackle the economic downturn that were announced by the Executive in December. Additionally, £1.2 billion of public sector construction schemes are currently on site.

Invest NI has also put in place a range of tailored support to help its clients to survive in the current market. There have been a number of seminars held across Northern Ireland which provided over 700 companies with practical information on surviving the credit crunch. In September 2008, I launched the £5 million Accelerated Support Fund and, at the end of last month, I announced details of the new £15 million Short-Term Aid Scheme. This will provide eligible businesses with financial assistance to enable them to plan and, where necessary, restructure for the future, while maintaining significant employment and retaining key staff so they are ready to take advantage of an economic upturn. The Scheme opened for applications on 1st June and there have been over 150 enquiries so far with nine applications for support currently being processed by Invest NI.

Social Economy Enterprise Strategy

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her plans to review the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy. (AQO 3048/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I am committed to developing the social economy sector, with its distinctive role and impact on local communities and particularly disadvantaged people, groups and disadvantaged areas.

In recognising the importance of the sector, my Department led the development of the Executive's first cross-departmental strategy, published in 2004, entitled "Developing a Successful Social Economy".

We are currently finalising a refreshed strategy, working closely with the Social Economy Network (SEN) which represents the sector, and other key stakeholders both within and outside Government with a role to play in supporting its development. The refreshed strategy will continue the Executive's commitment to three strategic objectives - to increase awareness of the sector, develop its business strength and provide a supportive environment in which it can prosper. These continue to be highly relevant especially in the current economic downturn.

In support of our strategic approach, Invest NI yesterday launched its new Social Entrepreneurship Programme to build on the skills and capabilities of local social entrepreneurs and to ensure that those social economy enterprises which are capable of making a significant economic impact get appropriate financial and other support.

I plan to put the strategy out to public consultation early next month and my aim is to have it finalised and in place by October.

Exploris Aquarium

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department is taking to promote the Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry. (AQO 3049/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I recognise the importance of the Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry as a tourist attraction and the contribution that Exploris provides to both the Regional and Northern Ireland Economy. With 94,674 visitors recorded in the 2008 calendar year, this is a key visitor attraction.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board works to promote Northern Ireland as a short break destination to residents of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and as such recently launched a major marketing campaign in both markets. The campaign features attractions right across Northern Ireland, including the Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry.

NITB also includes the Exploris Aquarium within other promotional materials including brochures and the consumer website discovernorthernireland.com.

NITB will continue to work to develop, promote and market the Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry as a key part of the Northern Ireland tourism offering.

Foreign Direct Investment

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she has considered a review of the Foreign Direct Investment Strategy in light of the current economic downturn. (AQO 3050/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI's results for the 2008 - 2009 show that there were 43 investments by externally owned clients, with investment commitments of £780 million, promoting or safeguarding 4,212 jobs and generating £95 million annually in wages and salaries.

Whilst these results highlight the significance of FDI to the Northern Ireland economy, it is also important to note that the vast majority of Invest NI's interventions from April 2002 to March 2009 were on behalf of indigenous businesses, with our locally-owned businesses accounting for 54% of all the assistance offered by Invest NI.

Invest NI's FDI effort continues to concentrate on the innovation-based sectors of international traded services, particularly software, business services, financial services and ICT. Although these sectors have been affected in some way by the economic downturn, in the short to medium term they are likely to create the most beneficial outcomes for the Northern Ireland economy.

Invest NI also continues to investigate new and emerging sectors to identify where potential future investment opportunities may exist. These include digital media, renewables, connected health and green technology.

An Independent Review of Economic Development is ongoing and its outcome will help my Department to gauge the success of the current investment strategies for both foreign and locally owned businesses

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline (i) what assessment has been made of the availability of credit for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; and (ii) what impact this is having on their ability to conduct business. (AQO 3051/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There is little doubt that many businesses continue to experience financial and credit problems which are hindering their survival and growth.

In April this year, a survey carried out by the Institute of Directors showed that our local companies were finding their banking facilities more expensive, despite Bank of England interest rate cuts, and whilst the majority of businesses had been able to renew or extend their current facilities, many were experiencing difficulty in getting new loans or overdraft facilities.

Invest NI maintains continuous contact with its client base, the vast majority of which are SMEs, and anecdotal evidence received through this contact, and meetings I have held myself with local businesses, supports the findings of the IOD survey. And, as a result of these difficulties in securing appropriate credit, there has been a reduction in the forecasted number of projects which Invest NI is predicting to support during the coming year.

Executive colleagues continue to engage with the local banks to impress on them the importance of their role in assisting the growth and development of our local businesses and to encourage them to fully utilise the national measures, such as the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme, that are available to them. I am particularly concerned that uptake of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee has been much lower in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK and I am embarking on a series of meetings with the main banks in Northern Ireland over the next number of weeks to address this.

Monitoring rounds: Invest NI and NI Tourist Board

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Invest NI and the NI Tourist Board have released £10.4 million in reduced requirements in the June monitoring round. (AQO 3052/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In the June monitoring round, Invest NI declared £2 million and NITB declared £4.6 million reduced requirements. This contributed to the overall departmental total of £10.4 million reduced requirements.

The reduced requirement in Invest NI was due to less demand from Foreign Direct Investment projects due to the global economic downturn.

The NITB reduced requirements were due to:

- £1.6 million slippage in projects; and
- £3.0 million from the Giants Causeway Visitor Centre as less Government contribution is forecast to be required than originally anticipated in Budget 2007.

Other reduced requirements in June monitoring round included:

- £0.9 million from InterTradeIreland due to reduced programme activity as a consequence of the economic downturn.
- £0.9 million from the Energy Challenge Fund as it will not be progressed during this financial year.
- 0.5 million from Broadband Stimulation as projects will cost less than anticipated.
- £1.5 million from minor reduced requirements across a range of DETI business area

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Historic or Environmentally Important Site

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the most severe measures his Department has taken against developers who damage an historic or environmentally important site. (AQW 8230/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): The most severe measure my Department can take is to secure a conviction, through the courts, against developers who damage a historic or environmentally important site. The extent of the punishment, including the level of fine, is then a matter for the presiding magistrate. The current maximum penalty for a person carrying out unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension to a listed building is, on summary conviction, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding £30,000, or both. On conviction on indictment, the term of imprisonment increases to a maximum of 2 years or a fine, or both.

The Department has, in the last 3 years, had 8 cases where prosecution has successfully been brought for unauthorised works to a Listed Building. Details of these are set out in the attached Annex.

In relation to archaeology, there has been no need to take measures against developers because the system has worked effectively; developers have been responsible in archaeological matters and there has been no significant unmitigated damage to archaeological sites.

ANNEX

DETAILS OF PROSECUTIONS OVER DAMAGE TO LISTED BUILDINGS IN THE LAST 3 YEARS

Date	Offence	Penalty
September 2007	Works to Beech Hill Hotel, Londonderry	£766 (inc costs)
September 2007	Alteration to 2 Quay Road, Ballycastle	£283 (inc costs)
June 2008	Demolition of out houses adjacent to Corrick House, Fivemiletown	£11,085 (inc costs)
June 2008	Works to 91 Dromore Road, Waringstown	£30,000
September 2008	Alteration to 11 Waterside, Coleraine	£583 (inc costs)
October 2008	Works to 33/35 New Road, Donaghadee	£5,000
March 2009	Alteration to 15 Waterside, Coleraine	£336 (inc costs)
June 2009	Demolition of 31 The Diamond, Moy	£16,170 (inc costs)

Incinerator Plant at Glenavy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the planning application for an incinerator plant at Glenavy. (AQW 8316/09)

Minister of the Environment: The planning application, accompanied by an Environmental Statement, for a biomass fuelled power plant at Ballyvannon Road, Glenavy was submitted to Planning Service on 4 June 2008. Article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 was applied to the proposal on 23 September 2008, designating the proposal as a major application.

