
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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Tel: 028 9052 1078

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Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)
Vacancy (South Belfast)*
Vacancy (Strangford)**

* Vacancy due to the resignation of Carmel Hanna on 15 January 2010.

** Vacancy due to the resignation of Iris Robinson on 12 January 2010.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 22 January 2010

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Community Relations Council

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2669/10, to detail the job title for each post funded by the Community Relations Council in (i) Armagh; (ii) Belfast; (iii) Derry; (iv) Fermanagh; and (v) Omagh. (AQW 3609/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): It has come to our attention that the information which we provided in our letter dated 7th December 2009 in answer to AQW 2669/10 was incomplete. Research to answer this current question (AQW 3609) has revealed that 3.5 posts had been omitted from the previous answer. The changes are in relation to posts in Nexus in Belfast and Wave in Omagh and have been included in the tables below as indicated. These corrections to the staffing figures do not alter the overall funding figures stated in AQW 2669/10.

The job titles for each post funded by the Community Relations Council in (i) Armagh; (ii) Belfast; (iii) Derry; (iv) Fermanagh; and (v) Omagh are as follows:

ARMAGH

| Organisation | Workers | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| REACT | CR Officer Administrator | 2 |
| FAIR | Director Administrator | 2 |
| SAVER/NAVER | Director Administrator | 2 |
| WAVE | Development Worker Administrator | 2 |
| Homes Unites Against Ruthless Terror | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Total | | 10 |

BELFAST

| Organisation | Workers | Total |
|---------------------------|---|-------|
| Belfast Interface Project | Director Senior Support Worker Development Worker | 3 |
| 174 Trust | Director | 1 |
| Ballynafeigh CDA | Assistant Director | 1 |

| Organisation | Workers | Total |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| Interaction | CEO Administrator | 2 |
| Intercomm | Development Officer | 1 |
| Linc Resource Centre | Director Co-ordinator Administrator | 3 |
| North Belfast Interface Network | Co-ordinator Project Worker Administrator | 3 |
| SLIG | Interface Worker x 2 Youth Worker | 3 |
| Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland | Director Administrator | 2 |
| Ashton Centre | Project Worker | 1 |
| Ballymurphy Women's Centre | Development Worker | 1 |
| Contact Youth | Clinical Supervisor | 1 |
| Corpus Christi Services | Counsellor Administrator | 2 |
| Families Beyond Conflict | Development Officer | 1 |
| HAVEN | Project Worker | 1 |
| Institute for Counselling and Personal Development | Administrator | 1 |
| Lenadoon Counselling | Counsellor Administrator | 2 |
| New Life Counselling | Administrative Officer | 1 |
| NEXUS | Counsellors | 2 |
| NI Music Therapy Trust | Music Therapist | 1 |
| Relatives For Justice | Director Project Worker Administrator | 3 |
| Shankill Stress | Director Counsellor Project Worker | 3 |
| Springhill Community House | Development Officer Administrator | 2 |
| Streetbeat Youth | Counsellor | 1 |
| Survivors of Trauma | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Wider Circle | Development Worker | 1 |
| Victims and Survivors Trust | Development Worker Administrator | 2 |
| WAVE | Project Worker x 2 Director | 3 |
| Total | | 50¹ |

¹ This figure is 2.5 posts higher than declared in AQW 2669/10 and represents a correction to that response.

DERRY

| Organisation | Workers | Total |
|--|---|--------------|
| Junction / Holywell Trust | Director Co-ordinator Administrator x 2 | 4 |
| Peace and Reconciliation Group | Director Finance Officer Training Officer Project Officer | 4 |
| Community Action for Locally Managing Stress | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Columba House | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Cunamh | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Derry Well Women | Project Co-ordinator | 1 |
| Lifeways Psychotherapy | Director / Counsellor | 1 |
| United Services Club | Co-ordinator | 1 |
| WAVE | Counsellor / Art Therapist Area co-ordinator Development Worker | 3 |
| Total | | 20 |

FERMANAGH

| Organisation | Workers | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Fermanagh Trust | Development Worker Administrator | 2 |
| Aisling Centre | Co-ordinator | 1 |
| Firinne | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| South East Fermanagh Foundation | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Ely Centre | Director Administrator | 2 |
| Total | | 9 |

OMAGH

| Organisation | Worker | Total |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Omagh Support and Self Help | Co-ordinator Administrator | 2 |
| Tara Centre | Counsellor Administrator | 2 |
| West Tyrone Voice | Director Administrator | 2 |
| WAVE | Development Worker x2 Administrator | 3 |
| Total | | 9² |

² This figure is 1 post higher than declared in AQW 2669/10 and represents a correction to that response.

Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

Mr D McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on each Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) project that affects North Antrim (AQW 3675/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Information on current projects taking place within North Antrim is included in the table below.

| Project name | A26/M2 Ballee Road East; Ballymena | Rail - Infrastructure (Bridge Replacement. Antrim to Coleraine) |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Department | DRD | DRD |
| Sub Pillar | Roads | Public Transport |
| Contract Description and latest procurement news | A26/M2 Ballee Road East; Ballymena | Bridge replacement along track from Antrim to Coleraine |
| Contract Value (£000s) | Between £3m and £6m | Between £1m and £3m |
| Contract Type | Construction | Construction |
| Published To Web | Yes | Yes |
| Invitation To Tender: Date | 12/2008 | 11/2008 |
| Contract Award: Date | 4/2009 | 1/2009 |
| Completion: Date | q/e Mar 2010 | q/e Dec 2009 |

North Antrim will also gain from the improvements to infrastructure that are designed to deliver benefits to the whole region (or a wider area than North Antrim). For example, improvements in connectivity through road and transport upgrades or improved technologies (project Kelvin), improvements to acute hospitals, the social housing programme, waste management programme, and also capital grants made available through DETI, DCAL or DARD. Updates on these projects are available through the ISNI Web Portal www.isni.gov.uk.

Childcare

Mrs M O'Neill asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what measures are being put in place to ensure affordable, flexible and age appropriate childcare is available to enable parents to access employment. (AQW 3815/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People identified childcare as a priority and tasked members of its cross-departmental sub-group on Child Poverty to undertake an exercise to consider the issues. A preliminary report was completed in June and the Sub-Committee agreed that an economic appraisal be carried out on a range of strategic options.

A consultant has been appointed to do this and it is hoped the work will be completed by early March. Ministers will make decisions on the way forward following consideration of this report.

Investment Strategy

Mrs N Long asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the creation of a fixed-term development plan to underpin the Investment Strategy, including firm project commitments and key project milestones and timelines that would invigorate the delivery of the Strategy, facilitate accountability and create confidence with private sector partners. (AQW 3860/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Capital spending of nearly £1.7 billion in 2008-09 marks the highest level of expenditure ever on infrastructure, and we anticipate a comparable high level of spend in 2009-10. Since the beginning of the current Investment Strategy, departments have been fully utilising the resources for new capital investment. The majority of the major schemes listed in the ISNI document itself are underway or will be commenced in the near term.

This outcome has been assisted by the production of individual Investment Delivery Plans by departments (IDPs) detailing the projects for which they are responsible. These plans provide information to facilitate effective delivery monitoring and capacity building in the public sector. The IDPs are available through the websites of individual departments and the Strategic Investment Board (www.sibni.org).

In addition, the Investment Strategy Delivery Tracking System (DTS) was rolled out to all departments and related public bodies in 2009. Over 500 projects are currently logged on the DTS. Information taken for the DTS is publicly available through the Investment Strategy Web Portal. (www.isni.gov.uk).

The availability of the Web Portal is assisting the construction industry with its business planning by allowing contractors to remain fully informed on opportunities arising from current and future infrastructure projects as they progress into procurement and delivery.

Review of 2010-11 Spending Plans for Departments

Mr S Hamilton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) which Ministers were in attendance at the Executive meeting which approved the Review of 2010 - 11 Spending Plans for Departments; (ii) if a vote was taken when agreeing the proposals; (iii) if the Review was agreed unanimously or with dissent; and (iv) to indicate which Ministers, if any, registered dissent formally. (AQW 3883/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is not our practice to disclose details of Executive business. The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Victims and Survivors Service

Mr P Doherty asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the key issues raised in the recent consultation on the victims and survivors service. (AQO 579/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have received 29 responses to the recent consultation on a Victims and Survivors Service. We are currently considering the detail of those responses. We have also forwarded a summary of the responses to the OFMDFM Committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those groups and individuals who took time to contribute on this important issue.

A number of key themes have emerged in the responses, including, the proposed design of the Service, funding, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and the timescale for establishment of the Service. We will be considering all of the issues raised carefully as we decide how to move on to the next stage in the development of the new service.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr F McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the review of the Strategic Investment Board will be completed. (AQO 580/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: A routine review of the Strategic Investment Board has been underway since the autumn and has involved consultation with a wide range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors. The review is now nearing completion and we expect to receive its recommendations for consideration shortly. We will share the findings of the Review with the OFMDFM Committee once they are available.

Disability Discrimination Act: Compliance

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the publication on 3 December of the 'Promoting Social Inclusion Report on Disability', if they have identified any major public service that is not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. (AQO 582/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister would expect all public authorities to comply fully with the provision of the Disability Discrimination Act. There is no duty however placed on this Department to monitor compliance.

It is the responsibility of The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to keep under review the “disability duties” placed on public authorities. This duty came into effect on 1 January 2007 as part of a series of changes to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006).

The Commission published in December 2009, its first review report which provides an evaluation of progress to date by public authorities and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in implementing the disability duties. A copy of this report is available in the Assembly Library and on the Commission’s website.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mrs N Long asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the production of a single draft document for public consultation on the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy. (AQO 583/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration was originally meant to have been brought forward before the end of 2008. That and subsequent commitments on timing were made in good faith, and it was our expectation that those would be met. Reaching agreement on the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy (CSI) remains one of the top policy priorities of OFMDFM.

Our commitment within the Programme for Government under PSA 7 “Making Peoples Lives Better” – Objective 5 – ‘to implement a programme of cohesion and integration for a shared and better future for all’ will be honoured. This issue is too important to get wrong and we will work at it until we have honoured that pledge.

Our officials continue to work intensively towards an agreed strategy and we believe that progress is being made that will benefit all our people now and over the longer term; work to promote community relations and good race relations has continued over the past two years, led and supported by us and the whole Ministerial team.

OFMDFM: Budget 2010-11

Mr A McQuillan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps they are taking to deal with budgetary pressures for 2010-2011. (AQO 584/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Finance Minister announced the outcome of the Executive’s review of its 2010-11 spending plans to the Assembly on 12 January 2010. The Review recommends that OFMDFM’s opening budget for 2010/11 is reduced by £4.1m (5%) on Current Expenditure and £5.2m (30%) on Capital Expenditure.

We will publish details of how we will deliver these budget reductions on the OFMDFM website shortly as part of the Executive’s consultation on its 2010/11 Spending Plans.

OFMDFM: Staffing

Mr W Irwin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to reduce the number of civil servants in their Department. (AQO 585/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Structures and staffing levels in the Department are regularly reviewed to ensure the work of the Department is delivered in the most efficient and effective way. The size of the Department has reduced from 408 staff in post in September 2007 to 394 in December 2009.

While we have made significant progress in reducing costs in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister during the last two years, we are committed to finding further efficiencies. This will include reducing the Departmental staffing complement by approximately 51 full time equivalents. Work is underway to effect these changes as swiftly as possible through redeployment within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Victims Groups

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the distribution of funding for victims groups. (AQO 587/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: During the 2009/10 financial year we have allocated almost £5 million to support groups working with victims and survivors. Groups have availed of Core funding and Small Grants through schemes administered on our behalf by the Community Relations Council.

We are currently considering options for support for groups as part of transitional arrangements in preparation for the establishment of the new Victims and Survivors Service. It is our intention that groups will not be disadvantaged as we implement the new strategy.

Cold Weather

Mr P J Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action the Executive has taken, or intends to take, to respond to the needs of the community due to the recent freezing weather. (AQO 588/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: In addition to issuing Winter Fuel Payments which are paid to those aged 60 or over at a rate of £250, and to those aged 80 or over at a rate of £400, the Department for Social Development has, to date, made arrangements to issue three separate Cold Weather Payments of £25 each to all qualifying customers regardless of age. In total, approximately 166,000 customers will benefit from the Cold Weather Payment Scheme.

As well as providing heating and insulation measures, the Warm Homes Scheme also provides advice on maximising household income by ensuring that vulnerable people are claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled. For the first time, Working Tax Credit is a qualifying benefit for both heating and insulation measures and the over 60 age restriction for heating measures has been removed. Over £118 million has been spent making in excess of 71,000 households warmer.

The Department for Regional Development has advised that Roads Service spread salt at the most effective times, to help traffic on the busier main through routes move safely and freely in the wintry conditions. Some salting of secondary routes was also undertaken, where appropriate.

Roads Service also committed significant resources to maintain approximately 3,500 salt bins provided on public roads.

Northern Ireland Water's (NIW) Winter Contingency Plan is reviewed annually, in advance of the winter period, and a series of pre-emptive actions are implemented to mitigate any potential adverse weather situations that may occur.

On Thursday 24 December 2009, NIW became aware of a higher than usual demand on water supplies, and water treatment works were operated at full capacity to compensate for the increased demand. On Monday 28 December, NIW activated a category-1 incident management regime from its Head Office in Belfast, supported by three tactical management teams in Altnagelvin (Derry/Londonderry), Westland House (Belfast) and Omagh.

Over the nine-day Christmas period, around 14,000 calls were received by NIW, of which 2,500 related to interruptions to the water supply caused by 54 burst watermains, 191 burst service pipes and 195 leaks within private property. In the period up to 30 December, NIW had tankered 13 million litres of water to maintain supplies from depleted service reservoirs, and provided 140,000 litres of bottled water to affected customers. NIW staff worked continuously over the Christmas and New Year period to locate and repair bursts, fill critically low reservoirs, provide alternative supplies and to provide advice and information to customers. At its peak, over 200 NIW staff and contractors were deployed in response to the situation.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) maintained close contact with the energy, telecommunications and food retail sectors during the cold spell. All have robust contingency plans in place for such an event. Supply chains coped well, particularly gas supplies to meet the very high level of demand, with little or no impact on Northern Ireland customers.

Throughout the freezing weather conditions, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) monitored the situation and provided advice to the public on practical issues such as the protection of pipes from freezing and what to do if there is a burst, as well as advice on transportation and obtaining heating oil at the best price.

In summary, our Executive colleagues have ensured that the Departments and their agencies responded quickly and effectively to the needs of the community during what proved to be a challenging time for many.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Grants for Farmers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has any plans to offer grants to (i) livestock farmers to assist with additional feeding costs; and (ii) arable farmers who have lost produce, due to the severe weather. (AQW 3631/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The recent severe weather has caused problems and created inconvenience for farmers and my thoughts are with all those individuals and businesses who have suffered disruption.

There are currently no financial support measures available for farmers' losses or additional feeding costs due to the severe weather, and my Department is currently facing significant financial resource pressures, across the board. I have considered all avenues for financial support from Europe, including State Aid and the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), however, these are not feasible in the circumstances.

As you will be aware I raised the issue of the recent flooding with my Executive Colleagues, and the Executive has set up a task force on the matter. Its work is ongoing and there may be lessons to be learnt in relation to handling of severe weather conditions generally from this important exercise.

DARD/ CAFRE Development Advisors will continue to be available to provide technical support in dealing with problems brought on by the severe weather conditions such as feed shortage or possible crop damage.

Graphic Information Systems (GIS)

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she would consider introducing a tolerance level for geographic information systems (GIS) mapping so that hedges can be fully considered and reduced to conform to GIS mapping figures. (AQW 3719/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The handling of features such as hedges is clearly set out in guidance provided by the European Commission.

In accordance with this guidance, where hedges form a boundary between fields and are traditionally part of good agricultural practice in the region, they can be considered as part of the area of the field if they are 4 metres wide or less with up to 2 m can be attributed to the area of each field. Where the hedge is part of an internal feature in a field, it can be accepted as part of the field if the width is less than 2 metres.

However, if a hedge forming a boundary is more than 4 metres wide, then the whole hedge has to be removed from the eligible area of the fields. Similarly, if the hedge is an internal feature in the field and is more than 2 metres wide, then the whole hedge has to be removed from the area of the field.

Bluetongue Disease

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she is taking to prevent the spread of Bluetongue disease. (AQW 3720/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has a range of preventive measures in place to deal with the threat of Bluetongue. I have continually advised farmers against imports of susceptible animals from the Bluetongue affected areas. Any farmer who applies for an import licence is advised of the risk to their own herd and the national herd if they import animals from Bluetongue affected areas. They are also advised that they may not be compensated if DARD has cause to slaughter an imported animal because it is diseased. For animals imported from Bluetongue zones, pre-import testing is one of the conditions laid down by

EU regulations. In addition, any susceptible animals that are imported must be kept in isolation until they have been post import tested and the Department is content that they do not pose a threat.

My officials have worked closely with our key industry stakeholders on preparedness to deal with the threat of this disease, through the Bluetongue Working Group and will continue to do so. We have provided advice to the industry regarding the clinical signs of this disease and information is also available on the DARD website.

My Department also continues to work closely with counterparts in Dublin to ensure all appropriate measures are taken to retain the island's Bluetongue free status.

Our current veterinary risk assessment is that the preventative measures we already have in place continue to be appropriate to the risk from the disease being introduced through live animal imports

Snared Animals

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many animals were snared (i) legally; and (ii) illegally in each of the last five years, broken down by animal type. (AQW 3723/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department does not hold or collect the information being sought. My officials have contacted the Department of the Environment (DOE), which regulates the use of snares, and they have been advised that the DOE does not hold this information either.

Single Farm Payment

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) as of 31 December 2009, how many farmers who had not received a farm inspection have yet to receive their Single Farm Payment; (ii) how many farmers in total, including those who had inspections, have not yet received their Single Farm Payment; and (iii) on what date did the final on-farm inspection take place. (AQW 3879/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- (i) As at 31 December 2009, 4,626 farmers out of 36,761 farmers, who had not received an eligibility inspection for the 2009 scheme year, had not received a 2009 Single Farm Payment.
- (ii) As at 18 January 2010, the payment position had not been finalised for 3,743 (9.6%) of all of the claims submitted under the 2009 Single Farm Payment Scheme
- (iii) The last on-farm eligibility inspection was carried out on 26 November 2009.

Brucellosis Incident in Co. Armagh

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what actions her Department is taking to identify the source of the brucellosis incident in Co. Armagh; and what progress has been made to date. (AQW 3958/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The initial investigation into this incident is ongoing, and as the Department is co-operating with the PSNI no further comment can be made at this time.

Farm Modernisation Programme

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if a decision has been taken on qualification criteria for the second phase of the Farm Modernisation Scheme. (AQO 593/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A paper detailing the proposed additional selection criteria for the second Tranche of the Farm Modernisation Programme is currently being prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee, which is due to take place on 3 February 2010. I would not want to be specific about the additional criteria until the Committee membership, which includes industry representatives, have had an opportunity to read the proposals.

I will arrange for a copy of the proposed selection criteria paper to be forwarded to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee at the same time as it is issued the Monitoring Committee.

Livestock Identification

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide an update on the implementation of electronic identification in livestock markets. (AQO 596/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Sheep and Goats legislation came into operation on 31 December 2009. The new system requires keepers to apply electronic, or EID, tags to sheep and to record their individual tag numbers when they move. This is compulsory under EU legislation to ensure effective traceability, especially in the event of a disease outbreak such as Foot and Mouth Disease.

I have long sought to reduce the impact of this EU legislation on our local sheep industry. In August 2009, we secured an important concession from the European Commission, which now allows markets and meat plants to act as Central Points of Recording to read and record tag numbers on behalf of flock keepers. This will significantly reduce the burden and costs on flock keepers here.

My officials have been working closely with representatives of our local livestock markets and meat plants, and others, to ensure we have a Central Point of Recording system in place from the spring of this year, as this function will be a fundamental element of our sheep electronic identification system.

My officials have recently sent letters to all livestock markets and meat plants asking them to advise if they are interested in becoming approved as a Central Point of Recording. To date a number of markets and meat plants have registered an interest.

I am delighted to announce today that I have been able to secure funding of £250,000 to provide some financial assistance to markets, meat plants, export assembly centres and collection centres to help them undertake the Central Point of Recording role.

Red Meat Industry Task Force

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the cost to her Department of developing and implementing the Northern Ireland Red Meat Industry Task Force strategy over the last three years. (AQO 597/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Red Meat Task Force Strategy was published in October 2007. The cost of developing the strategy was of £750k, which was split evenly between my Department (DARD), Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) and industry organisations.

The report identified actions for each of the main players and DARD is actively playing its part in implementing those that apply to its own role. Over the past 3 years the cost to DARD, has been approximately £90k.

Single Farm Payments

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide an update on the processing and delivery of Single Farm Payments. (AQO 598/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: By today, my Department has paid out £255.467 million to 34,944 farmers. This is 90.4% of farmers who claimed Single Farm Payment in 2009. Less than 10% of claims have not yet been finalized for a variety of reasons, including queries on the claims, the need to complete processing of on-farm inspection reports, challenges by others of the right to claim the land, the need to await probate or because the farmer has not provided bank account details to allow payments to be made by electronic transfer. Not all the remaining claims will be due a payment either because of ineligibility or the application of penalties under scheme rules.

I am pleased that this year, my Department has again improved its payment performance.

Flooding: Fermanagh

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide an update on the progress of the Fermanagh Flooding Taskforce and to outline what efforts can be made to reduce the impact of flooding in the future. (AQO 599/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The cross-departmental Task Force was set up by the Executive in response to the widespread flooding in County Fermanagh in November 2009 and the group held its first meeting in Enniskillen on 22 December 2009. The meeting was attended by me in my role as Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister Arlene Foster MLA, Regional Development Minister Conor Murphy MP MLA, Department of the Environment Minister Edwin Poots MLA and Head of the Civil Service Bruce Robinson. Representatives from a range of other government organisations, including local agencies, also took part.

All present found the meeting very useful in providing an opportunity to hear first hand from local officials about the challenges they faced in dealing with the flooding and, once again, I wish to pay tribute to the people of Fermanagh for the way they responded as a community to help each other at a very difficult time and contributed to making the impact less than it might otherwise have been. Members of the Task Force expressed a desire to hear from those most affected by the floods and, as such, announced that evidence gathering meetings were to be held in Fermanagh. The first such meeting took place on 6 January 2010, and a further two meetings were held on 11 January 2010. The Task Force have agreed to a target date of the end of February 2010 for producing the first phase of its review, and I will be in a better position to provide an update on the work of the Taskforce and potential future measures to minimise the impact of future flooding at that time.

Bluetongue Disease

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she intends to take following the receipt of information of an increase in imported animals from continental Europe and the resulting threat of Bluetongue disease. (AQO 601/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Bluetongue continues to be a serious threat to our agriculture industry. Our current veterinary risk assessment is that the import of potentially infected animals is the greatest risk. I have repeatedly advised farmers not to import susceptible animals from Bluetongue affected areas and I receive information on any such imports on a weekly basis.

I am very concerned about the increase in the number of animals imported from continental Europe during December 2009 and on 6 January I issued a statement reminding farmers of the risk to their own individual herds and the national herd. I also took part in an interview with an agriculture journalist on the subject.

I will continue to maintain the preventative measures that we have currently in place in the north, in addition to these imposed by EU Regulations. These include:-

- the provision of advice to anyone who applies for an import licence;
- the restriction of animals post import until my Department's Veterinary Officers are satisfied that they do not pose a threat; and
- a post import test for Bluetongue.

I urge anyone thinking of importing animals from Bluetongue affected areas to heed my appeal and the appeals from farming unions. Do not put your own farm business – and your own industry - in jeopardy by importing livestock from Bluetongue affected areas.

GM-free Zone

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, following the revised Programme for Government in the Republic of Ireland, if she has had any discussions with the Irish Government about creating an all-island genetically modified free zone. (AQO 602/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department's role, in relation to genetic modification is in the enforcement of European law controlling the import of animal feed stuffs and seed certification.

I am both personally and politically opposed to the growing of GM crops on the island of Ireland and am willing to discuss creating an all-island genetically modified free zone with the Government in the South.

Roles and responsibilities for the full range of issues raised by the genetic modification of food and animal feed is distributed across several local departments and agencies, including the Department of the Environment and the Food Standards Agency.

Rural Proofing

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has plans to make legislative provision for any Rural Proofing policy established by her Department. (AQO 603/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A decision on the need for a legislative basis to underpin rural proofing will be made after the enhanced rural proofing process has been introduced across government. My officials are currently finalising a new rural proofing training programme and support materials that will be rolled out to policy makers in all government Departments during 2010-2011. A review of the impact of the training programme and support on the rural aspects of policy making will be carried out in 2011. The outcomes of this review will inform the need, if any, to legislate for rural proofing.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Libraries: Dunmurry

Rt Hon J Donaldson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has for the future of library services in Dunmurry. (AQO 609/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): Library services in Dunmurry are being considered within Libraries NI's ongoing strategic Review of the Greater Belfast libraries estate.

A full public consultation on the Review proposals commenced on 11 January. As part of this process a series of meetings will be arranged at which Libraries NI will discuss the proposals with library users, staff, and the CAL Committee.

Nothing has been finalised by the Libraries NI Board at this stage and I would encourage everyone with an interest in libraries in Greater Belfast to participate in the consultation process. This will help ensure that in the future Belfast has a modern, accessible and excellent library service.

Ballymena United Football Club

Mr I Paisley Jnr asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the level of support his Department has made available to Ballymena Football Club and the Showgrounds in the last year. (AQO 610/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. In July 2008, Ballymena United Football Club received a provisional letter of offer for £205,000 under the Soccer Strategy Playing Facilities Programme towards improvement works at the Showgrounds stadium. It is anticipated that work will start on site shortly with all works due to be completed in this financial year. Furthermore, in December 2009, SNI issued a provisional letter of offer to the club for £800,000, under its Stadia Safety Programme, towards essential safety works. I understand the club is currently working through their conditions of award. Looking back over the last ten years, Ballymena United FC has received almost £1.76m in Government support. This is a good example of a club fully embedded in the community which is contributing positively to both senior and grassroots football.

Creative Industries

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has sought additional financing from public and private sources outside the Innovation Fund to boost the creative enterprises sector which employs over 34,000 people. (AQO 611/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The £5Million Creative Industries Innovation Fund was itself additional financing for the sector, having been sought and dedicated as such by my Department from government monies designated under the Northern Ireland Innovation Fund.

In addition to the Creative Industries Innovation Fund, my Department provided £1.98M funding to Northern Ireland Screen in 2008/09 by way of operating and education costs to support the development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry. This investment was supported by an additional £11M from Invest Northern Ireland over 2007-10 to support film, television and digital content production.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland also provides considerable support to individual artists and creative businesses. This fuels the emergence of creative people, services and enterprises. In 2008/09 my Department provided revenue and capital funding to the Arts Council totalling £19.44M.

In recent weeks I have met with a delegation from the Institute of Directors, and I am shortly due to meet with the Chief Executives' Forum, to discuss their ideas on ways to stimulate the creative industries sector and enhance private and public sector partnerships.

Such collaborations will serve to increase the range of support and investment opportunities available to creative enterprises and demonstrates the value of public and private sector leaders working together to support achievement of economic goals.

My Department also supports the work of Arts and Business NI, which encourages the establishment of innovative and mutually beneficial partnerships between business and arts organisations.

Members will be aware that we are facing a much more challenging fiscal environment which will put increasing pressure on all areas of expenditure. However, the creative industries can help to lead economic recovery and develop a vibrant and innovative economy in Northern Ireland and I will therefore continue to explore initiatives and investment opportunities that will support the sector.

Football: Amateur Clubs

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has made any approach to the Serious Organised Crime Agency regarding the allocation of funds from the profits of crime to local amateur football clubs, as is the case in Scotland. (AQO 612/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Issues pertinent to Assets Recovery and the redistribution of cash forfeiture receipts are a reserved matter and the responsibility of the Home Office in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I have not, therefore, directly contacted the Serious Organised Crime Agency regarding the allocation of funds from the proceeds of crime to local amateur football clubs, or indeed any other area within the remit of my Department.

However, I have given my full support to the distribution of funding provided through the Northern Ireland Office's Community Fund, which seeks to direct some of the funds recovered from criminal assets back to communities most affected by crime. As a result my Department will distribute, through its Arms Length Bodies, a proportion of the total funds available from the Community Fund. Approximately £30,000 of this will be distributed to sports projects by Sport NI through its Awards for Sport Programme.

The Awards for Sport Programme, which closed for applications on 6 January 2010, was open to applications from governing bodies, sports clubs, including amateur football clubs, and community and voluntary organisations.

Irish Language Strategy

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which groups his Department actively consulted in 2008 and 2009 in relation to the development of a strategy for the promotion of the Irish language. (AQO 613/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In 2008 and 2009 my Department met with Foras na Gaeilge, Pobal, the Ulster-Scots Agency, the Ulster-Scots Academy Implementation Group and the Ulster-Scots Language Society in relation to the Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages Strategy.

During that period DCAL also engaged with Gerry Adams and other representatives from Sinn Fein, representatives from the SDLP and the Irish Guild of the Church of Ireland for discussions on the Language Strategy

Public consultation on the Strategy will form part of the policy development process.

Ulster Aviation Society

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how his Department plans to increase public access to the Ulster Aviation Society's collection at the Maze/Long Kesh site. (AQO 614/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has no direct responsibility for public access either to the Ulster Aviation Society's collection or to the Maze/Long Kesh site.

The private collection of the Ulster Aviation Society can be viewed by the public through prior arrangement with the Society.

Details of these arrangements can be found on the Society's website.

The Schooner 'Result'

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans the National Museums have for the restoration of the schooner 'Result'. (AQO 615/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: National Museums Northern Ireland recognises the position of "The Result" as one of the UK's core collection of historic ships. It is also committed to developing and preserving maritime collections and making them accessible to the widest range of audiences. We will continue dialogue on options for the future of National Museums' maritime heritage collection.

"The Result" is currently protected under a purpose – built weatherproof awning.

Places for Sport Programme

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what alternative funding will be made available to the twelve GAA Clubs that met the criteria under the Places for Sport Programme but were subsequently denied funding. (AQO 616/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of exchequer and lottery funding. To date, SNI has run two phases of the Places for Sport programme, both of which were oversubscribed. For this reason and on the basis of SNI's scoring procedure, 32 applications, including 12 from GAA clubs, met the eligibility criteria but failed to secure exchequer funding. Should SNI be in a position to launch a new phase of the programme, all of these applicants will have the opportunity to re-apply and to be considered along with any other applications received against the eligibility criteria. However, this would be subject to budget availability. There are no other programmes funded by SNI that are designed to meet criteria similar to Places for Sport programme.

Midnight Soccer: South Belfast

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how his Department is supporting midnight soccer provision in the South Belfast constituency. (AQO 617/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. Midnight Street Soccer currently takes place at Olympia Leisure Centre in South Belfast, where it is supported by a number of organisations that have been in

receipt of SNI funding including the North Belfast Play Forum, Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group and the Greater Village Regeneration Trust.

Irish Language Strategy

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explain the delay in bringing forward a strategy to the Executive for enhancing and promoting the Irish language. (AQO 618/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My officials provided an update on this issue to the CAL Committee on 10 December 2009.

Since taking up office I have been actively considering the issues surrounding the enhancement and development of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture and the enhancement and protection of the development of the Irish language.

I have also been taking account of the position of other regional or minority languages across the United Kingdom, especially the situation in Scotland which has close parallels to Northern Ireland in terms of regional and minority languages, albeit with some differences.

Two of the key issues that have arisen during my considerations are education and broadcasting. I have written to the Minister for Education seeking a meeting to discuss the cultural rights of children in the classroom. I am awaiting a response from the Minister in relation to a suitable date for the meeting.

I have also raised the issue of broadcasting with Paul Goggins as this is a reserved matter, and I await further progress on this matter.

Sports Stadia

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 3050/10, whether his Department has given any guidance to sporting bodies on the budget they should work within when seeking funding for the development of separate stadia for (i) football; (ii) rugby; and (iii) gaelic games. (AQW 4097/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has informed the Governing Bodies that the Outline Business Case to examine the various stadium options is predicated on an indicative £110m being made available by Government, as its contribution toward the overall capital costs, subject to normal budgetary processes. No indicative budgets have been provided for the individual sports.

The allocation of funding to the individual Governing Bodies cannot be determined until the outcome of the Outline Business Case has been reviewed by my Department and subsequently approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Executive.

I recognise that the needs of the three Governing Bodies are quite different and my aim is to ensure that their respective strategic needs are addressed within the Outline Business Case.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Promoting Music in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what measures her Department has in place to promote music in (i) primary schools; and (ii) secondary schools, and in particular to encourage children to play a musical instrument. (AQW 3750/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Is gné riachtanach d'oidreachas cothromaithe é an Ceol, a sholáthraíonn foirm chumhachtach shainiúil de chumarsáid agus a fheabhsaíonn féinmheas agus muinín daltaí. Is cuid reachtúil den churaclam athbheithnithe é ó Bhonnchéim go hEochairchéim 3, agus féadann daltaí staidéar a dhéanamh air mar rogha scrúdaithe ag Eochairchéim 4. Tá teacht ag scoileanna ar sholáthar breise Ceoil fosta do dhaltaí ar mhian leo uirlis ar leith a fhoghlaim.

Music forms an essential part of a balanced education, providing a powerful and distinctive form of communication and expression, as well as enhancing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. It is a statutory part of the revised curriculum from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3 and pupils may also choose to study it as an exam choice at Key Stage 4. Schools also have access to additional music provision for pupils wishing to learn a particular instrument. This is provided by the Schools' Music Service of each Education & Library Board. These Music Services operate across and beyond all school sectors in both formal and informal settings, placing them in a key position to influence the lives of young people throughout and beyond their formal educational experience. The ELBs fund their music service from within their overall CASS budgets.

Musical Instruments in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what funding her Department has made available for schools to employ individuals to teach children to play musical instruments, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 3751/10)

Minister of Education: Ní dháileann mo Roinn cistiú do scoileanna chun daoine a fhostú le paistí

a theagasc le huirlis cheoil a sheinm nó chun uirlisí ceoil a cheannach go sonrach. Soláthraíonn gach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne cistiú do Sheirbhís Cheoil a scoileanna, atá mar phríomhfhoinsé i leith teagasc gairmiúil uirlise agus uirlisí ceoil do scoileanna.

My Department does not allocate funding to schools specifically for the employment of individuals to teach children/young people to play musical instruments or to buy musical instruments. Each Education and Library Board provides funding to its schools' Music Service, which is the main source for professional instrumental teaching and musical instruments for schools. In-school provision for musical tuition is at the discretion of each individual school and it is up to schools to fund this provision from their delegated budgets. My department does not hold information relating to the detail of this provision, this could only be accessed at individual school level.

Over-Arching Legal Criteria for Admissions to Nursery Schools

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8743/09, which states that in relation to the over-arching legal criteria for admissions to nursery schools "responsibility for drawing up these criteria rests entirely with the Board of Governors of each school", to confirm whether the over-arching criteria are set by the Department and whether Boards of Governors only have control over the setting of sub-criteria. (AQW 3757/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireann an Roinn Oideachais ceanglas i bhfeidhm ar thosaíocht a thabhairt do pháistí ó chúlraí faoi mhíbhuntáiste sóisialta (a bhfaigheann a dtuismitheoirí Sochair Shlándaála Sóisialaí áirithe) agus dóibh siúd a bhfuil breithlá i mí Iúil/ Lúnasa acu. Caithfear cloí leo agus chomh luath agus a shásaítear an ceanglas sin, tá critéar breise le haghaidh iontrála de dhualgas ar gach naíscoil aonair agus léireoidh sé príomhthosaíochta an Bhoird Ghobharnóirí le haghaidh iontrála ina scoil/ naíolann.