Following initial consideration of the power plant application, additional environmental information was requested on 11 February 2009 as an Addendum to the Environmental Statement. The Addendum was submitted to Planning Service on 12 June 2009. At the same time Rose Energy also submitted a new separate planning application for the abstraction of water directly from Lough Neagh. The new application for water abstraction is accompanied by an

Environmental Statement. The water abstraction application will be processed in tandem with the power plant planning application.

Consultations on the new water abstraction planning application and accompanying ES, and on the Addendum to the ES accompanying the power plant application, will issue shortly to all relevant consultees.

Neighbour notification and advertisement in respect of the new water abstraction application and accompanying ES will take place on 22, 23 and 24 July. Re-advertisement and re-notification of neighbours in respect of the power plant application and Addendum will also take place on 22, 23 and 24 July.

Golden Eagle Species

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to reintroduce the golden eagle species, similar to the successful project in the Republic of Ireland at Glenveagh National Park. (AQW 8332/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of the Environment currently has no plans to reintroduce Golden Eagles to Northern Ireland. Any project brought forward by a Non-Governmental Organisation would require licensing by the Department. Should such a licence application be received it would be assessed in relation to the relevant International Union for the Conservation of Nature guidelines which include the likelihood of success and the potential impact an introduced population of Eagles would have on the ecology and the agricultural activities in Northern Ireland.

Golden Eagles from Scotland are occasionally observed over Northern Ireland, as are birds that have been reintroduced into Glenveagh National Park. It is possible that these birds may, in time, set up a territory here and re-establish naturally provided the ecology is suitable.

Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment to outline why he has asked the Environment Agency to carry out a review of the listing of the prison buildings at the Maze/Long Kesh site, given that they meet the requirements of the legislation regarding listed buildings. (AQW 8333/09)

Minister of the Environment: The decisions to list and schedule structures at the Maze were taken only after a detailed examination and consideration of the architectural and historic significance of the site and buildings had been carried out.

However, as a result of previous concerns expressed on this issue, I asked the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to carry out a further review of the listing and potential for delisting on this site. I believe it is appropriate that the concerns expressed by the public and some members of this Assembly, subsequent to the protection of these structures by the Agency, are seen to have been considered seriously.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many areas of special scientific interest were declared in the year ending 31 March 2009. (AQW 8362/09)

Minister of the Environment: Twenty-five Areas of Special Scientific Interest were declared in the year ending 31 March 2009.

Listed Buildings

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment how many reviews into listed buildings his Department has carried out in the last 5 years. (AQW 8377/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has reviewed the listing status of 567 listed buildings within the last 5 financial years.

In most cases this has been as part of the ongoing Second Survey of Buildings of Architectural or Historic interest which has now covered 147 out of Northern Ireland's 526 electoral wards. However in some cases it was in response to requests from owners or the public.

Public Hire Taxis

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how many public hire taxis in Belfast have been found to be inadequately adapted to carry passengers with a disability. (AQW 8393/09)

Minister of the Environment: Since 20 December 2000 it has been a legislative requirement for all taxis licensed for public hire in the City of Belfast to provide facilities for the carriage of passengers in wheelchairs.

Records available show at the annual PSV Inspection for the period January 2004 to January 2009 that 12 vehicles were recorded as having a defect related to wheelchair facilities. Specific details of the exact nature of each of the defects or information as to whether they could be attributed to inadequate adaptation are not available from the records. In respect of spot checks carried out by enforcement officers at the roadside, information on the adequacy of adaptations to public service vehicles to carry passengers with a disability is not recorded.

Flyposting

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the law as it stands regarding 'flyposting'; (ii) the number of prosecutions which have been pursued for this offence; and (iii) the number of successful prosecutions, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8397/09)

Minister of the Environment: Posters are considered to be advertisements under the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (NI) 1992. Under Article 84 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 any person found displaying an advertisement in contravention of the Advertisement Regulations is guilty of an offence and on summary conviction could be subject to a fine of up to £2,500 and in the case of continuing offences of up to £250 for each day during which the offence continues. There have been no prosecutions for fly posting offences in the last 5 years.

Endangered Red List

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many of the birds on the endangered red list on mainland UK are also endangered in Northern Ireland. (AQW 8404/09)

Minister of the Environment: The red list referred to is derived from the UK Birds of Conservation Concern. This provides information on the conservation status of regularly occurring birds in the UK. The most recent listing was published in May 2009.

A total of 246 species were included in this review. Their conservation status was assessed against a set of criteria to place each on one of three lists; green, amber and red in increasing level of conservation concern.

There are 52 species on the UK red list – these are species of greatest conservation concern. 22 of these species occur regularly in Northern Ireland.

The red list is being used by Northern Ireland Environment Agency to update its list of priority species and to inform the development of conservation actions to assist these species.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Government Cars

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel which firm was successful in winning the contract for the supply of government/ ministerial cars in May 2007 and what was the scoring by category given to each firm tendering for the contract. (AQW 8234/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): Mervyn Stewart (Skoda) was awarded the contract for the supply of Ministerial cars in May 2007; scores for each of the tenders are listed in the attached table.

Criteria	Available Marks	Winning Tender	Tender 2	Tender 3	Tender 4	Tender 5	Tender 6	Tender 7	Tender 8
Whole life Cost	30	28.53	30.00	16.92	19.91	26.75	21.82	15.45	17.27
Compliance with Specification	30	29.00	29.00	29.00	28.50	25.00	27.00	27.00	0.00 (no specification supplied)
Delivery Period	40	40.00	14.29	28.57	12.00	15.00	20.00	20.00	13.33
Total	100	97.53	73.29	74.49	60.41	66.75	68.82	62.45	30.60

Energy Performance Certificates

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he would consider implementing regulation for Energy Performance Certificates through estate agents. (AQW 8437/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The European Union is currently working on a recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. One proposal under consideration by member states is to require that all marketing material includes the numeric indicator of the building's energy performance. One possible method of addressing this requirement should it be adopted would be to place such a duty on estate and letting agents.

Officials continue to monitor the progress and development of the recast through the EU, and will consult on any proposed legislation required to implement the recast Directive following its adoption by EU. It is too early at this stage to anticipate the outcome of the consultation exercise.

Energy Performance Certificates

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps he is taking to regulate letting agents to ensure that all properties have the up to date Energy Performance Certificate and leasers are protected under legislation. (AQW 8438/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department's power to make the Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 came from Section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. In citing this section, regulations should not go above and beyond the requirements of the European Directive. The EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings places the duty upon sellers and landlords to make available an Energy Performance Certificate to potential buyers and tenants, and this requirement is reflected in the above Regulations. Although estate and letting agents have no statutory duty

under the regulations, they do have a professional obligation to ensure that their clients are informed of their legislative requirements.

There are currently no plans to impose a duty on letting agents under these regulations; however my officials continue to monitor developments in Europe.

Equal Pay Claim

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel pursuant to AQW 7760/09, how “the sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review” were, or will be, selected. (AQW 8522/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Of the 616 Technical Grade posts in total, there were 69 discrete job titles. The sample consisted of all those individuals with a unique job-title, a random sample of 2 individuals for those job-titles where there were between 2 and 15 post holders and a 10% random sample for those job-titles where there were 16 or more post holders. The random samples were drawn by the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Swine Flu

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost incurred by his Department regarding the television publicity campaign outlining how to curtail the spread of swine flu. (AQW 7585/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The cost incurred by my Department to post leaflets on swine flu to every house in Northern Ireland was £123,583 (which includes printing and distribution) and the cost of the television publicity campaign for Northern Ireland was £73,369.

Swine Flu

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much it will cost his Department to post leaflets to every house, raising awareness of swine flu. (AQW 7587/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost incurred by my Department to post leaflets on swine flu to every house in Northern Ireland was £123,583 (which includes printing and distribution) and the cost of the television publicity campaign for Northern Ireland was £73,369.

MRSA Screening

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is planning to test patients in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for MRSA. (AQW 8235/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) MRSA screening policy includes the screening of all residents from nursing and residential homes on admission to all acute hospitals within the Trust. Other high risk groups of patients screened by the NHSCT, as recommended by DHSSPS (2008), and by Coia et al. (2006), include:

- all patients admitted with a history of MRSA;
- all patients admitted from nursing and residential homes;
- all patients transferred from other hospitals, and
- all patients admitted to ICU, Neonatal Unit and Renal Unit.

Additional screening may also be undertaken on the request of the Infection Control Department in the event of an outbreak situation.

MRSA Screening

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is planning to test staff in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for MRSA. (AQW 8236/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Trusts are responsible for deciding which staff should be screened for MRSA. The Northern HSC Trust has a programme to test all staff working in or entering areas where there is an increased number of cases detected through patient monitoring or where cases arise in areas, such as the neonatal unit, which are normally completely free of MRSA.

General Medical Services Contract

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions his Department has had with the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly regarding the content of the Quality and Outcomes Framework of the General Medical Services contract for 2010/11. (AQW 8247/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) was introduced as part of the new General Medical Services contract in 2004. The GMS Contract is a UK wide contract. Officials within my Department regularly discuss proposals and changes to QOF with the other UK Administration Health Departments as part of ongoing improvements and revisions to the GMS Contract, and such discussions continue in respect of 2010/11. Changes to QOF are not taken forward unless they have the agreement of all four UK Health Departments.

Osteoporosis

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the steps he is taking to promote the role of sunlight and vitamin D as a means of protecting bones and reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fragility fractures in later life. (AQW 8248/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department supports osteoporosis prevention through the promotion of regular exercise, a balanced diet, smoking prevention and cessation, and a responsible approach to alcohol consumption. There are, at present, no plans to develop public information campaigns on the role of sunlight and vitamin D as a means of reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fragility fractures in later life. However, the new Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy will highlight that limited exposure to sunlight daily is important for maintaining the density of bones.

Osteoporosis is included in the General Medical Services Contract as a Directed Enhanced Service. This means patients aged 50 and over who have suffered a fragility fracture receive enhanced diagnosis, treatment, and advice from GPs on bone health and falls. GPs will balance advice on the health benefits of limited exposure to sunlight with further advice on the dangers of excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

Work has commenced on the development of a service framework for promoting the health and social wellbeing of older people. The framework will set clear, measurable standards for health and social care for this group. It will include a section on osteoporosis covering the prevention and treatment of this condition.

Optometry NI

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has had any contact with Optometry NI about changes for care homes, waiting times and numbers to be examined within proposed domiciliary eye care. (AQW 8269/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have not had any contact with Optometry NI about changes for care homes, waiting times and numbers to be examined within proposed domiciliary eye care.

Optometry NI

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions his Department has had with Optometry NI in relation to proposed changes to domiciliary eye care. (AQW 8270/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: An advisory group was set up in April of this year to look at the rising costs of domiciliary eyecare. Optometry NI is represented on this group, along with representatives from DHSSPS, the Health and Social Care Board, the Business Services Organisation, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Guidelines and Audit Implementation Network (GAIN). The Group has met twice to review the procedures and protocols in connection with domiciliary visiting at nursing and residential homes and day care centres. Other aspects of Mobile Eye Service provision such as speciality training, clinical audit and the development of quality standards for best practice have also been discussed by the group.

Optometry NI

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has had any discussion with Optometry NI about the connection between sight loss and dementia. (AQW 8271/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have not had any discussion with Optometry NI about the connection between sight loss and dementia.

However, I understand that this issue is currently being researched locally by ophthalmologists and geriatricians. I also understand that Bradford University is developing specialist training for optometrists in managing patients with dementia.

IBD Nursing Posts

Mr A McFarland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the recently launched Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Service Standards, if he intends to increase the number of IBD nursing posts. (AQW 8285/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Whilst there are nurses with a key role in Inflammatory Bowel Disease employed by the Health & Social Care Trusts, there are no "specialist" nurses specifically with this remit and no current plans to introduce them.

However, my Department continues to work with HSC Trusts to help drive forward standards of care for this group of patients.

Physiotherapist Posts

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many physiotherapist posts, broken down by specialism, are currently vacant across all Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 8298/09)

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

NUMBER OF VACANT PHYSIOTHERAPY POSTS IN JUNE 2009 BY HSC TRUST AND SPECIALISM.

HSC Trust	Specialism	WTE
Belfast	Acute	25.06
	Community	7.0
	Adult Learning	0.5
	Young Physical Disability	1.0
	Intermediate Care	3.5
Northern	Paediatrics	3.0

HSC Trust	Specialism	WTE
South Eastern	Paediatrics	0.9
	Respiratory	1.0
	Acute/Outpatients	1.5
	Rotational Acute	3.7
Southern	Paediatrics	2.66
	Rotational	7.0
	Intermediate Care	0.5
	Care of the Elderly/Domiciliary	1.04
	Condition Management	2.0
Western	Community	0.6
	Rotational	4.5
	Acute	2.8
	Respiratory	0.6

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

In the current CSR period, £64.8m of additional funding will be made available for community based services, of which Physiotherapy is one of the Allied Health Professional services that will benefit. Planned expenditure for Physiotherapy rose by just under £1m in 08/09.

Intractable Epilepsy

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children, under ten years of age who have intractable epilepsy have been referred to hospitals in other parts of the United Kingdom for treatment in each of the last five years. (AQW 8301/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows the number of children under 10 years of age suffering from intractable epilepsy that were referred to other hospitals in the UK for consideration of treatment in each of the last five years.

Year	Number of referrals of children aged under 10 years with intractable epilepsy referred to other hospitals in the UK in:
2004/05	9
2005/06	10
2006/07	11
2007/08	11
2008/09	14

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

I do not believe that a new strategy for treating these children is required. Children suffering from this very debilitating condition currently have access to appropriate care and treatment, ranging from primary and community care to specialist regional and supra-regional specialist services, depending on their assessed individual needs. There are many options for their care within the health service here and by onward referral to centres elsewhere in the UK. The HSC Board may also give prior approval for treatment in other countries where there is clinical evidence that this is necessary.