DE sets a requirement to give priority to children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (whose parents are in receipt of certain social security benefits) and those with July/August birthdays. This must be adhered to and once this requirement is satisfied, additional criteria for admission are the responsibility of each individual nursery school and will reflect the Board of Governors priorities for admissions to their school/playgroup.

Irish Medium Unit, St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education if she will ensure that the Irish medium unit planned for St Joseph's Grammar school, Donaghmore, will be listed in this year's booklet which guides parents on transfer options. (AQW 3773/10)

Minister of Education: Foilsíodh an togra forbartha i dtaca leis an aonad Gaeilge ar 17 Nollaig agus críochnóidh an tréimhse comhairlithe reachtúil ar 17 Feabhra. Déanfaidh mé cinneadh ar an togra chomh luath agus is féidir i ndiaidh an dáta sin. Idir an dá linn, foilsíodh leabhráin na gcritéar iontrála cheana féin.

The development proposal in respect of the Irish medium unit was published on 17 December and the statutory two month consultation period ends on 17 February. I will make a decision on the proposal as soon as possible after that date. In the meantime the admissions criteria booklets have already been published.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 3400/10 (i) who pays the salaries relating to the Education and Skills Authority outlined in AQW 2817/10; and (ii) the number of posts held within the Education and Skills Authority and the related salary bands. (AQW 3779/10)

Minister of Education: Níl aon fhoireann fostaithe ag an Údarás um Oideachas agus Scileann cionn is nach bhfuil an tÚdarás ar marthain go fóill. Maoinítear foireann ar bith a bhíonn ag obair le Foireann Chur i bhFeidhm an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna ar bhonn lánaimseartha nó ar bhonn pro rata, de réir na n-uaireanta a oibríonn siad, ag an Roinn Oideachais.

No staff are currently employed by the Education and Skills Authority since the Authority has not yet come into existence. However, staff who are working with the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team are funded either full time or pro rata, according to their hours of work, by the Department of Education.

Accommodation Costs for the Education and Skills Authority

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 2817/10, to provide (i) a breakdown of the £359,000 accommodation costs incurred up to 31 October 2009 in preparation for the Education and Skills Authority; and (ii) the location and type of accommodation. (AQW 3780/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Tá miondealú ar chostais chóiríochta a tabhaíodh go dtí 31 Deireadh Fómhair in ullmhúchán le haghaidh an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna, mar a nochtadh in AQW 2817/10 leagtha amach sa tábla thíos:
- (i) A breakdown of the £359,000 accommodation costs incurred up to 31 October 2009 in preparation for the Education and Skills Authority, as disclosed in AQW 2817/10, is set out in the table below:

| Type of Cost Incurred | £'000 |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Rental Costs | 248 |
| Building Work | 40 |
| Utilities | 51 |
| Security | 4 |
| Other Miscellaneous Costs | 16 |
| Total | 359 |

- (ii) The accommodation costs relate to rented office accommodation at Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast and Omagh Library, Spillars Place, Omagh.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education how staff carrying out the functions of the Education and Skills Authority were recruited; and where the staff are located. (AQW 3781/10)

Minister of Education: Níl aon fhoireann fostaithe faoi láthair chun feidhmeanna an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna a dhéanamh cionn is nach bhfuil an tÚdarás ar marthain go fóill. Sanntar foireann d'Fhoireann Chur i bhFeidhm an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna le tacaíocht a thabhairt don Phríomhfheidhmeannach (Ainmnithe) le himeachtaí coinbhéirseachta a fheabhsú roimh theacht an ESA agus le hullmhú don Údarás um Oideachas agus Scileanna agus é a bhunú.

No staff are currently employed to undertake the functions of the Education Skills Authority since the Authority has not yet come into existence. However staff are seconded to the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) to support the Chief Executive (Designate) to take forward convergence activities in advance of ESA and to prepare for and establish the Education and Skills Authority.

Staff employed in ESAIT are seconded from their existing organisations on a full time or part time basis. As ESAIT is part of the Department of Education, some staff were seconded from the Department in accordance

with agreed procedures. Other staff have been recruited on a secondment basis following a trawl of Education Sector bodies affected by the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

Some staff are currently located at offices in Forestview, Purdys Lane, Belfast. Other staff divide their time between the location of their originating organisation and Forestview.

Musical Instruments in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what funding her Department has made available for schools to buy musical instruments, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 3786/10)

Minister of Education: Ní dháileann mo Roinn cistiú do scoileanna chun daoine a fhostú le paistí a theagasc le huirlis cheoil a sheinm nó chun uirlisí ceoil a cheannach go sonrach. Soláthraíonn gach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne cistiú do Sheirbhís Cheoil a scoileanna, atá mar phríomhfhoinsé i leith teagasc gairmiúil uirlise agus uirlisí ceoil do scoileanna.

My Department does not allocate funding to schools specifically for the employment of individuals to teach children/young people to play musical instruments or to buy musical instruments. Each Education and Library Board provides funding to its schools' Music Service, which is the main source for professional instrumental teaching and musical instruments for schools. In-school provision for musical tuition is at the discretion of each individual school and it is up to schools to fund this provision from their delegated budgets. My department does not hold information relating to the detail of this provision, this could only be accessed at individual school level.

Musical Instruments in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what funding each Education and Library Board has made available for schools to (i) employ individuals to teach musical instruments; and (ii) to buy musical instruments, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 3787/10)

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas don tréimhse ama seo i ngach ceann de na ceisteanna thuas ar fáil go héasca agus bheadh costas díréireach i gceist le hé a fháil. D'iarr mé ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, áfach, an t-eolas seo a bhailiú i dtaca leis na trí bliana a chuaigh thart. Scríobhfaidh mé chugat in am trátha, mar sin, nuair atá an t-eolas ar fáil.

The information for this period of time for each of the above questions is not readily available and an exercise to collect it would result in disproportionate costs. However, I have asked the ELBs to gather information relating to the last three years. I will, therefore, write to you in due course when the information is available.

Musical Instruments in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary schools; and (ii) secondary schools in each sector have employed individuals to teach children a musical instrument, broken down by Education and Library Board, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 3788/10)

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas don tréimhse ama seo i ngach ceann de na ceisteanna thuas ar fáil go héasca agus bheadh costas díréireach i gceist le hé a fháil. D'iarr mé ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, áfach, an t-eolas seo a bhailiú i dtaca leis na trí bliana a chuaigh thart. Scríobhfaidh mé chugat in am trátha, mar sin, nuair atá an t-eolas ar fáil.

The information for this period of time for each of the above questions is not readily available and an exercise to collect it would result in disproportionate costs. However, I have asked the ELBs to gather information relating to the last three years. I will, therefore, write to you in due course when the information is available.

Musical Instruments in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many children in (i) primary schools; and (ii) secondary schools in each sector have been taught a musical instrument in school, broken down by Education and Library Board, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 3789/10)

Minister of Education: Níl an t-eolas don tréimhse ama seo i ngach ceann de na ceisteanna thuas ar fáil go héasca agus bheadh costas díréireach i gceist le hé a fháil. D'iarr mé ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, áfach, an t-eolas seo a bhailiú i dtaca leis na trí bliana a chuaigh thart. Scríobhfaidh mé chugat in am trátha, mar sin, nuair atá an t-eolas ar fáil.

The information for this period of time for each of the above questions is not readily available and an exercise to collect it would result in disproportionate costs. However, I have asked the ELBs to gather information relating to the last three years. I will, therefore, write to you in due course when the information is available.

Christmas Tree at Ballyholland, Newry

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education the level of contribution, if any, made by her Department towards the provision of a Christmas Tree at Ballyholland, Newry. (AQW 3796/10)

Minister of Education: Ní dhearna an Roinn Oideachais aon ranníocaíocht le crann Nollag a cheannach ar Scoil Bhaile Cholmáin, an tIúr.

The Department of Education did not make any contribution towards the provision of a Christmas tree at Ballyholland, Newry.

Applications Ranked by the Boards of Governors

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8743/09 in which she stated that “The Board of Governors must compile a list of all applicants, in rank order, regardless of whether the school is their first, second or third preference”, if after the point where applications are ranked by the Boards of Governors, nursery schools only have sight of the applications of those who ranked them first choice and if these are ranked in order of criteria until either the list of applicants is exhausted or the unit becomes over-subscribed. (AQW 3803/10)

Minister of Education: Tá na socrúithe le haghaidh iontrála chuig naíscoileanna leagtha amach i gCiorclán 2009/05 na Roinne ‘Rollú Oscailte ar Naíscoileanna: Socrúithe le haghaidh Iontrálacha Mheán Fómhair 2010’. Ní mór do naíscoileanna gach iarratas le haghaidh iontrála a mheas agus glacadh le daltaí suas go dtí go mbaineann siad amach a n-uimhir rollaithe atá formheasta. I scoileanna atá ró-shuibscríofa, cuirfear foirmeacha iarratais ar fáil do dhara rogha na dtuismitheoirí i leith daltaí nár glacadh leo ar a bpríomhrogha tríd an Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

The arrangements for admission to nursery schools are set out in The Department’s Circular Number 2009/05 ‘Open Enrolment in Nursery Schools: Arrangements for September 2010 Admissions’. Nursery schools must consider all applications for admissions and admit pupils up to their approved enrolment number. In schools which are oversubscribed, application forms for pupils who have not been accepted for admission at their first preference are made available to the parents’ second preference school via the Education and Library Board. This process is repeated for third preference schools etc. until all pupils are placed. Therefore, schools will have sight of application forms for first preference applicants plus application forms for applicants who have named the school as a lower preference but who were unsuccessful in gaining admission to other schools of their choice.

It is important to note that while the admissions process is running schools must entirely reassess the rank order established at first preference stage, when second preferences are received, in order to take account of whether any of these second preference candidates meet a higher criterion than the first preference candidates already considered. If so, these pupils would be ranked higher in the rank order established by the school, regardless of the fact that they are second preference candidates.

This process must happen regardless of whether or not the school has places available within the enrolment number at that stage in the admissions process. The school must repeat this process with every subsequent set of applications through third, fourth, fifth preference stages. A school cannot consider itself to have reached a final and conclusive rank order until all applications, regardless of preference, have been received, the school’s criteria have been applied to those candidates and the admissions process has closed. This ensures that it is the ability of an applicant to meet the school’s admission criteria which establish their position in the schools rank order, rather than the preference they have given to the school.

Pre-School Provision

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education for her Department's assessment of the key differences between pre-school provision in a statutory nursery setting and that provided in voluntary and private settings. (AQW 3809/10)

Minister of Education: Cé go bhfuil roinnt difríochtaí idir soláthróirí deonacha/ príobháideacha réamhscoile ó thaobh soláthair de, ba chóir a thabhairt faoi deara go roinneann gach soláthar an curaclam céanna, atá ullmhaithe ag an Chomhairle Churaclaim, Scrúduithe agus Mheasúnachta, agus go bhfuil siad go léir oscailte le haghaidh cigireachta ag an Chigireacht Oideachais agus Oiliúna.

While there are a number of differences in provision between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school providers it should be noted that all providers share a common curriculum, prepared by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, and all are open to inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Key differences between the different types of providers are:

- All voluntary/private providers must be registered and inspected by the relevant Health and Social Care Trust under the Children's (N I) Order 1995. This leads to differences in terms of staff:child ratios:
1:8 in voluntary/private settings; 1:13 in statutory settings, staffed by qualified teachers;
- In voluntary/private settings all staff must be qualified to at least NVQ level 2, or equivalent, while leaders must have NVQ level 3 or equivalent. In statutory settings staff should comprise a qualified teacher and qualified nursery assistant;
- Under legislation the statutory sector can admit children who have attained the age of 2 and those under the statutory school starting age. Voluntary/private providers are funded only for those children in their immediate pre-school year;
- The funding of voluntary/private sector places was introduced in 1998 under the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme. The offer is for a free part-time place, for 2.5 hours per day for 38 weeks per year. In the statutory sector provision can be full-time or part-time;
- Pupils in nursery schools and classes are funded under the Local Management of Schools arrangements. Funding is provided under a Common Funding Formula and the level of funding is determined mainly by pupil numbers at each school. Additional financial support is also available through a range of other funding factors. Voluntary and Private sector providers are funded by direct grant, payable by the relevant Education and Library Board in instalments each year, at a flat rate per child, and which is reviewed annually.;
- In terms of accommodation, statutory nursery schools and classes are required to meet the Department's standards in respect of accommodation for nursery and primary school provision, while Voluntary and Private sector providers are required to conform to the standards set out in the Children (N I) Order 1995 Regulations and Guidance on Family Support, Childminding and Day Care.

Applications for Pre-School Places

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education what measures are in place to familiarise parents with the deadlines for applications for pre-school places. (AQW 3811/10)

Minister of Education: The Education and Library Board's Pre-School Education Advisory Groups (PEAGs) undertake publicity in respect of the admissions process for funded pre-school provision on a joint-Board basis. This involves both the use of newspaper advertising and the production of a joint 5 Board poster which is sent out to primary schools, nursery schools, libraries, Health Centres, Post Offices and DHSSPS offices.

Ina theannta sin, táirgeann an Roinn póstaer agus leabhrán eolais le haghaidh tuismitheoirí agus cuirtear cóipeanna díobh seo chuig soláthróirí deonacha agus príobháideacha a bhfuil áiteanna cistithe réamhscoile acu, naiscoileanna, bunscoileanna a bhfuil naí-aonaid acu agus suíomhanna Thús Cinnte. Dáileann Grúpaí Comhairleacha Oideachais Réamhscoile póstaer na Roinne agus cóipeanna den leabhrán le haghaidh tuismitheoirí fosta do leabharlanna, Ionaid Shláinte, Oifigí Phoist agus Oifigí na Roinne **Sláinte**, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta.

In addition, the Department also produces a poster and an information booklet for parents and copies of these are sent to voluntary and private providers with funded pre-school places, nursery schools, primary schools

with nursery units and Sure Start settings. Copies of the booklet for parents and Departmental poster are also distributed, through the PEAGs, to Libraries, Health Centres, Post Offices and DHSSPS offices.

This centrally co-ordinated publicity is in addition to that which individual settings undertake at local level.

Nursery Applications Process

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education if she has considered reviewing the nursery applications process to ensure that priority is given to children who are in their final pre-school year, regardless of the preference they have given, over under-age children who may have ranked the unit first on their list of preferences.

(AQW 3814/10)

Minister of Education: Agus iad ag breithniú iarratas le linn phróiseas iontrála na réamhscoilíochta, tugann gach soláthar reachtúil naiscoilíochta tosaíocht d'iarratais ó pháistí a bhfuil ina mbliain dheireanach réamscoile ag gach céim tosaíochta. Ciallaíonn sé seo go mbeidh tosaíocht ag an iarratas le haghaidh páiste a bhfuil ina réamhscoil dheireanach ar iarratas le haghaidh páiste atá níos óige.

In considering applications during the pre-school admissions process, all statutory nursery providers give priority to applications in respect of children in their final pre-school year at each preference stage. This means that a stated preference for a child in their final pre-school will have priority over an application from a younger child. Nursery schools and units only consider applications from younger children once the admissions procedure has been applied to the applications for the children in their final pre-school year. Funded pre-school places in the voluntary and private sector are only open to children in their final pre-school year.

Cost of Sending Literature in Irish to Protestant Schools

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Education the cost of sending literature in Irish to Protestant schools.

(AQW 3835/10)

Minister of Education: Government has obligations under both the Good Friday Agreement and the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages to promote, facilitate and encourage the use of the Irish language in speech and in writing. Issuing documents to all schools in Irish reflects my commitment to respect the language in an appropriate way.

Cuirtear formhór na gcáipéisí chuig scoileanna trí ríomhphost ar chostas íosta. Ós rud é go seoltar cáipéisí clóite i bhformáid dhátheangach, ní féidir an costas a áireamh ar litríocht as Gaeilge a sheoladh.

The vast majority of documents are sent to schools by email at minimal cost. As printed documents are sent in a bi-lingual format it is not possible to calculate the cost of sending literature in Irish.

Emails Written in Irish to Protestant Schools

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Education why her Department sends emails written in Irish to Protestant schools

(AQW 3836/10)

Minister of Education: Tá oibleagáidí ar an Rialtas faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus faoin Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh úsáid na Gaeilge sa chaint agus sa scríobh a chur chun cinn, a éascú agus a spreagadh. Léiríonn eisiúint de cháipéisí as Gaeilge chuig na scoileanna go léir mo thiomantas do mheas a thabhairt don teanga i mbealach atá oiriúnach.

Government has obligations under both the Good Friday Agreement and the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages to promote, facilitate and encourage the use of the Irish language in speech and in writing. Issuing documents to all schools in Irish reflects my commitment to respect the language in an appropriate way.

Anti-Bullying Publications

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education (i) what anti-bullying publications her Department has funded and distributed to schools; and (ii) what feedback her Department has received.

(AQW 3837/10)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn foilseachán mo Roinne ‘Cúram Tréadach i Scoileanna: Cur Chun Cinn Iompraíochta Dearfaí’ treoir mhionsonraithe, tionscnaimh phraiticiúla agus cas-staidéir le tacaíocht a thabhairt do scoileanna chun dul i ngleic le bulaíocht. Tá sé ceaptha go spreagfaidh sé comhrá laistigh den scoil maidir le saincheist na bulaíochta agus go misneoidh sé comhfhreagracht as an tsaincheist agus na bearta a nglacfar chun déileáil léi.

My Department’s publication ‘Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour’ offers detailed guidance, practical initiatives and case studies to support schools to tackle bullying. This guidance is intended to stimulate discussion within a school around the issue of bullying and to encourage collective ownership of the issue and the actions to be taken to counter it.

The Department cannot address the issue of bullying alone and, therefore, continues to work in close partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations through its membership and funding of the local Anti-Bullying Forum. Publications issued by the Forum are available on its website www.niabf.org.uk and I understand that any feedback received from schools has been positive.

Grammar School Places

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education what percentage of pupils with (i) C1; (ii) C2; and (iii) D grades gained a place in a grammar school, without upgrades due to special circumstances being considered, in each of the last three academic years, in each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 3852/10)

Minister of Education: Léiríonn na táblaí iata (i) líon na ndaltaí atá ag freastal ar bhunscoil i ngach ceantar Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne a bhain na gráid C1, C2 nó D amach; (ii) líon na n-iarratas a fuair scoileanna gramadaí i ngach ceantar Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ó dhaltaí a bhain na gráid C1, C2 nó D amach; agus (iii) líon na n-iarratasóirí a bhain na gráid C1, C2 nó D amach ar glacadh leo i scoileanna gramadaí i ngach ceantar boird oideachais agus leabharlainne, i ngach bliain de na trí bliana acadúla a chuaigh thart.

The tables, attached, show (i) the number of pupils attending primary school in each Education and Library Board area who received grades C1, C2 and D; (ii) the number of applications received by grammar schools in each Education and Library Board area from pupils who received grades C1, C2 and D; and (iii) the number of applicants who received grades C1, C2 and D who were admitted to grammar schools in each Education and Library Board area, in each of the last three academic years.

Please note:

- the information available does not distinguish between pupils who received an upgrade due to special circumstances and who were admitted to a grammar school and those who did not receive an upgrade due to special circumstances and who were admitted to a grammar school;
- applicants who attended primary school in one Board area may apply to a post-primary school in another Board area, therefore, it is not possible to provide the percentages requested.

GCSE Grades

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education to provide comparative figures for Northern Ireland and England and Wales for pupils who have, over the last three years, attained (i) 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A – C for overall subjects; (ii) 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A – C including English and Maths; (iii) 2 or more A-Level passes at grades A – E; and (iv) 1 or more Grade A at both GCSE and A-Level; and to indicate where these figures include vocational exams. (AQW 3854/10)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas seo ar fáil sa tábla thíos:

The information is provided in the table below:

| | Year Indicator | 2005/06 % | 2006/07 % | 2007/08 % |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| North of Ireland | (i) | 63 | 64 | 68 |
| | (ii) | 52 | 52 | 53 |
| | (iii) | 98 | 98 | 97 |

| | Year Indicator | 2005/06 % | 2006/07 % | 2007/08 % |
|---------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| England | (i) | 59 | 61 | 65 |
| | (ii) | 46 | 46 | 48 |
| | (iii) | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| Wales | (i) | 54 | 55 | 58 |
| | (ii) | n/a | 44 | 46 |
| | (iii) | 94 | 94 | 94 |

Notes:

- (i) Figures include vocational examinations equivalent to GCSE grade A*-C
- (ii) Does not include vocational exams.
- (iii) Includes vocational examinations equivalent to A level grades A-E
- (iv) The Department holds information on GCSEs and A levels separately.

For these years, it is not possible to link the two datasets at pupil level.

GCSE Grades in the Shankill and New Lodge Wards

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education to provide comparative figures for the last three academic years, of pupils residing in the Shankill and New Lodge wards gaining 5 GCSEs at grades A- C. (AQW 3858/10)

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

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL LEAVERS RESIDENT IN THE SHANKILL AND NEW LODGE WARDS ACHIEVING AT LEAST 5 GCSEs A*-C (INC. EQUIVALENTS) 2005/06 TO 2007/08

| | Shankill Ward | | | New Lodge Ward | | | Average |
|---------|---------------|---------------|------|----------------|---------------|------|---------|
| | Number | Total Leavers | % | Number | Total Leavers | % | % |
| 2007/08 | 15 | 43 | 34.9 | 38 | 80 | 47.5 | 66.9 |
| 2006/07 | 15 | 44 | 34.1 | 21 | 56 | 37.5 | 64.7 |
| 2005/06 | 18 | 48 | 37.5 | 28 | 80 | 35.0 | 64.2 |

1. The data in the table relates to GCSE grades A*-C

Source: School Leavers Survey

Free School Meals

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education for the percentage of pupils, in the last three years, in receipt of free school meals in (i) grammar schools; and (ii) all other schools, compared to the top 200 state schools in Britain. (AQW 3859/10)

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

The information requested is as follows:

| | School Year | | |
|---|-------------|---------|---------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| Grammar Schools ¹ | 5.6% | 5.0% | 4.8% |
| Non-Grammar Post-Primary Schools ¹ | 24.4% | 20.8% | 19.8% |
| England ² | 13.4% | 13.1% | 13.4% |
| Scotland ³ | 8.1% | 7.9% | 7.5% |
| Wales ³ | 11.6% | 11.0% | 11.6% |

Notes:

1. Figures are taken from the annual school meals census which provides a snapshot of the numbers taking meals on the day on which census information is gathered. Percentages are calculated on the basis of the number of pupils taking free school meals on the census day compared to the total number of pupils in attendance on that day.
2. The Department for Children, Schools and Families does not publish attainment related league tables as there are a variety of different indicators that are considered when analysing performance. Hence it is not possible to identify the top 200 state schools in Britain. The figures therefore relate to all state funded secondary schools and show the pupils eligible for free school meals on census day compared to the pupils on roll. Those eligible may choose not to take up their offer of a free school meal for various reasons eg through preference or through non-attendance on the day.
3. The Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government do not publish attainment related league tables either, nor do we here in the north of Ireland. The figures therefore relate to all Scottish/Welsh secondary schools and show the pupils registered and taking free school meals on census day compared to the pupils present.

New Build for Belfast High School

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on the new build for Belfast High School. (AQW 3881/10)

Minister of Education: Tá breithmheas eacnamaíochta i leith an fhoirgnimh nua le haghaidh Ardscoil Bhéal Feirste á nuashonrú faoi láthair. A luaitear atá sé curtha faoi bhráid, breithneoidh mo Roinn an breithmheas agus tar éis dó faomhadh a fháil, beidh sé i dteideal breithniú a dhéanamh air le haghaidh clár caipitil sa toadhcháil.

An Economic Appraisal (EA) for the proposed new build for Belfast High School is currently being updated. Once submitted, the EA will be considered by my Department and following approval, will be eligible for consideration for any future capital programme.

New Build for St Columbanus College, Bangor

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education to outline the reasons for the delay in the new build for St Columbanus College, Bangor; and when she expects the project to be approved. [R] (AQW 3904/10)

Minister of Education: Tá an dearadh mionsonraithe críochnaithe le haghaidh Coláiste Naomh Columbanus ach tá dul chun cinn breise ag brath ar thoradh an athbhreithnithe leanúnaigh ar na tionscail chaipitil reatha ar fad, a chinnteoidh go bhfuil siad go léir i gcomhréir leis an chreat beartais ar fad agus go mbeidh siad inchothaithe inmharthana san fhadtéarma, agus ar infaighteacht acmhainní airgeadais leoga.

The detailed design for the St Columbanus' College is complete but further progress on the scheme is dependent on the outcome of the on-going review of all current capital projects, which will ensure that all are consistent with the overall policy framework and will be viable and sustainable in the long term, and to the availability of sufficient financial resources.

Pupils Absent due to Extreme Weather Conditions

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education if her Department will encourage school principals to take into account impassable roads and the temporary non-availability of school buses in rural areas at times of extreme weather conditions when recording pupils as absent. (AQW 3912/10)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn Ciorclán 2006/14 na Roinne, atá ar fáil ag www.deni.gov.uk/revise/circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance_absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf, comhairle do scoileanna maidir le cóid neamhláithreachta ba chóir dóibh a úsáid nuair nach bhfuil dalta i láthair ar chlárú maidine ná clárú tráthnóna.

The Department's Circular 2006/14, which is available at www.deni.gov.uk/revise/circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance_absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf, provides advice to schools on absence codes to be used by schools when a pupil is not present at morning or afternoon registration.

Registration Code O may be used to record an authorised absence in exceptional circumstances which were outside the control of the school or the pupil, such as unavailability of Education and Library Board transport or if a pupil is unable to travel due to heavy snow. The guidance also states that a school can keep the morning register open for a longer period than usual in circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, so that a pupil would not be marked 'late'.

Faughan Valley School, Derry

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Education what plans she has for the future use of land at the former Faughan Valley School in Derry. (AQW 3957/10)

Minister of Education: Tá talamh scoile agus réadmhaoin iar-scoil Faughan Valley faoi uinéireacht Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair. Cé go raibh Comhairle Cathrach Dhoire i dteagmháil go foirmiúil leis an Bhord chun suim a léiriú i bPáirceanna Imeartha Dhroim na hUamha a cheannach, ní dhearna an Bord aon chinneadh i dtaca leis seo go fóill.

The former Faughan Valley school lands and property remain in the ownership of the Western Education and Library Board.

Whilst Derry City Council has formally approached the Board expressing interest in acquiring the Drumahoe Playing Fields no decision has yet been taken by the Board in relation to this approach.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Tuition Fees

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why students in Northern Ireland have to pay tuition fees when students in Scotland and Wales do not. (AQW 3833/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): Variable tuition fees were introduced in Northern Ireland in September 2006, in line with similar arrangements in England, to provide additional funding to help higher education institutions meet long-term challenges to maintain and improve standards, widen access, strengthen links with business and become more internationally competitive. Variable tuition fees are based on the principle that it is reasonable to ask graduates to make an increased contribution to the cost of their education.

Higher education is also a devolved matter for Scotland and Wales and student finance arrangements in these jurisdictions are a matter for each of the administrations. Eligible Scottish and non-United Kingdom European Union students studying in Scotland have their fees paid by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. Eligible Welsh students studying in Wales do pay tuition fees but are currently eligible for a tuition fee grant to partially offset the higher fees being charged, although this grant is being phased out from academic year 2010/11.

I have commissioned an independent review of tuition fees and student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland. This review, which is currently ongoing under the chairmanship of Joanne Stuart, is expected to report in February 2010, following which there will be a public consultation.

Flights for Civil Servants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of flights booked for civil servants in his Department which were paid for wholly, or in part, but never used; and (ii) the costs and loss of revenue incurred booking these flights, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3839/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The following table details the number of unused flights and the total costs incurred for each of the last five years:

| Year | No of Cancellations | Cost |
|---------|---------------------|-------|
| 2004/05 | 3 | £496 |
| 2005/06 | 7 | £1316 |
| 2006/07 | 3 | £622 |
| 2007/08 | 9 | £761 |
| 2008/09 | 4 | £326 |

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Jobs Created by American Companies

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many new jobs have been created by American companies since January 2008. (AQW 3681/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): This question has been answered in terms of US-owned investment projects which have been assisted by Invest NI. Invest NI does not assist projects which only serve the local marketplace e.g. those involved in retail and distribution activities. We, therefore, do not have information relating to investment made by US-owned businesses in these sectors, or investment made by US-owned companies that are not Invest NI clients.

Between 1st January 2008 and 31st December 2009 Invest NI offered financial assistance to a range of US-owned employment-related projects. These investments expect to create 1,375 new jobs during the lifetime of the projects, and included offers to companies such as New York Stock Exchange, Cybersource and Navinet. At 31st December 2009, 382 of these jobs had been created.

Broadband Services

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which areas will benefit from better broadband services following her recent announcement; and how many 'points-of-presence' will be in south Armagh. (AQW 3730/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: On 3 December 2009 I announced jointly with BT the Next Generation Broadband project which will deliver Next Generation Services to 85% of businesses across Northern Ireland by 2011. The exchange areas that will benefit from this investment have been listed in response to AQW 3333/10 published in the weekly answer book dated 18 December 2009.

A Point of Presence (POP) is generally a location where communications traffic is exchanged between networks owned by different companies. An example would be the Kelvin POP in Armagh. However, in the context of this enquiry it has been assumed that a point of presence is a location from where BT has been contracted to provide specific next generation broadband services.

The current plan indicates that in the Newry and Armagh constituency upgrades will take place in fourteen exchange areas. Improvements and new equipment will be undertaken at 86 cabinet locations in these exchange areas. However, not all of them may lie within constituency boundaries as telephone exchange boundaries do not precisely align to constituency boundaries and a small number may lie slightly outside the area.

Arntz Belting

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 8611/09, if she intends to intervene, given the confirmation that the management of Derry based Arntz Belting has announced that they are entering a 90 day collective consultation on the possible closure of the company. (AQW 3766/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: It is regrettable that Optibelt, the Parent Company of Arntz Belting have had to announce this consultation. It is a direct result of a continued downturn in global demand across the Optibelt Group.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment through its economic development agency, Invest NI have been in close liaison with Arntz Belting prior to the current situation.

They will continue to liaise and remain committed to doing everything within their remit to intervene where possible.

I have asked Invest NI officials to continue to keep me informed of developments.

Arntz Belting

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the level of financial or in-kind assistance provided by her Department to Arntz Belting, broken down by year; and (ii) whether any such assistance is subject to claw-back or other recovery clauses. (AQW 3800/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Arntz Belting Company Ltd have received a total of £ 3.597 million from Invest NI and its legacy agencies. A yearly breakdown is included below.

The assistance is not subject to claw-back or recovery as the company has fulfilled all its obligations under the various letters of offer.

ARNTZ BELTING - DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

| LoO Number | Year of Offer | Amended | Amount | Paid to Date | Clawback |
|---------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|
| 38/0 | 1985 | 1987 | £1,256,000 | £1,254,753 | Nil |
| 37/0 | 1987 | 1990 | £1,008,000 | £1,008,000 | Nil |
| 35/0 | 1991 | 1995 | £1,112,580 | £1,112,503 | Nil |
| 01/02/1991 | 1991 | N/A | £188,740 | £154,595 | Nil |
| 24/01/1997 | 2001 | N/A | £239,244 | £58,431 | Nil |
| Totals | | | £3,804,564 | £3,588,282 | |

OTHER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

| Item | Year | Amount Paid to Consultant | Clawback |
|-------------------------------------|------|---------------------------|----------|
| Business Health Check | 2005 | £4,469 | Nil |
| Accelerated Support Fund Diagnostic | 2009 | £4,500 | Nil |
| Total | | £8,969 | |

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Accidental Misuse and Deliberate Abuse of Pesticides and Poisons

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many cases of the (a) accidental misuse and (b) deliberate abuse of pesticides and poisons were investigated by his departmental officials in each of the past 5 years; (ii) what actions were taken in relation to these cases; and (iii) what sanctions were imposed on the individuals involved. (AQW 3653/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating reports of pollution and for instigating enforcement action where appropriate.

In the last 5 years, January 2005 to December 2009, NIEA has investigated 18 suspected incidents of water pollution as a result of accidental misuse of pesticides. NIEA do not have any records of suspected incidents of water pollution as a result of deliberate abuse of pesticides.

During the same period NIEA did not investigate any suspected incidents of water pollution as a result of accidental or deliberate misuse of poisons.

NIEA carried out extensive site investigations in each of the 18 suspected incidents referred to earlier and issued three advisory letters as a result of accidental misuse of pesticides.

Table A below details the number of incidents investigated in each of the last 5 years and when the three advisory letters were issued.

TABLE A

| Year | No of Suspected Incidents | Advisory Letters Issued |
|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2005 | 1 | |
| 2006 | 13 | 1 |
| 2007 | 2 | 1 |
| 2008 | 1 | |
| 2009 | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 18 | 3 |

Code of Conduct and Local Government Law

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if Mrs Iris Robinson was in breach of the councillors' Code of Conduct and local government law for not declaring a pecuniary interest in relation to the lease for the Lock Keepers Inn when it was considered at a meeting of Castlereagh Council. (AQW 3706/10)

Minister of the Environment: Castlereagh Borough Council has instigated a full investigation into local government matters raised during the recent BBC Spotlight programme concerning Councillor Iris Robinson and is committed to keeping the local government auditor fully informed of that process.

Until the outcome of the investigation (and, if necessary, any subsequent audit review) is known, it is too soon to comment on whether Councillor Robinson may have been in breach of the Northern Ireland Code of Local Government Conduct and local government legislation in relation to the granting of the lease for the Lock Keeper's Inn by Castlereagh Borough Council.

Planning Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many times since 2003 Mrs Iris Robinson made representations to the Planning Service in relation to planning applications which were submitted by Ken Campbell or an organisation to which he belongs; and (ii) to list these planning applications. (AQW 3707/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department's records indicate that since 2003 Mrs Iris Robinson made representations on 2 planning applications which were submitted by Ken Campbell or an organisation to which he belongs. The details of these applications are provided below.

However, it should be noted that the details of the Directors of a company are seldom relevant to the processing of a planning application as planning permission relates to land rather than an individual.

| Planning Application | Applicant | Proposal | Location |
|----------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| X/2005/1391/O | Carnet Developments | Housing Development | Lands at 1-8 Ardnalvalley Park, Ballydrain Road, Comber |
| X/2008/0086/O | Carnet Developments* *During processing applicant changed; Decision was issued under Trinity Housing Limited. | Housing Development | Lands to the rear of 1-11 Beverley Heights, 2-20 Beverley Road, 2-14 Beverley Park and 10-18 Beverley Avenue, Newtownards |

This is not a definitive list and to provide accurate figures for the information requested would require both a company search and manual checking of files which is disproportionate in terms of time and cost.

Planning Service

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many times since 2003 Mrs Iris Robinson made representations to the Planning Service in relation to planning applications which were submitted by Fred Fraser or an organisation to which he belonged; and (ii) to list these planning applications. (AQW 3708/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department's records indicate that since 2003 Mrs Iris Robinson made representations on 1 planning application which was submitted by Fred Fraser or an organisation to which he belongs. The details of this application are provided below.

However, it should be noted that the details of the Directors of a company are seldom relevant to the processing of a planning application as planning permission relates to land rather than an individual.

| Planning Application | Applicant | Proposal | Location |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| X/2003/0173/F | Fraser Houses NI LTD | Proposed Dwelling | Land adjacent to Old Forge Green, Movilla Road, Newtownards. |

This is not a definitive list and to provide accurate figures for the information requested would require both a company search and manual checking of files which is disproportionate in terms of time and cost.