It is for the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board, as commissioners of services, to prioritise and allocate resources to meet the needs of their local population, including those with epilepsy. In determining their priorities, the HSC Board will take into account local circumstances, the strategic objectives established for the HSC and demands and pressures generally for a wide range of health and social care services.

The routine treatment for epilepsy patients is through the use of anti-epileptic drugs. Morphine is not routinely used as treatment for epilepsy and would not be used for seizure control.

Intractable Epilepsy

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to introduce a new strategy to treat children, under ten years of age who have intractable epilepsy. (AQW 8302/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows the number of children under 10 years of age suffering from intractable epilepsy that were referred to other hospitals in the UK for consideration of treatment in each of the last five years.

Year	Number of referrals of children aged under 10 years with intractable epilepsy referred to other hospitals in the UK in:
2004/05	9
2005/06	10
2006/07	11
2007/08	11
2008/09	14

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

I do not believe that a new strategy for treating these children is required. Children suffering from this very debilitating condition currently have access to appropriate care and treatment, ranging from primary and community care to specialist regional and supra-regional specialist services, depending on their assessed individual needs. There are many options for their care within the health service here and by onward referral to centres elsewhere in the UK. The HSC Board may also give prior approval for treatment in other countries where there is clinical evidence that this is necessary.

It is for the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board, as commissioners of services, to prioritise and allocate resources to meet the needs of their local population, including those with epilepsy. In determining their priorities, the HSC Board will take into account local circumstances, the strategic objectives established for the HSC and demands and pressures generally for a wide range of health and social care services.

The routine treatment for epilepsy patients is through the use of anti-epileptic drugs. Morphine is not routinely used as treatment for epilepsy and would not be used for seizure control.

Intractable Epilepsy

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that morphine is not routinely used as a treatment for epilepsy patients. (AQW 8303/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows the number of children under 10 years of age suffering from intractable epilepsy that were referred to other hospitals in the UK for consideration of treatment in each of the last five years.

Year	Number of referrals of children aged under 10 years with intractable epilepsy referred to other hospitals in the UK in:
2004/05	9
2005/06	10
2006/07	11
2007/08	11
2008/09	14

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

I do not believe that a new strategy for treating these children is required. Children suffering from this very debilitating condition currently have access to appropriate care and treatment, ranging from primary and community care to specialist regional and supra-regional specialist services, depending on their assessed individual needs. There are many options for their care within the health service here and by onward referral to centres elsewhere in the UK. The HSC Board may also give prior approval for treatment in other countries where there is clinical evidence that this is necessary.

It is for the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board, as commissioners of services, to prioritise and allocate resources to meet the needs of their local population, including those with epilepsy. In determining their priorities, the HSC Board will take into account local circumstances, the strategic objectives established for the HSC and demands and pressures generally for a wide range of health and social care services.

The routine treatment for epilepsy patients is through the use of anti-epileptic drugs. Morphine is not routinely used as treatment for epilepsy and would not be used for seizure control.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service directors will have to repay monies received as a result of the pay award that did not follow the proper approval process. (AQW 8339/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The retrieval of unauthorised payments made to the non-uniformed Directors is a contractual matter between the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the individuals concerned. I have, however, asked the Fire and Rescue Service to explore all means available to recover all of the unauthorised payments.

Chief Fire Officer

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will continue to have the Chief Fire Officer as a Special Advisor in light of the recent pay rise that did not follow the proper approval process. (AQW 8340/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As I indicated in my previous answer (AQW 6452/09), I have no Special Adviser for questions regarding the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. I seek advice on operational matters from the Chief Fire Officer and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health and Social Care Trusts have a designated clinical lead for Inflammatory Bowel Disease. (AQW 8351/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: IBD services are generally managed by clinical leads in Gastroenterology/ Endoscopy. The Northern HSC Trust has recently appointed a lead clinician in Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) based in the Causeway Hospital.

Osteoporosis

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in implementing the Primary Medical Services (Directed Enhanced Services) Direction NI 2008 Scheme on osteoporosis and the secondary prevention of fractures. (AQW 8352/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In 2008/09 my Department introduced a 3 year Directed Enhanced Service for the identification, assessment and treatment of osteoporosis among older people who have already suffered a fragility fracture. The Directed Enhance Service came into operation in September 2008.

In year one of the Directed Enhanced Service (2008/09) Practices that had undertaken to provide the service were required to compile a disease register of female patients over the age of 50 who have had a fragility fracture

and one third of the patients on the register were to receive an assessment and treatment in accordance with the Osteoporosis/Secondary Prevention of Fractures scheme.

The Regional Offices of the Health and Social Care Board have advised that to date 353 out of the 357 Practices in Northern Ireland have signed up to provide this voluntary service. The respective Regional Offices will be examining and addressing the need to ensure that this service is provided to patients of the four Practices not currently offering the service.

Data on success rates will be readily available once the service becomes more established.

Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the reasons for the resignation of the Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 8555/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Norma Evans made her own decision to bring forward her planned retirement. It would be inappropriate to comment further on her decision.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bridal Loanan Cul-de sac, Warrenpoint

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider setting up a survey to identify lands that would be suitable to provide an alternative entrance and exit to and from the Bridal Loanan Cul-de sac, Warrenpoint. (AQW 8254/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is aware of the difficulties experienced, at peak times, in accessing the Bridal Loanan Cul-de-sac. However, it would be very difficult to provide any substantial improvements to the existing entrance.

Providing an alternative means of access, would be substantial and involve the acquisition of additional land. In the present circumstances, such a scheme could not be justified, when competing against other more important schemes.

Therefore, at present, Roads Service has no plans to provide an alternative means of access to the Bridal Loanan Cul-de-sac.

NI Railway Trains

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if EU funding was obtained for the new NI Railway trains. (AQW 8259/09)

Minister for Regional Development: EU funding was not obtained to assist with the purchase of new trains for the railway network here as the project did not satisfy any of the conditions of the various EU funding programmes.

Grand Parade, East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans Roads Service has to upgrade Grand Parade, East Belfast and surrounding roads. (AQW 8260/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is currently completing a scheme on Grand Parade, which includes the provision of an additional pelican crossing, an upgrade of the existing zebra crossings and the provision of two refuge islands to assist pedestrians. Carriageway markings have also been provided to help reduce vehicle speeds and to create a cycle lane in each direction. This scheme is due for completion in early July.

There are no further plans at present to carry out further upgrades in Grand Parade, or the roads in the immediate vicinity.

Grand Parade, East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many complaints have been received in relation to road vibrations emanating from Grand Parade, East Belfast. (AQW 8263/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that my Department's Roads Service has received complaints from seven properties, between November 2000 and June 2009, in relation to road vibrations in Grand Parade.

Grand Parade, East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide the data of vehicular usage, including traffic surveys of Grand Parade, East Belfast, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8264/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it collects data from approximately 300 automatic traffic counting sites located throughout the North's road network. I can advise the Member that none of the automatic traffic counting sites are currently situated at Grand Parade, Belfast. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the data on vehicular usage requested. However, a pelican crossing was recently installed on Grand Parade, near Orby Road, and a traffic survey was carried out on 10 January 2008. I have summarised the findings of this survey in the table below.