Councillors Required to Declare Interests

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if Councillors are required to declare interests or significant gifts from a property developer if they are lobbying the Planning Service on behalf of that property developer. (AQW 3709/10)

Minister of the Environment: There is nothing to prevent councillors from lobbying the Department's Planning Service on behalf of property developers if such lobbying is in the public interest.

Councillors would however be in breach of the Northern Ireland Code of Local Government Conduct if they sought or received gifts or offers of hospitality which might be intended or might be perceived to influence their judgement on council matters (e.g. when planning applications are being considered by councils).

Councillors would also be in breach of the Code of Conduct and local government legislation if they failed to declare at council meetings when they were present any pecuniary interest they have, direct or indirect, in any matters being considered by their councils.

Recent Weather Conditions

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment if his Department intends to introduce emergency procedures to facilitate people who have been unable to get their vehicles to MOT centres or tax their vehicles due to the recent weather conditions. (AQW 3733/10)

Minister of the Environment: My Department seeks to facilitate customers affected by adverse weather either by accommodating, where possible, those who arrive late, or by offering alternative appointments. I have no plans to introduce emergency procedures in relation to vehicle licensing.

Educator Staff

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment how many educator staff are employed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to work with primary schools and other groups; and where these individuals are based. (AQW 3749/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency currently have eight contract staff employed in environmental educational duties; they are located as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Crawfordsburn Country Park | 2 |
| Peatlands Park | 2 |
| Carrickfergus Castle | 1 |
| Castlearchdale Country Park | 1 |
| Roe Valley Country Park | 1 |
| * NIEA Headquarters, Belfast | 1 |

* Providing a service across all of Northern Ireland.

Caravan Parks

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many councils operate or have operated caravan parks. (AQW 3767/10)

Minister of the Environment: Twelve councils currently operate caravan parks. Five councils have previously operated caravan parks.

Bat Roosts

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of the Environment (i) if his Department allows property owners to demolish buildings which are bat roosts; (ii) if his Department has instructed any property owners to demolish buildings which are bat roosts; and (iii) to outline the importance his Department places on protecting bat roosts. (AQW 3771/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) It is an offence to deliberately damage or destroy a bat roost. However in certain circumstances a licence may be granted by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to exclude bats and destroy their roost. A small number of licences are granted each year to facilitate the demolition and/or re-development of old buildings.
- (ii) NIEA does not instruct the demolition of property.
- (iii) All of the Northern Ireland bat species are listed as 'European protected species of animals' and are afforded protection under the EU Habitats Directive which is transposed into Northern Ireland law through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, as amended 2007. This affords protection to bats and their roosts. As such NIEA are obliged to ensure that the species that occur in Northern Ireland are adequately protected.

Gritters and Snowploughs

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment the number of (i) gritters; (ii) snowploughs which are currently registered with the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency; and (ii) how many of these are in public / private ownership. (AQW 3772/10)

Minister of the Environment: Vehicle licensing is an excepted matter which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver & Vehicle Agency under a formal agreement between DoE and the Department for Transport.

Details of the number of gritters and snowploughs currently licensed by the Driver & Vehicle Agency and the numbers registered in public or private ownership are as follows:

| Category | Total Number | In Public Ownership | In Private Ownership |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Gritters | 149 | 134 | 15 |
| Snowploughs | 8 | 8 | 0 |

For the purposes of these figures, DVA has deemed any vehicles which are registered to a NI Government department or agency as being in public ownership and all others as being in private ownership.

Traffic Flow

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for his assessment of the traffic flow arrangements related to the planning approval for the new Abbey School, Newry; and (ii) if he can assure the residents of the Castleown development that they will continue to have freedom of movement as they drive, cycle or walk to and from their homes following the opening of the school. (AQW 3819/10)

Minister of the Environment: In granting planning permission for the new Abbey School, Newry, the Planning Service consulted DRD Roads Service as regards issues of access and traffic movement. DRD considered that the final plans put forward by the applicant were acceptable. Since DRD Roads Service has responsibility for road safety and traffic management, Planning Service was content to give significant weight to this advice in arriving at its decision to approve the school.

While it is recognised that the new school, like any new development, will have some impact on its immediate environs, Planning Service is content that the approved traffic arrangements and travel plan aim to provide for ease of movement for vehicular and pedestrian traffic including local residents in the vicinity of both the new school and Castleown. I am content therefore that the arrangements are acceptable.

Article 31 Inquiry, Newtownards

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment to confirm the time-scale and start date for the Article 31 Inquiry for the three planning proposals in Newtownards. (AQW 3845/10)

Minister of the Environment: I recognise the potential economic implications associated with the proposals, including opportunities for employment generation. As such, my officials have asked the PAC to prioritise the Newtownards inquiry to follow the Sprucefield inquiry.

The final decision in terms of the scheduling of the inquiry rests with the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). However, before setting a date the PAC has asked for clarification on one of the proposals. This relates to a Notice of Opinion to approve planning permission which recently issued for a similar food superstore by Castlebawn/Tesco for the former Abattoir site in Newtownards. The applicant has indicated that their earlier application which is one of the proposals subject to the public inquiry may be withdrawn. In the circumstances this has created uncertainty over the number of development proposals to be considered at the inquiry.

My Department is awaiting clarification from the agent for Tesco/Castlebawn in order to provide the necessary clarification for the PAC.

Planning Application by North and West Housing

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for his assessment of the planning application by North and West Housing to build 70 dwellings on the site of the former United Technologies Factory at Bligh's Lane, Derry; and (ii) how the concerns of local residents will be addressed as part of the planning process.

(AQW 3851/10)

Minister of the Environment: (i) Outline planning permission for Social Housing on this former industrial site was granted on 27 March 2009, with a condition restricting the number of dwellings on the site to no more than 65. An application for Full Planning Permission was submitted on 11 December 2009. The Department is not yet in a position to make an assessment of the current application which is for 70 dwellings, as the statutory consultation process has not yet been completed; and

(ii) All objections and other representations which are received to the proposal will be given the fullest consideration prior to reaching a recommendation on the application and consultation with Derry City Council.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment how many flights (i) departed from; and (ii) arrived at George Best Belfast City Airport after 9.30pm, in each month since June 2008.

(AQW 3861/10)

Minister of the Environment: The number of flights departing from and arriving at George Best Belfast City Airport after 9:30pm, in each month since June 2008 is set out below.

| Month | Arrive | Depart |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| June 2008 | 18 | 14 |
| July 2008 | 34 | 18 |
| August 2008 | 40 | 13 |
| September 2008 | 27 | 11 |
| October 2008 | 16 | 13 |
| November 2008 | 13 | 15 |
| December 2008 | 25 | 11 |
| January 2009 | 12 | 9 |
| February 2009 | 30 | 9 |
| March 2009 | 11 | 9 |
| April 2009 | 7 | 10 |
| May 2009 | 12 | 10 |
| June 2009 | 14 | 20 |
| July 2009 | 28 | 23 |
| August 2009 | 16 | 11 |
| September 2009 | 7 | 10 |
| October 2009 | 3 | 9 |
| November 2009 | 17 | 11 |
| December 2009 | 42 | 29 |

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the penalty charges imposed for flights delayed after 9.30pm at George Best Belfast City Airport, since the review of the 1997 Planning Agreement. (AQW 3863/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Department has no legal powers to impose levels of fines for delayed aircraft. However, GBBCA introduced a Community Fund, which is a voluntary initiative which will see funds donated to charity through the Energy for Children Charitable Trust for flights arriving or departing the airport during the 'extended hours'. The amount of funds donated and their distribution is a matter for GBBCA.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Reduction in Rates Bills

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if his Department will consider a reduction in the rates bills for households, particularly in Mid and West Tyrone, that had no water supply over the Christmas and New Year period. (AQW 3658/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): I am unable to provide a reduction in the rates bills of households that had no water supply over the Christmas and New Year period.

While a contribution is made by each individual ratepayer towards funding regional public services, including water and sewerage services, there is no specific proportion of any individual's rates bill that can be linked to the availability or usage of any particular public service.

Legislation on Multi-Unit Residential Developments

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the establishment of a Ministerial sub-group to examine the scope for legislation on multi-unit residential developments. (AQW 3660/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The establishment of a cross departmental working group will require the agreement of Executive colleagues and I will be bringing forward proposals in this regard shortly.

Northern Ireland Energy Regulator's Office

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel the annual running cost of the Northern Ireland Energy Regulator's office. (AQW 3663/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR) was established on 1 April 2007 when responsibility for the regulation of the water and sewerage industry in Northern Ireland was taken on in accordance with the provisions of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

The following table provides details of the budget for running costs of the office since NIAUR was established.

| Year | 07/08 | 08/09 | 09/10 |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Annual Budget | 7.4m | 8m | 8m |

Northern Ireland Energy Regulator's Office

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people are employed by the Northern Ireland Energy Regulator's office. (AQW 3664/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR) was established on 1 April 2007 when responsibility for the regulation of the water and sewerage industry in Northern Ireland was taken on in accordance with the provisions of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

The following table provides details of the number of people employed in NIAUR since NIAUR was established.

| Year | 07/08 | 08/09 | 09/10 |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of staff | 60 | 62 | 70 |

Northern Ireland Energy Regulator

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the running costs of the Northern Ireland Energy Regulator compare with other regions in the UK. (AQW 3665/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no direct equivalent organisation to NIAUR and therefore no direct comparisons are possible, however the following observations may be helpful.

NIAUR is unique in that it is the only economic regulator in the UK and Ireland which regulates the Electricity, Gas and Water industries. Its statutory duties and functions are equivalent to those undertaken by both OFGEM and OFWAT in GB.

The running costs of NIAUR reflect the progressive implementation of a revised staffing structure approved by DFP, which took account of NIAUR's additional responsibility for water regulation from 2007. At 31 March 2009 OFGEM employed 315 staff and OFWAT employed 203 staff. The ROI's Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) employs 68 staff, but does not regulate the water industry. The Scottish Water Regulator (WICS) employs around 23 staff.

Although the customer base in NI is obviously much smaller than GB, this does not in itself reduce the regulatory workload. Policy analysis is broadly a fixed cost – as demanding in a small market as a larger one – but price control is broadly variable.

In addition, NIAUR's salary levels have been independently benchmarked and are lower than salaries paid for equivalent roles in other regulators and regulated utilities. NIAUR's pay ranges are broadly comparable to the equivalent NICS grades. The average salary in NIAUR as at March 2009 was lower than that paid by OFGEM, CER and WICS.

Bunkers Hill, Castlewellan

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why maps issued by NI Water and Roads Service refer to Bunkers Hill, Castlewellan as 'Paul Magorrian Park'. (AQO 552/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The maps issued by NI Water and Roads Service were based on the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland® (OSNI®) mapping produced by Land and Property Services (LPS).

The name 'Paul Magorrian Park' as shown on the LPS (OSNI) mapping refers to an area of open space to the East of Bunkers Hill road. The name Bunkers Hill is still shown on the published mapping and refers to a section of the road leading to the centre of Castlewellan and also a local hill.

LPS (OSNI) have confirmed that the addition of the name 'Paul Magorrian Park' to that area of open space was one of a number of changes to that particular map resulting from a survey of the area carried out in 1994.

Based on OSNI practice at that time it is likely that the name was recorded from a visual nameplate at, or close to, the entrance to the area of land.

LPS (OSNI) does not have responsibility for creating place-names, therefore LPS have now written to Down District Council to clarify the official name of the area and will amend the map, if required, based on their response.

Civil Partnership Act

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of (i) marriages; and (ii) civil partnerships which have been registered each year since the introduction of the Civil Partnership Act, broken down by council area. (AQW 3726/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of marriages and civil partnerships registered each year since 2006 broken down by council area of registration is given in the tables below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF MARRIAGES BY COUNCIL AREA OF REGISTRATION, 2006 TO 2008

| Registration Area ¹ | Registration Year | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| Northern Ireland | 8,259 | 8,687 | 8,510 |
| Antrim | 281 | 312 | 262 |
| Ards | 273 | 268 | 295 |
| Armagh | 333 | 336 | 350 |
| Ballymena | 319 | 359 | 375 |
| Ballymoney | 132 | 109 | 166 |
| Banbridge | 174 | 165 | 188 |
| Belfast | 1,320 | 1,356 | 1,336 |
| Carrickfergus | 166 | 164 | 158 |
| Castlereagh | 167 | 209 | 186 |
| Coleraine | 279 | 280 | 291 |
| Cookstown | 238 | 224 | 209 |
| Craigavon | 317 | 362 | 356 |
| Derry | 458 | 533 | 485 |
| Down | 331 | 409 | 357 |
| Dungannon | 260 | 292 | 297 |
| Fermanagh | 374 | 417 | 424 |
| Larne | 134 | 156 | 138 |
| Limavady | 182 | 173 | 167 |
| Lisburn | 477 | 475 | 463 |
| Magherafelt | 227 | 220 | 196 |
| Moyle | 91 | 101 | 103 |
| Newry & Mourne | 512 | 534 | 538 |
| Newtownabbey | 213 | 210 | 228 |
| North Down | 539 | 551 | 480 |
| Omagh | 274 | 281 | 275 |
| Strabane | 188 | 191 | 187 |

¹ These data represent where marriages were registered. They do not necessarily reflect where either the bride or groom lived and will contain marriages of some people who lived outside Northern Ireland at time of marriage.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BY COUNCIL AREA OF REGISTRATION, 2006 TO 2008

| Registration Area ¹ | Registration Year | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|
| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| Northern Ireland | 116 | 111 | 86 |
| Belfast | 69 | 72 | 48 |
| Derry | 11 | 11 | 9 |
| Newry and Mourne | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| All Other Districts ² | 30 | 23 | 22 |

1 These data represent where civil partnerships were registered. They do not necessarily reflect where either partner lived and will contain civil partnerships of some people who lived outside Northern Ireland at time of civil partnership.

2 There were fewer than five civil partnerships registered in a given year in each of the other council areas.

Flights for Civil Servants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of flights booked for civil servants in his Department which were paid for wholly, or in part, but never used; and (ii) the costs and loss of revenue incurred booking these flights, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3801/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of flights booked for civil servants in DFP but never used is not recorded by the DFP Travel Desk. This information could only be researched at disproportionate expense. The cost of any unused flights is likely to be very low as DFP's Travel booking policy allows for the majority of cancellations to be fully refunded at relatively short notice.

Hotels Booked for Civil Servants

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of nights in hotels booked for civil servants in his Department which were paid for wholly, or in part, but never used; and (ii) the costs and loss of revenue incurred booking these hotel rooms, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3802/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of hotels booked for civil servants in DFP but never used is not recorded by the DFP Travel Desk. This information could only be researched at disproportionate expense. The cost of unused hotel bookings is likely to be very low as DFP's Travel booking policy allows for the majority of cancellations to be fully refunded at relatively short notice.

Constructing Excellence NI

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the independence of Constructing Excellence NI. (AQW 3817/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) entered into an agreement with the University of Ulster to grant fund Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni) for a four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010.

CPD's governance of the project is principally delivered through its participation in the CEni Management Committee which also includes representatives from the Strategic Investment Board for Northern Ireland, the University of Ulster and the Construction Industry Group for Northern Ireland.

While the Committee provides strategic direction and leadership for the CEni project, the day-to-day professional advice and expertise provided by CEni staff is managed by the University and is independent of the Management Committee and the funding bodies.

Constructing Excellence NI

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the funding streams of Constructing Excellence NI. (AQW 3818/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni) is grant funded, up to a maximum of £920k, for the four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010.

DFP's funding is provided by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). CPD also co-ordinates the funding contributions provided by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and six business areas with significant construction investment programmes included in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI).

The funding bodies and their envisaged total contributions are set out in the table below:

CENI FUNDING STREAMS

| Funding Body | Estimated Total Contribution by April 2010 |
|---------------------|--|
| CPD (DFP) | £120k |
| SIB | £120k |
| DHSSPS | £120k |
| DSD | £120k |
| DE | £120k |
| DEL | £120k |
| Roads Service (DRD) | £120k |
| NI Water (DRD) | £80k |
| Totals | £920k |

CEni also generates additional income from providing a range of business services to the construction industry.

Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail a definitive timeframe when Civil Servants included in the Civil Service Equal Pay settlement will receive their back pay. (AQW 3828/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: It is not possible to give a timescale at present. Once the offer is formally accepted by NIPSA there will be a detailed and lengthy process to be followed before payments could be made. The precise details of the process and the timescales are currently being developed but it is my intention that it should not take any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Reinvestment and Reform Initiative

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the levels of funding under the Reinvestment and Reform initiative in each of the last three years. (AQW 3843/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The RRI funding in each of the last 3 years is detailed below:

| | |
|---------|-----------------|
| 2006-07 | £214,621,000.00 |
| 2007-08 | £97,605,000.00 |
| 2008-09 | £260,000,000.00 |

For the years 2006-07 and 2007-08 this represents the amount actually borrowed.

For 2008-09 the amount actually borrowed from the National Loans Fund was £16,600,000.00. The remainder relates to the funding of on-balance sheet PPP projects, permitted under revised arrangements agreed with HM Treasury.

Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when affected staff can expect to receive their back pay from the Civil Service Equal Pay settlement. (AQW 3855/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: It is not possible to give a timescale at present. Once the offer is formally accepted by NIPSA there will be a detailed and lengthy process to be followed before payments could be made. The precise details of the process and the timescales are currently being developed but it is my intention that it should not take any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Services Contracts

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of (a) works and services contracts; and (b) supplies and services contracts that were awarded by Central Procurement Directorate in 2007/08 and 2008/09; and (ii) the number of (a) works and services contracts; and (b) supplies and services contracts, that were awarded to businesses based in Fermanagh and South Tyrone in 2007/08 and 2008/09. (AQW 3875/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The tables overleaf summarise the contracts awarded by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) during the financial years 2007-08 and 2008-09 and those awarded to businesses based in Fermanagh and South Tyrone during those periods.

The tables include individual contracts, new framework agreements and contracts awarded following secondary competitions under existing framework agreements.

Purchase Orders placed using call-off arrangements under existing contracts are not included in the tables.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTRACTS AWARDED BY CPD

| Type | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Works and Services | 43 | 67 |
| Supplies and Services | 567 | 428 |
| Total | 610 | 495 |

NUMBER OF CONTRACTS AWARDED BY CPD TO BUSINESSES BASED IN FERMANAGH AND SOUTH TYRONE

| Type | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Works and Services | 3 | 0 |
| Supplies and Services | Data Not available ¹ | 51 |
| Total | 3 | 5 |

Note:

¹ Prior to the introduction of the e-SourcingNI electronic tendering portal on the 8 May 2008, supplier postcode information was not recorded for supplies and services contracts.

Non-Domestic Rates

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to confirm whether non-domestic rates will remain restricted to the projected level of inflation throughout 2009/10 and 2010/11. (AQW 3876/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Executive agreed in January 2008 the levels for both the domestic and non domestic regional rates for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11. This amounted to a cash terms freeze in

the domestic regional rate and an increase of 2.7% each year for the non domestic regional rate to account for predicted inflation at that time.

This year, and exceptionally, the non domestic regional rate was frozen in cash terms as a result of the Executive Review of measures to address the economic downturn in late 2008. This has reduced the funding available for the Executive for both 2009-10 and 2010-11.

For 2010/11 the level of the regional non domestic rates will revert to that agreed in 2008, i.e a 2.7% increase. The regional domestic rate remains frozen in cash terms.

On the 7th January the Department made the Regional Rates Order to set the levels of regional rates for 2010/2011. This Statutory Rule is subject to affirmative resolution in the Assembly and so the levels set will be subject to that affirmation. The debate to affirm is expected to take place on 22 February.

Barnett Consequential

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the amount of the Barnett consequential associated with the boiler scrappage scheme introduced in England, and if there is no Barnett consequential, to explain why. (AQW 4030/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced funding for a Greener Boiler Incentive in England during his 2009 Pre-Budget Report (PBR) statement on 9 December 2009.

Although the majority of the funding for this scheme will come from a reprioritisation of the existing budget allocation for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, an additional allocation of £20 million was made to the department as part of the PBR.

As a consequence of this decision, the Northern Ireland Executive received £0.7 million in additional capital funding for 2010-11, through the Barnett formula.

However, any and all allocations received from the Barnett Formula are unhyponothecated, that is to say that they are available to the Executive to spend in correspondence with local needs and priorities.

As part of the Review of 2010-11 Spending Plans, the Executive has proposed that all the additional Barnett consequentials from the 2009 PBR are used to offset the spending pressures for 2010-11.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Fracture Liaison Service

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans there are to establish a Fracture Liaison Service and to review service provision to support fracture patients in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, with specific emphasis on plans for such a service at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine. (AQW 3597/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Approximately £270,000 has been provided to the Northern Trust to fund an orthopaedic/fracture rehabilitation service which will provide a liaison service for fracture patients leaving hospital. The Commissioner advises that plans are well progressed to put this service in place for all residents in the Northern Trust area, including those who attend the Causeway Hospital.

Parkinson's Disease

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) if he is aware of the research published in the Journal of Movement Disorders in 2003 that reveals the annual direct cost to the Health Service of a patient diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease living at home is £4,189, a patient whose care is divided between home and an institution annual costs are £15,355, and that a patient in full-time institutional care costs the

Health Service £19,338; and (ii) what funding he is making available to allow patients to be treated at home by Parkinson's Disease nursing specialists and to save the Health Service valuable resources. (AQW 3598/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am aware that the research quoted is referenced within the NICE Guidelines for Parkinsons disease which my Department formally endorsed and issued to the HSC on 7th June 2007.

It is the responsibility of the HSC Board to plan and allocate resources to meet the needs of the population, including those with Parkinsons disease. In determining the priorities for funding, the Board will take into account local circumstances, strategic objectives established for the HSC and competing demands and pressures for a wide range of health and social care services generally.

There are currently 7 Parkinsons Disease specialist Nurses in Northern Ireland.

6 specialist nurses assess and coordinate the interventions and care required for Parkinsons Disease sufferers with colleagues who work in Community settings.

The other nurse is carrying out research into Parkinsons Disease.

Hypothermia

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases of hypothermia were reported in December 2009; and how many of these cases required hospital treatment, in each Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 3610/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of cases of hypothermia reported and the number of these cases requiring hospital treatment in December 2009 is not available.

Health Inequalities

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment his Department has made of health inequalities in loyalist working class communities. (AQW 3617/10)

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

Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the costs attributable to the drafting, consultation and publication of the departmental Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. (AQW 3619/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department holds limited information relating to the costs attributable to the drafting, consultation and publication of its Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. A list of recorded costs incurred is as follows:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Workshop in May 2005: | £992.29 |
| Non-Departmental staff travel and locum expenses: | £343 |
| Full public consultation advertising costs July 2008: | £2591.84 |

The cost of the recent High Court case between Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and DHSSPS has not been finalised.

I am currently giving careful consideration to the two adverse findings of the High Court ruling.

Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the cost to his Department of the High Court case on the Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. (AQW 3620/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department holds limited information relating to the costs attributable to the drafting, consultation and publication of its Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. A list of recorded costs incurred is as follows:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Workshop in May 2005: | £992.29 |
| Non-Departmental staff travel and locum expenses: | £343 |
| Full public consultation advertising costs July 2008: | £2591.84 |

The cost of the recent High Court case between Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and DHSSPS has not been finalised.

I am currently giving careful consideration to the two adverse findings of the High Court ruling.

Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the Department intends to implement the High Court ruling in relation to the Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy; and to outline the consultation process. (AQW 3621/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department holds limited information relating to the costs attributable to the drafting, consultation and publication of its Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy. A list of recorded costs incurred is as follows:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Workshop in May 2005: | £992.29 |
| Non-Departmental staff travel and locum expenses: | £343 |
| Full public consultation advertising costs July 2008: | £2591.84 |

The cost of the recent High Court case between Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and DHSSPS has not been finalised.

I am currently giving careful consideration to the two adverse findings of the High Court ruling.

Allocation of Junior Doctors

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can provide an assurance that the Western Health and Social Care Trust will receive a sufficient allocation of junior doctors to ensure that there is no recurrence of the shortages in obstetrics and gynaecology experienced in the Erne Hospital in August 2009, which led to a reduction in services for a two week period. (AQW 3623/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Every effort is made to ensure that sufficient allocations of junior doctors are made to each hospital each year. I acknowledge that there were specialities that experienced particular difficulties last year and I recently established a working group up to consider what mechanisms could be put in place to improve the recruitment and allocation process.

Deafblind People

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list any Health and Social Care Trusts that collect data on the number of people who are deafblind within their areas. (AQW 3624/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All Health and Social Care Trusts collect data on the number of people registered as deafblind.

Histiocytosis

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) children; and (ii) adults are currently diagnosed with histiocytosis. (AQW 3625/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Histiocytosis is the name for a range of disorders caused by an excess of white blood cells called histiocytes which attack various parts of the body.

It is not known how many (i) children; and (ii) adults are currently diagnosed with the disease; however there have been (i) 65 admissions to hospitals by children aged 0-16 and (ii) 82 admissions to hospital by adults aged 17 and over, during the last five years.

Treatment of Fibromyalgia

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there is a specific department available for the treatment of fibromyalgia; and, if not, whether he would consider introducing such a department given the debilitating effects of this condition. (AQW 3632/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cause of fibromyalgia remains unknown. The variability of symptoms in potential sufferers means that there is difficulty in diagnosis. At present there is no dedicated fibromyalgia service and no diagnostic test or cure for the illness.

The majority of care is provided by general practitioners. Patients also have full access to a wide range of treatment and support services in secondary, primary and community care settings, including neurology services, rheumatology services and mental health services. It is a matter for commissioners to determine the need for specific service development proposals.

Picture Commemorating the 1987 Remembrance Day Bombing

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the issues surrounding the removal from Enniskillen Fire Station of a picture commemorating the 1987 Remembrance Day bombing. (AQW 3633/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) is responsible for day to day employment matters in fire stations, including the promotion of an inclusive working environment. I understand that NIFRS tried to find a locally-agreed resolution to the issue in Enniskillen Fire Station, but these efforts were unsuccessful. In the circumstances, the Chief Fire Officer decided that an alternative photographic tribute, recognising the significance of the bombing for the whole community and highlighting the work of fire-fighters at the Enniskillen bomb explosion, should be displayed. This has been on display on the wall of Enniskillen Fire Station since 13 February 2008 and no further concerns have been raised.

Care Services in the Community

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many private companies are currently contracted by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to provide care services in the community; and to detail the locations in which these companies operate. (AQW 3634/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At present the Southern Health and Social Care Trust commission community care services from 30 independent contractors. These contractors provide services across the entire trust area with several providing services in more than one locality.

Eight Bed Residential Scheme at Gransha Hospital

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Western Health and Social Care Trust is developing an eight bed residential scheme at Gransha Hospital which will cost approximately £200,000-£300,000 more to run each year than if the voluntary sector provided the service. (AQW 3635/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Health and Social Care Trust advises that it is building a 16 bed challenging behaviour unit on the Gransha Hospital site. The difference in running costs cited in the question is possibly a result of comparing a voluntary sector tender, which is several years old, and current revenue costs of the scheme. The Trust is satisfied that the projected running costs of the new unit reflect current costs of meeting the assessed healthcare needs of those who will be placed in the unit.

Contracting Out Public Services

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is aware that Government research carried out in 2008 revealed that up to 30% saving can be made by contracting out public services such as the provision of care in the community. (AQW 3636/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am unaware of any research carried out in 2008 indicating that savings of up to 30% can be made by contracting out services such as care in the community.

Care Services in the Community

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has any plans to follow the example in England where central government has asked the voluntary sector to take responsibility for the provision of care services in the community. (AQW 3637/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am convinced that the best way forward for the development of innovative, flexible and responsive community care services is to work with our partners in the independent and voluntary sector rather than focusing on all provision coming from one sector alone. My Department is therefore committed to the development of a mixed economy of care with a flourishing independent and voluntary sector alongside good quality public services.

In England, the commissioning of community care services is largely a matter for Local Authorities.

Care Services in the Community

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why his Department has developed types of care services in the community which have previously been developed by the voluntary sector. (AQW 3638/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A wide range of services currently provided as health and social care had their origins within charitable activity. In this way, services have been piloted then validated to prove their worth.

Limb Amputation Procedures

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of limb amputation procedures directly related to (i) diabetes; and (ii) smoking, that have been undertaken in each of the last five years. (AQW 3649/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) The number of amputation procedures carried out in Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland, where a diagnosis of diabetes was also recorded, in each of the last five years, are shown below;

| Year | Procedures |
|---------|------------|
| 2004/05 | 178 |
| 2005/06 | 149 |
| 2006/07 | 171 |
| 2007/08 | 160 |
| 2008/09 | 158 |

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

(ii) Information is not available on the number of amputation procedures carried out in Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland which are directly related to smoking.

Adoption

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children, from countries outside the UK or Ireland, have been adopted by parents or families in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years, detailing the country of origin of the adopted child. (AQW 3650/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is detailed in Table 1 below. To avoid personal disclosure, figures have been presented for the five year period from 2004/05 to 2008/09. The total numbers of children adopted from countries outside the UK or Ireland during the years from 2004/05 to 2008/09 are detailed in Table 2.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF CHILDREN FROM COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM OR IRELAND ADOPTED BY PARENTS OR FAMILIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND FOR THE FIVE YEAR PERIOD FROM 2004/05 TO 2008/09 BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

| Country of Origin | Children Adopted 2004/05-2008/09 |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Thailand | 28 |
| China | 13 |
| Russia | 11 |
| Guatemala | 6 |
| Other Countries | 12 |
| Total | 70 |

Notes: The five year period refers to 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2009. Children refer to those younger than 18 years. 'Other Countries' includes, Brazil, Bulgaria Mexico and several other countries. The information reported in Table 1 was provided by Health and Social Care Trusts and has not been validated by the DHSSPS.

TABLE 2 NUMBER OF CHILDREN FROM COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM OR IRELAND ADOPTED BY PARENTS OR FAMILIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND DURING THE YEARS FROM 2004/05 TO 2008/09

| Year | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Children Adopted | 11 | 14 | 11 | 11 | 23 |

Notes: Year refers to the period from 1 April to 31 March. Children refer to those younger than 18 years. Information reported in Table 2 was provided by Health and Social Care Trusts and has not been validated by the DHSSPS.

Counter Fraud Services

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the counter fraud services that are currently operating in the Health Service. (AQW 3676/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Operational counter fraud services in the Health Service are centralised in a specialist fraud investigation team located in the Business Services Organisation. This team consists of accredited, experienced fraud investigators, whose role is to conduct formal criminal investigations into cases of suspected fraud. Extensive verification and investigative work is also carried out in relation to claims made by patients regarding exemption from statutory Health Service charges for prescriptions, dental and ophthalmic treatment.

Cancer Survival Rate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cancer survival rate of (i) males; and (ii) females. (AQW 3684/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Cancer Registry provides accurate, timely information on cancers occurring in the population of Northern Ireland for research, planning and education, so the burden of disease may be reduced. The latest report detailing the survival of cancer patients in Northern Ireland Survival of cancer patients in Northern Ireland: 1993-2004, which was published in October 2007, can be accessed at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/FileStore/PDF/Survival/Filetoupload,81422,en.pdf>

Ryan Report

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the debate in the Assembly on the Ryan Report motion on 2 November 2009, for an update on his Department's work to encourage victims of institutional child abuse to come forward and seek assistance. (AQW 3691/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As you are aware my officials are currently preparing a paper for the Executive based on the information which is already known to them. Once all relevant information is available to me for consideration I will be in a position to bring detailed proposals forward to the Executive, in the near future.

Any decision on the way forward will be for the Executive as a whole.

Current arrangements are that victims can consult their GP who can then make an appropriate referral for treatment and/or counselling. Victims can also contact social services for advice, counselling and support. Voluntary organisations such as the NEXUS Institute which deals confidentially with those who have suffered sexual abuse can also be contacted.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis have been involved in the beta interferon drugs study which led to the Risk Sharing Scheme; and what assessment he has made of the progress of this scheme for the provision of MS disease-modifying drugs. (AQW 3692/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 188 patients from Northern Ireland involved in the multiple sclerosis (MS) risk sharing scheme at the Royal Victoria Hospital, which is one of 70 participating centres throughout the UK.

As at 30 November 2009, 1006 patients in Northern Ireland were receiving disease modifying drugs, which include beta interferon drugs, for the treatment of MS; no patients were waiting more than 13 weeks to begin their treatment.

Data from the first two years of the scheme have been collected, analysed and interpreted by an independent advisory group, chaired by Professor Richard Lilford of Birmingham University. A paper outlining the results can be found on the British Medical Journal's website http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/339/dec02_1/b4677

Treatment for Slips or Falls on Snow or Ice

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people who have (i) required surgery; and (ii) been treated for fractures caused by slips or falls on snow or ice since 1 December 2009, broken down by (a) Health and Social Care Trust; and (b) hospital. (AQW 3696/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is not yet possible to give an accurate assessment of the number of people who have (i) required surgery and (ii) been treated for fractures caused by slips or falls on snow or ice since 1 December 2009.

Arthritis Care

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's future plans for arthritis care. (AQW 3697/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust currently provides a range of medical, nursing and support services for people with arthritis. Treatment of people with arthritis is delivered by a range of health and social care professionals including rheumatologists, GPs, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists in hospitals and in the community.

Musgrave Park Hospital, in the Belfast HSC Trust area, also supplies a regional rheumatology service for Northern Ireland.

Joint Replacements

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost to the Health Service of joint replacements in the last financial year. (AQW 3698/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: 2008/09 costs are not available.

TNF Drugs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost to the Health Service of using TNF drugs in the last financial year. (AQW 3699/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In the financial year 2008-09 the health service spent £11,559,515 on anti-TNF drugs. This amount relates to the cost of the drugs only; costs for the associated infrastructure to deliver the treatment are not available. Anti-TNF drugs are used to treat a number of conditions and the table below provides a breakdown by specialty.

| Specialty | Anti-TNF drug spend |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Rheumatology | £8,475,344 |
| Gastroenterology | £1,547,930 |
| Dermatology | £1,536,241 |

Vagus Nerve Stimulation

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently on the Royal Victoria Hospital waiting list for Vagus nerve stimulation. (AQW 3754/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently two patients waiting for Vagus nerve stimulation at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

EEG Telemetry Scan

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently on the waiting list for an EEG Telemetry scan; and what the average waiting time is. (AQW 3824/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 51 adults waiting for an EEG Telemetry scan, with an average waiting time of 175 days. Additionally, there are ten children waiting for an EEG Telemetry scan, currently waiting between 60 and 90 days. All patients are waiting for this procedure at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Tenders from Taxi Companies

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 2059/10, (i) how many tenders from taxi companies were received by each Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2007/08; and (b) 2008/09; and (ii) the value of each of these tenders. (AQW 3847/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Taxis may be used by Health and Social Care Trusts for various purposes, for example, the transportation of blood, medical records, equipment, staff, clients or patients. Most of the expenditure is incurred on the transport of patients and clients.

In relation to the Northern, South Eastern and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service HSC Trusts no tenders were received for the period in question.

As regards the Belfast HSC Trust no tenders were received in 07/08. 11 tenders were received in 2008/09 and the successful one has an annual value of £1m.

In terms of the Southern HSC Trust, there was one tendering process undertaken during 2007 through the Regional Supplies Service covering the period 1st August 2007 to 31st July 2012. 23 bids were received and 18 companies have been used over the period to date. The annual value is approximately £1m.