Time Period	2 way flow
08:00 – 09:00	1456
09:00 – 10:00	1008
14:00 – 15:00	1236
15:00 – 16:00	1372

Grand Parade, East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development when the structural viability of Grand Parade, East Belfast was last assessed. (AQW 8265/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that 'C' class roads, such as Grand Parade Belfast, are monitored using Coarse Visual Inspection (CVI) surveys, in accordance with the United Kingdom Pavement Management System, which is carried out over a 4-year period on all roads. In general terms, the observed output from the CVI identifies lengths of road where the surface condition is deteriorating and exceeds certain pre-determined thresholds.

The last CVI inspection of Grand Parade was carried out in 2007 and some minor carriageway deterioration was noted. This is routinely monitored through the cyclical inspections of the public road network, when anything which is considered to be hazardous to the public is identified, and subsequently programmed for repair.

The footways and carriageway in Grand Parade, Belfast, are inspected on a 4-week cyclical basis and the most recent inspection was undertaken on 30 May 2009.

Grand Parade, East Belfast

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail what process Roads Service follows to measure and monitor the structural viability of the road network. (AQW 8266/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service monitors the condition of the public road network, using a variety of specialist machines and visual surveys, in order to measure its strength, skidding resistance and surface condition. Annual road condition surveys on the main strategic road network include the:-

- Deflectograph assessment – which measures the structural strength and life expectancy of the road;
- SCRIM (Sideways-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine) assessment – which measures the skidding resistance of the road surface; and
- SCANNER (Surface Condition Assessment for National Network of Roads) assessment - which is a new condition survey, undertaken at normal traffic speed, using laser sensors and other devices to measure rutting, cracking and the profile of the road surface.

All other roads are monitored using Coarse Visual Inspection (CVI) surveys, which are carried out on a cyclic basis, over a 4-year period.

Roads Service also implements a system of regular inspections, to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed as necessary.

Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the work planned to be carried out by Roads Service and NI Water, in the South Antrim constituency, in June 2009. (AQW 8292/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the following work will be undertaken in the South Antrim Constituency during June 2009:

- Resurfacing of Ballyrobin Road, Templepatrick;
- resurfacing of Ballynadentragh Road, Crumlin;
- resurfacing of Manse Road, Crumlin;
- resurfacing of Old Lough Road, Antrim;
- resurfacing of Massereene Street, Antrim;
- provision of 30 metres of infill footway at Portglenone Road, Randalstown;
- new kerb lines, drainage installation and carriageway resurfacing at 57 Templepatrick Road, Newtownabbey;
- reconstruction of footway at Ards Drive, Newtownabbey;
- carriageway resurfacing at Craigarogan Road, Newtownabbey;
- carriageway resurfacing at Downshire Road, Carrickfergus; and
- reconstruction of footway at Windmill Estate, Carrickfergus.

Roads Service will also carry out routine maintenance work on roads in the South Antrim constituency during June 2009.

Northern Ireland Water has advised of the following work to be carried out in the South Antrim Constituency during May 2009:

- Replacement watermain - Birchill Road, Antrim;
- reservoir Rehabilitation Programme phase 1 – Crosskeenan Service Reservoir, Antrim;
- reservoir Rehabilitation Programme phase 2 – Battery Hill Service Reservoir;
- service reservoir, enhanced security – Antrim and Newtownabbey;
- replacement of joints – Hyde Park Service Reservoir, Newtownabbey; and
- upgrading of existing works – Milltown Wastewater Treatment Works, Antrim.

This work is in addition to the day-to-day maintenance and repair required to the water and sewerage network.

Traffic Flow on the M2

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the improvement in traffic flow on the M2, now that the third citybound lane has been open for several weeks. (AQW 8293/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that although traffic is generally lighter at this time of year, the early indications are that opening three lanes in each direction, between Sandyknowes and Greencastle junctions, has significantly reduced journey times on this section of the M2 and the approaches to it.

The provision of an additional traffic lane on the Belfast-bound carriageway from Sandyknowes Junction has reduced delays for traffic joining the M2 at this location, and this has improved journey times during the morning peak. This in turn has considerably reduced the queue of M2-bound traffic on Sandyknowes Roundabout and improved the efficiency of this key intersection.

Widening the two-lane country bound section of the M2, over the Greencastle junction, to three lanes has also reduced congestion at this point and improved journey times during the evening peak.

Roads Service realise that the completion of the M2 Improvements and the M1/Westlink Schemes has resulted in traffic now being delivered much more quickly to the Nelson Street off slip and York Street junction. This has resulted in increased pressure on this part of the road network and traffic can now queue back along the M2 Foreshore from Nelson Street off slip in the morning peak.

In planning for this, Roads Service has developed preliminary proposals to provide major improvements to the York Street area. A scheme to improve the links between the M2, M3 and Westlink is included in my Department's published Investment Delivery Plan for Roads, which envisages construction commencing in the latter part of the ten year plan period 2008 – 2018. The timescale for the start of construction of the new Westlink/York Street junction is dependent upon the successful completion of the necessary Statutory Procedures (Environmental Statement, Designation Order and Vesting Order), a detailed economic appraisal and the availability of funding through the normal budgetary process.

As an interim measure, Roads Service will undertake minor improvements to improve the capacity of the York Street/Westlink junction this summer. This will involve widening the M2 bound carriageway of the Westlink, to provide a dedicated left turn lane to York Street, and extending the length of the existing M3 bound lane.

Water Rates

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has considered charging water rates to registered charities. (AQW 8311/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Executive agreed with the Independent Water Review Panel's recommendation that billing for water and sewerage services should be extended to all non-domestic properties from 1 April 2008. Many non-domestic consumers, including some charities, have been paying water charges for a number of years. The Executive decided to phase in the extension over a two year period with customers paying half of the full bill in 2008/09 and the full amount from 2009/10.

Following further consideration in February 2009 the Executive agreed proposals for non-domestic charging in 2009/10 as follows:

- unmeasured non-domestic payments will remain at 50% for 2009/10;
- the domestic water allowance will be retained for metered non-domestic customers; and
- non-domestic metered sewerage payments will be increased to the full charge and a domestic sewerage allowance introduced from 2009/10 for metered non-domestic customers.

Provision of Cycle Lanes

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on the provision of cycle lanes in the last 2 years. (AQW 8315/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service's target for the provision of cycling measures, in both 2007/08 and 2008/09, was to provide 15km of new cycle lanes.

However, in 2007/08, 22.65km of cycle lanes were implemented across the North, at a cost of £1.06m, and in 2008/09, 30.72km of new cycle lanes were implemented at a cost of £1.36m.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider providing pedestrian crossings at the Poleglass roundabout in the Colin area. (AQW 8334/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Requests for pedestrian crossings are assessed using established criteria relating to the number of pedestrians crossing the road and the volume of vehicles. This ensures that requests are dealt with fairly in a similar manner and the most deserving sites treated first.

I have asked my Department's Roads Service to survey the location. As traffic and pedestrian flows are generally lighter over the summer months, this survey will be scheduled for the autumn of this year. Mr Tom McCourt, Divisional Roads Manager for Eastern Division, will write to with the outcome of the survey, once the results have been analysed.