As regards the Western HSC Trust no tenders were received in 07/08. 17 tenders were received in 2008/09 and the one accepted has an annual value of £0.5m.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Water Infrastructure

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will invest capital expenditure to enhance the water infrastructure, including upgrading booster pumps and increasing reservoir storage capacity in parts of County Tyrone where hundreds of families had no water supply over the Christmas and New Year period. (AQW 3662/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is satisfied the existing water infrastructure in County Tyrone, including service reservoirs, is adequate to meet demand for water under normal circumstances. However, due to the adverse weather conditions over the Christmas and New Year period, there was a substantial increase in demand for water caused by burst watermains and leaks within private property.

In order to improve the water distribution system and to reduce the risk of interruptions to the water supply, NIW will continue to undertake capital projects in County Tyrone including:-

- a major trunk main scheme to transfer water from Castor Bay to Dungannon and increase some service reservoir capacity, at a capital cost of approximately £18 million;
- construction of a new intake from the Strule River to provide additional water, at a cost of approximately £3.5 million; and
- watermains extension on the Creggan Road, Carrickmore and watermains replacement at Mullaghbane and Cornavarrow Road, Clanabogan.

In addition a detailed Watermain Rehabilitation Zonal Study is currently being undertaken for the Omagh water supply zone to examine the structural, water quality, hydraulic and operational performance of the water supply network. The Study, which is scheduled for completion in April 2011, will make recommendations for any improvements required to the water infrastructure.

NIW is also preparing a Water Resources Management Plan to assess the adequacy of the water supply network, including reservoir capacities and the security of supply provided. The Report, which is expected to be completed in draft form in April 2010, will identify measures required to improve and sustain the water network.

Road Salting

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development if he plans to increase the frequency of road salting, given the forecast of a prolonged cold spell. (AQW 3669/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Firstly, I should explain that the aim of winter service is to help, as far as possible, traffic on the busier main through routes, to move safely and freely in wintry conditions by spreading

salt at the most effective times. I am pleased to report that Roads Service has achieved this objective during the recent very cold spell.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that there is no upper limit to the number of salting treatments, which may be applied to the through routes, on the existing salting schedule. Therefore, at present there are no plans to change the current policy.

Road Salting

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to extending the current salting of 'A' road routes to 'B' road routes and footpaths. (AQW 3671/10)

Minister for Regional Development: One of the key outcomes of the most recent review of my Department's Winter Service policy, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly, was that the practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes should continue.

In general, this means that Roads Service salts the North's main through routes that carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day and, in exceptional circumstances, roads with difficult topography, carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles per day. The application of this policy ensures that 28% of the total road network, which carries around 80% of traffic, is salted, at an annual cost of approximately £5m. An extension of the salting schedule to cover 90% or 100% of traffic volumes would increase the cost to approximately £10m or £20m per annum, respectively.

At the time of the review, it was recognised that the cost of salting footways was prohibitive, and that the basic logistics of introducing such a service, which is largely a manual task, made it impractical. Roads Service does, however, provide salt boxes at strategic locations, which can be used by the general public on a self help basis, to help prevent the formation of snow and ice on pavements and roads.

The Member will appreciate that there is a fine balance to be drawn between putting even more funds into salting, or continuing to spend it on the many other worthwhile demands on Roads Service's limited resources.

It is considered that circumstances have not changed significantly since the last review was carried out and, as such, there are currently no plans to extend the criteria, to include other roads.

Salt and Sand Boxes

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to increasing the number of salt and sand boxes in areas of high housing density. (AQW 3672/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service already has in place procedures to provide salt bins or grit piles, for use by the public on a self-help basis, on roads that do not qualify for inclusion on the gritting schedule.

Roads Service has advised that provided the necessary criteria are met, there are no limits placed on the number of salt boxes which may be provided, although they will not normally be provided within 100m of an existing salt box.

The Member will appreciate that Roads Service already commits significant resources to maintain approximately 3,500 salt bins provided on public roads. In these circumstances, there are currently no plans to change the criteria for the provision of salt boxes.

Salting of Routes for Funeral Processions

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what protocols are in place for the salting of routes for funeral processions; and if he has any plans to review them. (AQW 3688/10)

Minister for Regional Development: One of the key elements of my Department's Roads Service's winter service policy is the practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes.

While there are no formal arrangements in place for the salting of routes for funeral processions, it is Roads Service practice to treat such routes, wherever possible. This practice appears to work well, and I have no plans to review the current arrangements, at this time.

Attacks on Gritters and Spreading Vehicles

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of attacks on gritters and spreading vehicles since the start of December 2009; and (ii) the cost of the damage. (AQW 3700/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there have been 16 attacks on gritters and spreading vehicles since the start of December 2009.

The damage has cost Roads Service £1,060.00

Easibus Drivers

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans Translink has for the two Easibus drivers if the service is withdrawn in Bangor. (AQW 3711/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink has advised me that following the withdrawal of the Easibus service in Bangor in June 2010, the two drivers will be deployed within the Bangor Depot. No redundancies will be made due to the alteration to Easibus services in the town.

Easibus Service

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development the frequency of the Easibus service provided in Bangor each day. (AQW 3715/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink has advised me that currently two buses provide Easibus services in Bangor. Each bus provides four journeys daily (Monday to Friday) on two routes equating to 16 journeys per day. On Saturdays each bus provides four journeys on one route equating to 8 journeys.

Road Gritting

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of road gritting in each month of (i) 2007; (ii) 2008; and (iii) 2009. (AQW 3716/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service maintains its expenditure on Winter Service by financial year. Details of expenditure on Winter Service for financial years 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 is provided in the table below:

| Month | Winter Maintenance Spend | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------|------------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| April | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| May | 0 | £329,000 | 0 |
| June | £607,000 | £151,000 | £931,000 |
| July | £196,000 | £167,000 | £175,000 |
| August | £173,000 | £289,000 | -£123,000 |
| September | £392,000 | £67,000 | £33,000 |
| October | £111,000 | £411,000 | £431,000 |
| November | £831,000 | £318,000 | £696,000 |
| December | £346,000 | £598,000 | £1,317,000 |

| Month | Winter Maintenance Spend | | |
|------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| January | £541,000 | £815,000 | £1,294,000 |
| February | £629,000 | £697,000 | £1,370,000 |
| March | £617,000 | £841,000 | £675,000 |
| Year Total | £4,443,000 | £4,683,000 | £6,799,000 |

Notes:

1. These figures include costs for procurement of forecasting services and maintenance of weather stations.
2. Roads Service operate on a Resource Accounting basis. This means that Work in Progress accrual costs are input to account for costs incurred but not yet paid. The negative figure in August 2008 relates to corrections and estimations. However, the year end figure represents the total consumption in the financial year 08-09.
3. Expenditure on Winter Service in the summer months is due to the purchase of salt. During this time the price of salt is cheaper and it makes good business sense for Roads Service to fill their salt barns at this time.

Expenditure details of Winter Service for the financial year 2009/2010 are not currently available.

Gritting

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development if there are priority areas for gritting around the facilities where emergency services are located. (AQW 3717/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that its Winter Service policy does not specifically provide for the salting of areas around the facilities where emergency services are located. Local agreements are in place that facilitates the gritting of routes inside hospital grounds. It is generally considered that most emergency services would have direct access to the salted road network. However, Roads Service may, subject to the availability of resources, undertake additional salting in the case of an emergency, for example, at accesses for the emergency services or other unforeseen circumstances, such as a funeral.

Overtime Bill for Gritting

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the amount of hours and cost of his Department's overtime bill for gritting each week since the start of December 2009. (AQW 3727/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of the approximate weekly hours and cost of overtime worked by industrial staff in my Department's Roads Service in connection with gritting and snow clearance each week, since the start of December 2009 to 6 January 2010, are provided in the table below:

| Pay Week Ending | Overtime Hours | Cost |
|------------------|----------------|---------|
| 9 December 2009 | 1,012 | £9,776 |
| 16 December 2009 | 1,141 | £11,612 |
| 23 December 2009 | 3,746 | £49,260 |
| 30 December 2009 | 7,323 | £87,355 |
| 6 January 2010 | 7,125 | £81,937 |

Roads Service does not maintain separate details of the hours and cost of overtime worked by its non-industrial staff in relation to winter service duties.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers used the Door-to-Door service in each of the last three years. (AQW 3734/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The information is not available in the format requested.

The table below sets out the number of trips taken by members of the Door-to-Door transport scheme in the last three financial years.

| Period | Number of Trips |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| April 2007 to March 2008 | 44, 887 |
| April 2008 to March 2009 | 123,281 |
| April 2009 to November 2009 | 101,071 |

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the projected cost to his Department of the Door-to-Door service in 2010/11. (AQW 3735/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The projected cost to my Department for the operation of door-to-door transport in Belfast and Derry for the year 2010/2011 is £1m. My Department is currently undertaking a procurement exercise for the provision of door-to-door services in the other 27 towns and cities where the scheme operates and the projected cost for these other areas will depend on the outcome. However the cost of the service for these areas in the current financial year is expected to be £2.2m.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost to his Department of the Door-to-Door service in 2009/10. (AQW 3736/10)

Minister for Regional Development: For the period from April 2009 to December 2009 the actual cost to my Department for the operation of Door-to-Door services, including those in Belfast and Derry, was £2,232,208.78.

It is anticipated that the cost for the remainder of the financial year will be about £750,000.

Annual Grants

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost of annual grants to Translink or other organisations for increased access to public transport for people with disabilities, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3737/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below sets out the grants paid by the Department in each of the last three financial years to increase access to public transport for people with disabilities. This includes support to Translink for the purchase of new buses and the upgrade of railway stations and halts in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. These figures also include support to door-to-door services in urban areas and to Rural Community Transport Partnerships in rural areas to assist people with problems of accessibility, including those arising as a result of disability.

| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (including Easibus) | £1,518,000 | £4,501,000 | £3,587,000 |
| Rural Transport Fund | £1,808,000 | £3,240,000* | £2,666,000 |
| Bus purchase | £19,035,000 | £48,791,000 | £6,616,000 |
| DDA Compliance – Station Halt Upgrade | £120,000 | £8,656,100 | £1,316,400 |

* Includes capital grant expenditure of £1.3 million for replacement purchase of accessible minibuses for Rural Community Transport Partnerships.

Salt Boxes

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the location of salt boxes available to the public in each council area. (AQW 3744/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it maintains approximately 3,500 salt bins on public roads across the North. In light of the number of salt bins currently in use and the demands that it would place on finite staff resources in collating this information, I would ask the Member to direct any queries he has regarding the provision/location of salt boxes in specific areas to the relevant local Roads Service Section Office.

Salt Boxes

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how Roads Service (i) monitors the use of salt boxes; and (ii) ensures that salt boxes are filled, particularly during cold periods when roads are icy. (AQW 3747/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it maintains approximately 3,500 salt bins at pre-agreed strategic locations on public roads across the North, which meet the required criteria. These boxes are filled with road salt, and subsequently monitored on a regular basis, including during the cyclical highway inspections.

During hazardous weather conditions, the replenishment of salt boxes is given a high priority. Depending upon the prevailing weather conditions, and the specific quantities used by the public, Roads Service will endeavour to maintain these boxes with salt supplies, and any requests for salt replenishment are duly actioned, as resources permit.

During the recent exceptional period of cold weather, which began on 17 December 2009, squads were employed to replenish salt boxes. Roads Service was inundated with requests to refill salt boxes during this period. Unfortunately, after refilling, the salt was sometimes completely removed from many boxes, frequently on the same day and often by people for use in other areas. This made it very difficult to keep up with the demand for replenishment.

Portaferry Ferry Messaging Signage

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an update on the Portaferry ferry messaging signage. (AQW 3752/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that work is continuing on the variable message signs for the Strangford Lough Ferry Service. Unfortunately, this work has taken longer than originally anticipated, as some of the electronic parts required have had to be specially manufactured.

It is now anticipated that five of the six signs will be operational by the end of January 2010. The remaining sign at the Portaferry Rd, Newtownards, is being re-located to the junction with the Old Shore Road, so that it can be seen by traffic approaching from the new bypass. However, as civil and electrical work is required at the new location, this sign may not be operational until the end of February 2010.

Planning Applications

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would consider increasing the numbers of officers in the Roads Section in Downpatrick due to the excessive delays in processing planning applications. (AQW 3769/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, at present, staffing levels within the Development Control Section in Downpatrick are sufficient to deal with the current volume of planning application consultations. Internally monitored monthly performance figures, for the processing of applications received from the relevant Planning Office, show that Downpatrick Development Control Section meets, or exceeds the relevant Roads Service target and in this respect, is on a par with other Development Control Sections within Roads Service.

However, delays in individual applications can occur for a number of reasons including, poor initial applications and delayed, or the absence of, responses from applicants, or applicants' agents, to queries posed by Roads Service.

Roads Service will continue to monitor performance in this section to ensure that it maintains its standards in this regard.

Free Travel for Companions

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would consider introducing free travel for (i) those who accompany a person with epilepsy to essential health appointments; (ii) those who accompany Blind or Partially-Sighted people; and (iii) those who accompany people with other disabilities when using public transport. (AQW 3770/10)

Minister for Regional Development: As part of the last Comprehensive Spending review I made bids for the resources to extend the concessionary fares scheme. Those bids did not include companion travel. Resources were made available for the 60 plus scheme but not for other changes. Were additional resources to be available, my priority would be in relation to groups already bid for and not to provide concessionary travel to the groups described in the question.

Cost of Supplying and Maintaining Grit Boxes

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of supplying and maintaining a grit box. (AQW 3775/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the average cost of supplying and maintaining a grit box is approximately £150.00 for the first year. This figure includes the capital cost for the provision of the grit box and also the average costs associated with the winter replenishment cycle.

Detailed costs cannot be supplied as the information is commercially sensitive.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost to his Department of the Door-to-Door service in the Bangor area during the last year. (AQW 3782/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The information is not available in the form requested as Bangor and Holywood are treated as a single contract area.

In the 2008/2009 financial year, the cost to my Department for the operation of the Door-to-Door service in the Bangor and Holywood operational area was £232,765.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of requests for the Door-to-Door service have been accepted and delivered. (AQW 3783/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been informed by the operators that since September 2006 when services began until November 2009, over 98% of requests to use the service have been accepted and delivered.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many requests for the Door-to-Door service have been made by Bangor residents in each of the last three years. (AQW 3784/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below shows the number of trips requested by Bangor members of the Door-to-Door transport scheme in each of the last three financial years. In the 2007/08 financial

year Bangor and Holywood were treated as one operational area and a small number of requests made by Holywood members are included in that figure.

| Period | Number of Requests |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| April 2007 to March 2008 | 5,389 |
| April 2008 to March 2009 | 14,418 |
| April 2009 to November 2009. | 11,732 |

Door-to-Door Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passenger journeys the Door-to-Door service has carried out in Bangor in each of the last three years. (AQW 3785/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The Table below sets out the number of passenger trips made by Bangor members of the Door-to-Door transport scheme in the last three financial years. In the 2007/08 financial year Bangor and Holywood were treated as one operational area and a small number of trips made by Holywood members are included in that figure.

| Period | Number of Passenger Trips |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| April 2007 to March 2008 | 5,195 |
| April 2008 to March 2009 | 13,816 |
| April 2009 to November 2009 | 11,339 |

Gritting Pavements

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy on gritting pavements. (AQW 3825/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has no statutory obligation to salt roads or footways. However, to assist the safe movement of traffic in wintry conditions, Roads Service applies salt on the main traffic routes across the North.

During the most recent review of my Department's Winter Service policy, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly, it was recognised that the cost of salting footways was prohibitive and that the basic logistics of introducing such a service, which is largely a manual task, make it impractical.

That said, you will be aware that Roads Service does provide salt boxes (approximately 3,500 at present) at strategic locations, which can be used by the general public on a self help basis to help prevent the formation of snow and ice on pavements and roads.

Easibus Services in Bangor

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on proposals about the future of Easibus services in Bangor. (AQW 3827/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has not carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the future of Easibus services in Bangor as this is an operational matter for Translink and does not represent a change to Departmental policy

Easibus Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers used the Easibus service in Bangor in each of the last three years. (AQW 3829/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below sets out the number of passenger trips made on Bangor Easibus services in each of the last three financial years.

| Period | Number of Passenger Trips |
|---------|---------------------------|
| 2006/07 | 24,530 |
| 2007/08 | 26,048 |
| 2008/09 | 23,286 |

Easibus Service

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the cost to his Department of providing the Easibus service in Bangor, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3831/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has provided funding to Translink to operate two of the four Easibus services in Bangor. The table below shows the cost to the Department in each of the last three financial years.

| Period | Funding (£) |
|---------|-------------|
| 2006/07 | 37,500 |
| 2007/08 | 37,700 |
| 2008/09 | 38,400 |

Winter Tyres

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider introducing a policy to allow vehicles owned by Local Government or Government Departments, such as bin lorries, school buses and ambulances to have access to winter tyres. (AQW 3844/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that my Department does not have a policy concerning the use of winter tyres by its vehicles.

Translink and Roads Service have both advised that they do not consider there is a need to use winter tyres on their vehicles, at this time.

Policy on the use of winter tyres by other vehicles in the public sector, would be a matter for the relevant service provider.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development why the Door-to-Door service can only collect one person at a time in the Ards area. (AQW 3846/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I can confirm that the Door-to-Door transport service in Newtownards can and does transport more than one person at a time. However, this is a demand responsive service and, although every effort is made by the operator to utilise capacity fully, the numbers being carried at any one time will be dependent on the number of members wanting to travel at that time along the same or similar route.