Waste Water Sewage Plant in Dunmurry

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development whether funding has been secured for the new waste water sewage plant in Dunmurry; and when work will commence on upgrading the existing plant. (AQW 8335/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that a project for the upgrade of Dunmurry Wastewater Treatment Works is included in its current Strategic Business Plan with a scheduled commencement date of January 2010. Commencement of the project is subject to funding being available following the June 2009 Monitoring Round and the current price control review for the three year period to 31 March 2013 by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

NI Railways

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if NI Railways has a preservation order on the signal box at Castlerock, if not, does it intend to obtain one. (AQW 8338/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have advised me that there is no preservation order on this signal box and there are no plans to obtain one.

NI Railways

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if NI Railways intends to fit GPS tracking devices to all its road vehicles, including staff cars. (AQW 8341/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have advised me that they do not intend to fit tracking devices to their road vehicles.

Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail what work is planned to be carried out by Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water in the East Antrim constituency in (i) June; (ii) July; and (iii) August 2009. (AQW 8367/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the following works will be undertaken in the East Antrim Constituency during June, July and August 2009:

- resurfacing of Harbour Road, Carnlough;
- resurfacing of Ballyrickard Road, Larne;
- resurfacing of West Street, Ballycarry;
- resurfacing of Quay Street, Larne;
- resurfacing of The Roddens, Larne;
- surface dressing of Garron Road, Carnlough;

- surface dressing of Ballymena Road, Larne;
- surface dressing of Munie Road, Glenarm;
- surface dressing of Ballymullock Road, Larne;
- surface dressing of Portmuck Road, Islandmagee;
- surface dressing of Ballyvaddy Road, Glenarm;
- surface dressing of Branch Road, Larne;
- surface dressing of New Road, Glenarm;
- surface dressing of Mullaghsandall Road, Larne;
- surface dressing of Craiganee Road, Larne;
- collision remedial scheme at Main Road, Glynn;
- traffic calming – Glynn Village;
- pelican crossing enhancement scheme – Shore Road, Eden Village;
- replacement of street lighting – Dean Park, Castlemara Estate, Carrickfergus;
- repairs to sea wall – Rhanbuoy Park, Carrickfergus; and
- remedial works to correct minor road and sewer defects – Maritime area, Carrickfergus.

In addition to these works Roads Service will continue to carry out routine maintenance work on roads in the East Antrim constituency during June, July and August 2009.

NI Water has advised of the following works to be carried out in the East Antrim Constituency during June, July and August 2009:

- a. new and replacement watermains – Munie Road/Straidkilly, Larne;
- b. reservoir rehabilitation pre-inspection programme – Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus;
- c. reservoir rehabilitation – Kane’s Hill, Larne;
- d. realignment of existing watermains, sewers and pumping main – A2 Shore Road, Carrickfergus;
- e. installation of pumps and control panel – Glenarm Sewage Pumping Station;
- f. completion of contract following installation of new foul sewer – Victoria Road, Ballyclare;
- g. replacement of overflow pipe – Joymount, Carrickfergus;
- h. cleaning and repairs to storm system – Manse Road, Camross Park, Merville Mews, Whitehouse, Carrickfergus; and
- i. foul and storm sewer extension – Antrim Road, Mallusk.

NI Water will also continue to undertake day-to-day maintenance and repair to the water and sewerage network in this constituency, as necessary.

Vandalism of Bus Shelters

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what the cost of vandalism of bus shelters has been to his Department in the last 5 years; and (ii) how much has been spent on repairs following vandalism at bus shelters in the West Belfast constituency in the last 5 years. (AQW 8374/09)

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

The provision and the maintenance of these shelters are funded by Adshel through advertising revenue and at no cost to the Department. The Department has no information on the costs incurred by Adshel in relation to the cost of vandalism of bus shelters, or how much was spent on repairs following vandalism at bus shelters in the West Belfast constituency in the last 5 years.

M5 Motorway

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 7814/09, (i) when is the next major maintenance of the M5 scheduled for, given the current deterioration of the carriageway along significant sections; and (ii) will urgent repairs be undertaken in the interim to address the situation. (AQW 8426/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As I advised the Member in my reply to Assembly Question, AQW 7814/09, my Department's Roads Service plan to resurface a total of 0.5 kilometres in each direction of the M5 this year, during overnight closures on 27 and 28 June 2009.

The M5 is subject to a daily safety patrol and a weekly safety inspection. Any defects identified as urgent will be repaired promptly, ensuring that the surface is maintained in a safe condition.

Accessible Transport Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development to consider the provision of audio visual information on buses, as the pilot was not undertaken in the Accessible Transport Strategy 2007-2008 work plan; and to confirm that his Department is fully committed to piloting audio-visual information. (AQW 8443/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department will consider proposals for the introduction of an audio visual information pilot on buses. As I said in my answer to AQW 7881/09 and AQW 8159/09, the funding of any pilot will be dependent on the outcome of those considerations and availability of resources, including in light of other priorities, at that time. The Accessible Transport Strategy does not contain a commitment to run a pilot.

Accessible Transport Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development when the funding will be available for the pilot of audio visual information on buses, in line with the Accessible Transport Strategy. (AQW 8444/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 8159/09.

Accessible Transport Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline how three applications submitted by Translink for funding have been mislaid, resulting in the further delay of the pilots under the Accessible Transport Strategy 2010-2020. (AQW 8445/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As I said in my answer to AQW 7881/09 and AQW 8163/09 no application to fund an audio-visual pilot on buses has been mislaid.

Roads Service Minor Works Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development to confirm when work will commence to provide visibility splays at the junction of the Ballylurgan Road and the Craigstown Road, given this work was in the Roads Service Minor Works scheme for 2008/09. (AQW 8451/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the work to provide visibility splays, at the junction of the Ballylurgan Road and the Craigstown Road, is programmed to commence during September 2009.

Randalstown Drainage Area Scheme

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the Randalstown Drainage Area scheme (i) to outline the reasons for the delay; and (ii) when the work is expected to be completed and roads and footpaths reinstated. (AQW 8468/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that there was a small delay in work on the Randalstown Drainage Area scheme due to unforeseen circumstances encountered in the New Street area. In addition, while on site, NIW agreed to install new gulleys on behalf of Roads Service to provide storm alleviation.

Work on the main scheme is now substantially complete and the roads and footpaths have been reinstated. Only minor sewer and watermain connections to the main pipeline remain to be completed.

Lower Braniel Road, East Belfast

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Regional Development what were the financial costs for the road calming measures on the lower Braniel Road in east Belfast. (AQW 8548/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has spent some £29,500 on the traffic calming scheme carried out on the Lower Braniel Road in East Belfast. The work consisted of a series of road humps.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in her Department in the year 2008/09. (AQW 8200/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): Information on the total amount paid in non-consolidated bonus payments to Senior Civil Servants in the Department for Social Development in respect of performance year 2008/2009 is not yet available. It is anticipated that this information will be available in the autumn. Non-consolidated bonus payments paid in the 2008/09 financial year in respect of the 2007/08 performance year amounted to £101,000 distributed to 13 recipients.

Social Housing Development Programme

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to detail why the draft Equality Impact Assessment for the Social Housing Development Programme - Strategic Guidelines did not go in front of the Social Development Committee. (AQW 8243/09)

Minister for Social Development: In Spring 2008 the Housing Executive's Board approved new Strategic Guidelines for the Social Housing Development Programme. At the time the Housing Executive subjected the new Strategic Guidelines to a preliminary Equality Impact Assessment which indicated that the new Guidelines were robust, fair and equitable.

The Housing Executive also undertook to subject the Guidelines to the full, formal EQIA consultation process and this involved all of the Housing Executive's 200+ Equality statutory consultees which included representatives of all NI Political Parties. In the context of such inclusive consultation, direct consultation with the Committee did not take place at that time although since then the Housing Executive have briefed the Committee on the changes and will do so further on 2 July.

Housing Needs

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development why the current policy of ring-fencing housing needs in north and west Belfast, and in Derry is being removed. (AQW 8245/09)

Minister for Social Development: Ring Fencing was one of the mechanisms used for distributing the Social Housing Development Programme and directed scarce new social housing into areas of particularly acute

housing need. Beyond these designated areas the remainder of the Social Housing Development Programme has been distributed proportionately on the basis of the level of housing stress as evidenced by the waiting list.

Ring-fencing, did not however sufficiently recognise the huge growth in housing need which was dispersed and has since grown throughout Northern Ireland. The new Strategic Guidelines and subsequent end to ring-fencing will distribute the Social Housing Development Programme on the basis of an area's proportionate share of total housing stress and importantly, are also weighted to reflect the length of time applicants wait before being re-housed.

Social Housing

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to outline how the "Housing Needs Assessment Weighted by Waiting Time" method will ensure that religious differentials on the social housing waiting lists are addressed over the next five years. (AQW 8249/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Equality Impact Assessment of the Strategic Guidelines for the Social Housing Development Programme identified that there was a differential impact in relation to religious backgrounds of those applicants on the waiting list.

To mitigate against this differential impact, the new approach to Housing Needs Assessment, weighted by waiting time, will ensure that those areas where applicants wait longer will receive a more proportionate share of the new build programme and should start to address the religious differentials identified in the Equality Impact Assessment. I will continue to monitor the impact of this approach in terms of impacts on social housing waiting lists.

Social Housing

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many NIHE social housing units currently use Economy 7; (ii) the location of where Economy 7 heating is currently used in NIHE social housing units by (a) electoral wards (b) super output area and (c) common landlord area; and (iii) where Economy 7 has been removed from NIHE social housing units since 1998 by (a) electoral wards (b) super output area and (c) common landlord area. (AQW 8313/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the form requested. The Housing Executive does not collate information regarding heating types within its properties by the geographical areas requested.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive currently has 10,654 occupied social housing dwellings with Economy 7 electrical heating systems as set out in the table below, by Housing Executive District Office area:

District Office	Dwellings with Economy 7	District Office	Dwellings with Economy 7	District Office	Dwellings with Economy 7
East Belfast	451	Newtownabbey 1	360	Lisburn Antrim	626
North Belfast	823	Newtownabbey 2	297	Lisburn Dairyfarm	37
Shankill	272	Armagh	181	Newtownards	419
South Belfast	395	Banbridge	111	Collon Terrace	334
West Belfast	469	Dungannon	105	Cookstown	57
Antrim	383	Fermanagh	142	Limavady	146
Ballycastle	9	Lurgan Brownlow	499	Magherafelt	53
Ballymena	490	Newry	271	Omagh	80
Ballymoney	90	Portadown	310	Strabane	20
Carrickfergus	150	Bangor	499	Waterloo Place	263
Coleraine	504	Castlereagh	1063	Waterside	237
Larne	166	Downpatrick	342		

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for an update on the Eaga warm homes scheme; and (ii) who will take over the current scheme and when this will happen. (AQW 8318/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive was responsible for procuring new Scheme Managers as the contract with Eaga to manage the Warm Homes Scheme ended on 31 March 2009. During April and May, while the tender process was under way, Eaga undertook transitional arrangements to ensure that any home with no central heating, solid fuel or Economy 7 or a system which had broken down beyond repair was assisted with heating measures.

Applicants for the new Warm Homes Scheme contract have been interviewed and notification letters to successful and unsuccessful applicants have issued. Section 32 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 requires a contracting authority to inform all Tenderers of its decision to award and allow a period to elapse prior to awarding the contract(s). We are now in a 15 day "Alcatel" period in which unsuccessful applicants can appeal the decision. Subject to no judicial interruption the names of the new Warm Homes Scheme Managers will be announced shortly.

Once the Warm Homes Scheme contracts have been signed the details of those on the Warm Homes waiting list will be passed to the new Scheme Managers. The remaining Warm Homes Plus referrals have functioning heating systems; albeit they may be inefficient, they are still working and people are welcome to apply to the new scheme if they believe they satisfy the qualifying criteria.

Rent Arrears

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the amount of rent arrears debt the Housing Executive has written off in each of the last two financial years. (AQW 8320/09)

Minister for Social Development: The amount of arrears written off for the last two years is:-

2007/08	-	£1,310,000
2008/09	-	£1,151,000

Social Security Agency

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the Social Security Agency's policy in determining the employment location of newly appointed staff. (AQW 8322/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Civil Service Vacancy Management Policy sets out the procedures for filling vacancies in the Social Security Agency. When the decision has been made to fill the vacancy from an external recruitment list, candidates are allocated to posts in merit order. For the majority of new staff, the placement is normally in the Greater Belfast area, where the Agency has the greatest number of vacancies.

Social Security Agency

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development if the place of residence of new employees of the Social Security Agency is taken into consideration when determining their location of employment, and if the nearest and most convenient location where there is a vacancy is offered. (AQW 8323/09)

Minister for Social Development: I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 8322/09. Where there are business reasons to recruit staff to locations other than Greater Belfast, the Social Security Agency would, within the overarching merit principle approach, when filling the vacancy take into consideration the place of residence of the new employee and where possible offer the nearest and most convenient location.

Social Security Agency

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development if the preference of new employees of the Social Security Agency is taken into account when determining their location of employment and if there is any discussion with newly recruited staff on this issue. (AQW 8324/09)

Minister for Social Development: I refer the member to my previous answers to AQW 8322/09 and AQW 8323/09. The Social Security Agency does not take into account the preference of new employees when determining their location of employment and does not enter into discussion with newly recruited staff on this issue.

Social Security Agency

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development if the availability of public transport is taken into consideration in determining the location of employment of newly recruited staff to the Social Security Agency. (AQW 8325/09)

Minister for Social Development: I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 8322/09. The Social Security Agency does not take into account the availability of public transport in determining the location of employment of newly recruited staff to the Social Security Agency.

Social Security Agency

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the principles affecting the workplace of staff which she outlined in her response to the Strategic Business Review of the Social Security Agency and if she can confirm that the same principles are taken into consideration in determining the place of employment of newly recruited staff. (AQW 8326/09)

Minister for Social Development: The principles underpinning the movement of existing staff are as outlined in the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook. If, following public consultation, I approve the revised Strategic Business Review proposals for implementation, these principles will apply and the precise arrangements thereafter will be a matter for consultation with Agency Trade Union Side.

I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 8322/09 with regard to the policy in determining the employment location of newly recruited staff.

Housing Executive Homes in Crumlin

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive homes in Crumlin and the immediate vicinity that have been allocated to individuals from outside the Housing Executive Antrim District Area in each of the last five years. (AQW 8343/09)

Minister for Social Development: The number of Housing Executive homes in the Crumlin area that have been allocated to applicants from outside the Housing Executive Antrim District Area in each of the last five years is as follows:

2004/05	Nil
2005/06	Nil
2006/07	1
2007/08	2
2008/09	1

Apartment Blocks

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development if she proposes to introduce legislation to deal with management companies set up to manage apartment blocks. (AQW 8365/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have no plans to introduce legislation to deal with management companies set up to manage apartment blocks.

Voluntary and Community Sector

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development if, and when, she intends to host a summit to discuss the impact of the recession on voluntary and community organisations. (AQW 8368/09)

Minister for Social Development: As Minister with lead responsibility for the voluntary and community sector, I regularly meet with representatives from voluntary and community organisations hearing their concerns at first hand. On 29 April I addressed a meeting of the Joint Government / Voluntary and Community Sector Forum which focused on the impact of the recession on the sector. These meetings will continue.

Monkstown Estate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the maintenance work planned for Housing Executive houses in the Monkstown Estate in the next four months. (AQW 8371/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is anticipated that the External Cyclic Maintenance Scheme in Monkstown/Glenvarna will commence on site in autumn 2009. There are 353 dwellings included in the scheme which has an estimated value of £734k.

Renovation Grants

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the current freeze on renovation grants, will the Housing Executive ensure that applicants, architects and any other agents employed are speedily reimbursed for expenses incurred in preparing the now frozen applications. (AQW 8372/09)

Minister for Social Development: There is no statutory provision to enable the Housing Executive to recompense expenses incurred by applicants for architect and other fees associated with these grant applications as the relevant legislation is quite specific that such fees are only recoverable if the grant is approved and the works are satisfactorily completed. However, I am very conscious of the difficulties, and will be having a further look at this issue.

Gas Appliances

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of complaints the Housing Executive has dealt with about faulty gas appliances in the last two years. (AQW 8376/09)

Minister for Social Development: The number of referrals relating to gas appliances completed by the Housing Executive for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2009 was 35,785. However many of these relate to issues involving inappropriate operation of the system which do not require repair works - for example where the meter is empty. The Housing Executive is unable to disaggregate these figures.

Monkstown Estate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development when all social housing in the Monkstown Estate will be offered double glazed windows. (AQW 8389/09)

Minister for Social Development: Many of the dwellings within the Monkstown Estate have had double glazed windows installed since the mid 1990s through the Housing Executive's ongoing programme of maintenance and improvement schemes. The Monkstown/Glenvarna External Cyclic Maintenance scheme which is scheduled to commence in autumn 2009 will involve some window replacement where required. Those windows identified for replacement through a physical survey will be replaced with double glazed units.

Housing Executive Grant Aided Works

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW8193/09, to detail how many of the 26 grants in Armagh and 75 grants in Newry and Mourne at the documents complete stage, have been successful and are awaiting payment of grant aid from the Housing Executive. (AQW 8398/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has been unable to approve any of these applications. However all of the cases are being reviewed to determine if any exceptional circumstances exist and if this is the case then a grant can be approved. The economic downturn has had a severe impact on local housing and on housing funding, and money which had previously funded the Private Sector Grants Scheme is no longer available. The Housing Executive's focus is to prioritise resources to those people and places in greatest need.

Environmental Improvement Schemes

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the amount spent by the Housing Executive on housing and environmental improvement schemes in the Dairyfarm district in the last 5 financial years. (AQW 8430/09)

Minister for Social Development: During the period in question within the Dairyfarm District Office area, the Housing Executive spent some £10.9m through planned schemes, carrying out improvements to more than 1500 dwellings and the general environment through 21 schemes.

Voluntary and Community Sector

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister for Social Development if she plans to meet representatives from the voluntary and community sector to discuss the negative impacts the recession will have on these organisations in the coming financial year. (AQW 8432/09)

Minister for Social Development: As Minister with lead responsibility for the voluntary and community sector I regularly meet with representatives from the sector and hear of their concerns regarding the current recession. That will continue in the future.

Maintenance and Replacement Schemes

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm how many front-line jobs will be under threat due to her Department's lack of investment in maintenance and replacement schemes through various Egan contracts. (AQW 8449/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has been reviewing all of its services in order to deliver the 5% efficiency saving in running costs required under the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The introduction of Egan contracts has allowed the Housing Executive to restructure and secure staff savings over the past year. It is too early to determine if further savings will be required based on the 2009/10 budget.

The Egan contracts themselves were signed in 2008 with the economic downturn well underway. It is not known what staffing levels the various contractors had at that time and therefore difficult to assess the impact on employment of the quantity of Egan work being less than that anticipated by the contractors. The Egan contracts do attract a sizeable share of the Housing Executive's Maintenance Budget, which was some £127 million in 2009/10.

Royal Exchange Project

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm that, if the Royal Exchange Project is not completed, she will argue for the unused money to be re-allocated to social housing. (AQW 8450/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is not the case that the Royal Exchange Project will not be completed. Due to a sharp reduction in Housing Executive capital receipts, there is a £100m shortfall in the housing budget. Where there are budget easements that can be reallocated, I will be seeking to reallocate them to priority areas in housing.

Duneane Crescent, Toomebridge

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development when finance will be made available to start the multi-element scheme in Duneane Crescent, Toomebridge. (AQW 8467/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive recently reviewed its programme of planned improvement schemes and is unable to confirm when this work will commence. The delivery of their programmes of activity is dependent on obtaining appropriate approvals and the availability of finance. There is currently a £100m shortfall in the Housing Budget and this inevitably impacts on a wide range of planned projects and programmes.

Women's Centres Regional Partnership

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development whether the evaluation report on the Women's Centres Regional Partnership has been completed. (AQW 8483/09)

Minister for Social Development: The evaluation report on the Women's Centres Regional Partnership to measure the impact of the Department's Regional Infrastructure Programme funding for the period April 2006 to March 2009 was completed in January 2009.

Women's Centres Regional Partnership

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development if the evaluation report on the Women's Centres Regional Partnership will be made public. (AQW 8484/09)

Minister for Social Development: It is not standard practice to publish evaluations of individual projects funded by the Department, however, a copy of the evaluation report of the Women's Centres Regional Partnership for the period of funding April 2006 to March 2009 would be made available on request to staff in the Department's Voluntary and Community Unit.

Housing Executive's Decent Homes Expenditure

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact on the small and medium sized businesses affected by the reduction of the Housing Executive's decent homes expenditure. (AQW 8616/09)

Minister for Social Development: Funding for the Housing Executive's implementation of decent homes has reduced as due to the downturn in land and house sales, there is a £100 million shortfall in the Housing Budget for 2009/10 which will impact on all spending programmes. My priority must be to protect vulnerable households. I have therefore protected the budgets for:

- i. Warm Homes – to help households facing fuel poverty;
- ii. Supporting People – to help people live independently in the community rather than in institutions; and
- iii. the newbuild programme – to help those in acute housing stress and the homeless.

In addition, current market conditions are more suited than ever before to increase investment in social housing, to stimulate the economy, protect jobs in the overall construction industry and help the most vulnerable in this society by providing them with a home.

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