Door-to Door Service

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development when the contract for the Door-to Door service is due for renewal. (AQW 3849/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The current contract for the provision of Door-to-Door services in all operational areas other than Belfast and Derry is due for renewal on 25 May 2010. The contracts for Belfast and Derry are due to end in April 2011 and September 2011 respectively, with an option to extend each for an additional year.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Housing New Builds

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the number of social housing new builds in (a) North Belfast; (b) West Belfast; and (c) Foyle in each of the last three years; (ii) to show these figures as a percentage of total new build social housing in Northern Ireland; and (iii) for a breakdown of the people allocated these properties by religious denomination. (AQW 3571/10)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The table below shows the number of new build social housing units started in each of the last three years for North Belfast, West Belfast, and the West Bank in Derry / Londonderry. The figures in brackets show the percentage share of the units started in these three areas against the total units started in each year.

| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| North Belfast | 135 (13.08%) | 298 (18.68%) | 234 (20.6%) |
| West Belfast | 120 (11.63%) | 202 (12.66%) | 27 (2.38%) |
| West Bank (Derry) | 146 (14.15%) | 160 (10.03%) | 140 (12.32%) |

The Housing Executive does not have records of the religious denomination of the people allocated to these properties. However, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations does record the socio-economic characteristics of new housing association tenants as shown in the three tables below. Note: the Federation's figures are for new build lettings which includes 'off the shelf' new housing, and their definitions for North Belfast, West Belfast, and West Bank Derry / Londonderry are not identical to those of the Housing Executive, and therefore the totals are not exactly the same as the Housing Executive figures.

| | North Belfast (BT14 & BT15) | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| Protestant | 70 (44%) | 40 (26%) | 7 (8.5%) |
| Catholic | 83 (52.2%) | 111 (72%) | 72 (87.8%) |
| Mixed | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| No religious belief | 2 (1.3%) | 1 (0.6%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| Other religion | 4 (2.5%) | 2 (1.3%) | 2 (2.4%) |
| Total | 159 (100%) | 154 (100%) | 82 (100%) |

| Community Household Belongs To | West Belfast (BT11 & BT12) | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| Protestant | 39 (13.4%) | 14 (6.8%) | 10 (19.2%) |
| Catholic | 245 (84.5%) | 184 (89.8%) | 40 (76.9%) |
| Mixed | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.9%) |
| No religious belief | 5 (1.7%) | 5 (2.4%) | 1 (1.9%) |
| Other religion | 1 (0.3%) | 2 (1%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Total | 290 (100%) | 205 (100%) | 52 (100%) |

| | Foyle (BT48) | | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| Protestant | 7 (8.5%) | 2 (3.6%) | 1 (1.1%) |
| Catholic | 71 (86.6%) | 52 (96.0%) | 88 (98.9%) |
| Mixed | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| No religious belief | 3 (3.7%) | 1 (1.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Other religion | 1 (1.2%) | 1 (1.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Total | 82 (100%) | 56 (100%) | 89 (100%) |

Properties in Dunlugh Deemed Unfit

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development how many (i) publicly-owned; and (ii) privately-owned houses in Dunlugh are currently deemed unfit. (AQW 3599/10)

Minister for Social Development: There are five publicly-owned vacant dwellings in Dunlugh considered derelict and due for demolition in 2010. The Housing Executive, in co-operation with Ballymena Borough Council Environmental Health Department, has identified three unfit privately owned properties in the area.

Properties in Dunlugh Deemed Unfit

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development how many owners of private properties in Dunlugh has the Housing Executive initiated statutory action against because their properties have been deemed unfit; and to detail what action has been taken. (AQW 3600/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has identified three unfit privately owned properties in Dunlugh and their officials have met with the relevant owners and one has agreed to complete the necessary remedial repairs. The Housing Executive has sought to use its statutory powers to resolve the situation in respect of the remaining two properties and is currently in the process of securing the registration of Closing Orders (under Article 38 Housing Order (NI) 1981). The Housing Executive will continue to seek to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current spend to date in each Neighbourhood Renewal area. (AQW 3601/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details expenditure by the Department for Social Development's Regeneration Offices, in each of the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, between 2003/04 and 2008/09.

TABLE 1: NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL EXPENDITURE 2003/04 – 2008/09

| | Neighbourhood Renewal Area | £ (thousands) |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Andersonstown | £1,991 |
| 2 | Armagh | £2,139 |
| 3 | Ballyclare | £563 |
| 4 | Ballymena | £3,895 |
| 5 | Bangor | £1,521 |
| 6 | Brownlow | £2,905 |
| 7 | Cityside | £26,335 |

| | Neighbourhood Renewal Area | £ (thousands) |
|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 8 | Coalisland | £718 |
| 9 | Coleraine (East) | £1,969 |
| 10 | Coleraine (West) | £1,769 |
| 11 | Colin | £5,747 |
| 12 | Crumlin/Ardoyne | £5,627 |
| 13 | Downpatrick | £2,545 |
| 14 | Dungannon | £610 |
| 15 | Enniskillen | £411 |
| 16 | Greater Falls | £9,877 |
| 17 | Greater Shankill | £11,631 |
| 18 | Inner East Belfast | £11,450 |
| 19 | Inner North Belfast | £7,621 |
| 20 | Inner South Belfast | £5,227 |
| 21 | Ligoniel | £783 |
| 22 | Limavady | £1,405 |
| 23 | Lurgan | £2,661 |
| 24 | Newry | £3,533 |
| 25 | North West Portadown | £660 |
| 26 | Omagh | £1,309 |
| 27 | Outer North (NWDO) | £6,496 |
| 28 | Outer West (NWDO) | £2,997 |
| 29 | Outer West Belfast(Lenadoon) | £1,743 |
| 30 | Rathcoole | £270 |
| 31 | South West Belfast | £6,065 |
| 32 | Strabane | £6,303 |
| 33 | Tullycarnet | £1,372 |
| 34 | Upper Ardoyne / Ballysillan | £3,423 |
| 35 | Upper Springfield / Whiterock | £4,270 |
| 36 | Waterside | £20,825 |

Notes:

1. Figures include; Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund capital and revenue expenditure, expenditure from physical regeneration programmes (Urban Development Grants, Comprehensive Development, Environmental Improvements Schemes and Public Realm).
2. An additional £970,000 expenditure on projects which benefit more than one area has not been allocated in the table.
3. Caution is advised in making comparisons of expenditure across Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The expenditure is influenced by factors such as; the population of the area, the date of the formation of the Partnership, the historic expenditure in an area and the needs identified in Action Plans. The Cityside and Waterside Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in the North West encompass the city centre and this has a significant impact on the level of expenditure reported for those areas. Belfast City Centre is not located within a Neighbourhood Renewal Area boundary.

Neighbourhood Renewal Projects

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how much additional finance has been leveraged in from (i) Northern Ireland Housing Executive; (ii) Roads Service; (iii) Health Trusts; (iv) Education and Library Boards; (v) PSNI; and (vi) other agencies, to assist in funding Neighbourhood Renewal projects. (AQW 3602/10)

Minister for Social Development: Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and the residents therein are already among the biggest recipients of public funding in Northern Ireland. The priorities identified in Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans are resourced and delivered by various means. My Department has committed £60m of its CSR allocation to Neighbourhood Renewal. Other Departments and agencies support Neighbourhood Renewal actions in a number of ways, such as; joint funding, provision of benefits in kind and through the mainstream provision of services.

It is not possible to quantify how much additional finance has been allocated to activities in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Other Government Departments have highlighted the means by which additional resources are skewed towards disadvantaged areas, groups or individuals. For example; DE allocates additional funding on the basis of levels of Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME), this directs additional resources to schools whose catchment areas correlate strongly with Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, the DHSSPS Investing for Health Strategy has a particular focus on the most disadvantaged areas and DEL have a range of skills programmes which target individuals in the most disadvantaged areas.

My Department is working with all providers to examine the delivery of their existing services and to seek tailored improvements that would ensure more effective and efficient delivery.

Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development for the religious background of the members of each Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board. (AQW 3604/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department does not hold this information. Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships are bodies whose membership includes representation from the statutory, private and voluntary and community sectors. The composition of individual Neighbourhood Partnerships reflects local circumstances bringing together the different parts of the public, private, business and community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the geographical areas covered by each of the Winter Fuel Payments made to date. (AQW 3639/10)

Minister for Social Development: Entitlement to a Winter Fuel Payment is not dependent on geographical factors. Anyone living within Northern Ireland may therefore receive their annual payment so long as they meet the qualifying conditions.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the process for prioritising Winter Fuel Payments. (AQW 3640/10)

Minister for Social Development: Individuals are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment if they meet the qualifying conditions. The issue of prioritisation only applies in relation to when the payment is made. People who get their payments automatically can normally expect to receive their payment from early November but before Christmas as will those whose first claim is received this year by 27 September 2009. All claims received after that date up until the closing date of 30 March 2010 will normally be paid as soon as possible in 2010.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Winter Fuel Payments (i) had been made by 1 January 2010; and (ii) have yet to be made. (AQW 3641/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions and is not expected to be available until August 2010.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Winter Fuel Payments were made in each of the last five years. (AQW 3642/10)

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

| Year | Number of recipients | Number of Households |
|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2004/05 | 283,843 | 208,700 |
| 2005/06 | 286,068 | 211,186 |
| 2006/07 | 293,267 | 216,079 |
| 2007/08 | 300,615 | 220,761 |
| 2008/09 | 307,223 | 225,537 |

Link Road Outlined in the Dunclug Action Plan

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development when the new link road outlined in the Dunclug Action Plan will be completed. (AQW 3654/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Dunclug Link Road forms part of phase 2 of the Housing Executive's Environmental Improvement Scheme for the area.

Unfortunately due to the collapse of the land and property market the resources for schemes such as this are not currently available.

As such the Housing Executive are not currently able to state when this scheme will begin, however they remain committed to it and will keep the situation under close review.

Central Heating

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development in how many instances (i) families with children; and (ii) pensioners, were given single heaters by the Housing Executive when their central heating broke down over the past two months. (AQW 3655/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive does not collate the information in the format requested. However,

they provided two temporary heaters each to 25 households in November 2009 and two temporary heaters each to 41 households in December 2009 due to heating systems breakdowns.

Gas and Electricity Disconnections

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive tenants have had their (i) gas; and (ii) electricity supplies disconnected because of unpaid bills in each of the last 5 years. (AQW 3677/10)

Minister for Social Development: The provision of utility services with respect to a Housing Executive dwelling is a matter between the tenant and the utility provider. Consequently the Housing Executive does not hold records regarding the number of its tenants who have had gas or electrical supplies disconnected because of non payment of bills.

Social Housing Schemes

Rt Hon J Donaldson asked the Minister for Social Development for an indication of the time-scale for the completion of the new social housing units on the site at Ballymacross Hill in Lisburn; and to outline any other planned social housing schemes in the Lagan Valley constituency. (AQW 3678/10)

Minister for Social Development: Ulidia Housing Association are currently finalising their scheme submission in respect of a proposed development of up to 150 new homes at Ballymacoss Hill in Lisburn.

This scheme is expected to be formally submitted to the Housing Executive for approval in the coming weeks and subject to that approval process, I am confident that work can begin as soon as possible thereafter.

A timetable for completion of the work will obviously be dependant on receiving the various approvals necessary and the Housing Association procuring this work in accordance with European Regulations. I will be happy to update the Member on a more specific timetable once this is in place.

In respect of the wider provision for Lagan Valley, in addition to plans at Ballymacoss, the current Social Housing Development Programme has a further 10 schemes that could potentially deliver another 205 new homes in the Constituency. 112 of these have of course already been provided at Pond Park in former Military Housing. Any of these further schemes that do not get on site in this financial year for whatever reason can be rolled forward into next years programme that is still being finalised.

Deafblind People in Northern Ireland

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development (i) whether any agency of her Department collates data on the number of deafblind people in Northern Ireland; and (ii) to detail that information. (AQW 3693/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Department does not hold data on the number of deafblind people in Northern Ireland.

Details of the number of people who are claiming IB and DLA where their main disabling condition is Deafness or Blindness are set out in the tables below.

TABLE 1: DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE WITH MAIN DISABLING CONDITION AS 'BLINDNESS' AND 'DEAFNESS'

| | Live load | Payload |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Blindness | 2,739 | 2,726 |
| Deafness | 2,769 | 2,761 |

TABLE 2: INCAPACITY BENEFIT WITH MAIN DISABLING CONDITION AS 'BLINDNESS' AND 'DEAFNESS'

| | Live load | Payload |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Blindness (and low vision) | 266 | 152 |
| Deafness | 151 | 89 |

Social Fund

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total amount of money awarded from the social fund for (i) crisis loans; and (ii) budgeting loans, in each of the past 5 years. (AQW 3694/10)

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

| Year | Crisis Loan Awards £ | Budgeting Loan Awards £ |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2008/09 | 12,321,510 | 43,786,809 |
| 2007/08 | 8,658,648 | 44,902,927 |
| 2006/07 | 9,090,753 | 51,839,449 |
| 2005/06 | 8,193,856 | 39,900,374 |
| 2004/05 | 8,443,771 | 36,929,712 |

Social Fund

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the sum total of monies awarded from the social fund for (i) crisis loans; and (ii) budgeting loans, which have been written off as unrecoverable in each of the past 5 years. (AQW 3695/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the amount of Social Fund Crisis Loans and Budgeting Loans that have been written off as unrecoverable in each of the past five years.

| Year | Budget Loan | Crisis Loan |
|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 2004-05 | £113,448 | £38,121 |
| 2005-06 | £174,406 | £63,465 |
| 2006-07 | £114,326 | £53,322 |
| 2007-08 | £104,483 | £34,215 |
| 2008-09 | £130,539 | £50,090 |

NI Housing Executive Land

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Social Development what land available for development in the East Belfast parliamentary constituency is currently held by the NI Housing Executive; and to outline the proposals the NIHE has for each land holding. (AQW 3702/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. The Housing Executive has undeveloped land in its East Belfast and Castlereagh District Offices areas as detailed in the table below:

| Housing Executive District Office | Location | Site Area (Hectares) | Land Available for Development * | Retained for future development ** |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| East Belfast | Knocknagoney | 5.76 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | Milltown Rd, Belvoir | 1.20 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | Killynure Estate, Carryduff | 1.75 | Y | |
| Castlereagh | Keel Way, Moneyreagh | 0.75 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | Coleshill Gdns, Belvoir | 0.17 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | Grays Park, Belvoir | 0.06 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | 97-107 Gilnahirk Road | 0.21 | | Y |
| Castlereagh | 21 Grahamsbridge Road | 0.06 | Y | |
| Castlereagh | Millmount Retained Land | 6.23 | Y | |
| Castlereagh | Lower Braniel Road | 0.50 | | Y |

* These sites are programmed for transfer to Housing Associations for provision of social housing.

** Land retained for future development would include lands such as green/communal areas but which could potentially be considered for use at some stage in the future should a need be identified.

Land in the East Belfast Constituency

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Social Development what land in the East Belfast parliamentary constituency does each housing association currently have. (AQW 3703/10)

Minister for Social Development: Details of undeveloped land owned by Housing Associations in the East Belfast parliamentary constituency is as follows:

| Housing Association | Location |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Connswater Homes | Ballygowan Road |
| Helm Housing Association | Off Ravenhill Street (currently landscaped) |
| North & West Housing Association | Former factory site: Ravenhill Road/Ampere Street/Federation Street, Belfast |
| Oaklee Housing Association | Site at Hosford House |
| Open Door Housing Association | Former Hostel site, Castlereagh Street |
| Triangle Housing Association | 104 Holywood Road, Belfast |

Housing Associations in the East Belfast Constituency

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Social Development (i) which housing associations registered by her Department (a) currently operate in the East Belfast parliamentary constituency; and (b) plan to do so in 2010/11 or 2011/12; and (ii) to outline the programmes planned by these housing associations for the next two financial years. (AQW 3704/10)

Minister for Social Development: The following Registered Housing Associations currently operate in the East Belfast parliamentary constituency and plan to continue to do so in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Alpha Housing Association
 Ballynafeigh Housing Association
 Belfast Community Housing Association
 Clanmil Housing Association
 Connswater Homes
 Fold Housing Association
 Habinteg Housing Association
 Helm Housing Association
 Hearth Housing Association
 Oaklee Housing Association
 Open Door Housing Association
 SHAC Housing Association
 St Mathews Housing Association
 Triangle Housing Association
 Trinity Housing Association
 Ulidia Housing Association
 Wesley Housing Association

The Housing Executive, which manages the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme by Registered Housing Associations, is unable to confirm details of programmes of activity beyond the current financial year as funding for 2010/11 and beyond has not yet been announced.

Sickness Benefits

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister for Social Development what procedures are in place to alert people on long-term sickness benefits that they need to renew their claims. (AQW 3731/10)

Minister for Social Development: Customers who receive Incapacity Benefit are not required to renew their claims. However, unless they fall into one of a limited number of exempt categories, all Incapacity Benefit

customers are required to periodically satisfy a test of incapacity - a process which is initiated by the Agency and may include a medical assessment.

There is no requirement for customers who receive Employment and Support Allowance to renew their claims. All Employment and Support Allowance customers are subject to a review of their medical condition between three months and three years after they have passed a Work Capability Assessment and they are notified of this in writing.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development which Department drew up the eligibility for individuals to receive cold weather payments; what input her Department had in the process. (AQW 3732/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Cold Weather Payment Scheme, was designed by the Department of Social Security in Britain and came into operation on 7 November 1988. That Department remained responsible for all subsequent amendments to the scheme until the establishment of the Department for Work and Pensions. All amendments to the scheme since November 2003 have been put in place in Britain by the Department for Work and Pensions.

In keeping with the long standing principle of parity in social security matters, the then Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland made the necessary legislation to set up the equivalent Cold Weather Payment Scheme for Northern Ireland also on 7 November 1988.

The parity principle operates on the basis that Northern Ireland has the same range of benefits which are paid at the same rates and subject to the same conditions as in Britain.

As is the normal practice there was and continues to be close liaison on all social security matters between my Department and the responsible Department in Britain.

Nelson Street Site in North Belfast

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any contact her Department has had with developers or agencies/representatives of developers in relation to the Nelson Street site in north Belfast. (AQW 3777/10)

Minister for Social Development: I am not aware of any meetings having taken place between my officials or the Housing Executive and developers or agencies/representatives of developers specifically in relation to the Nelson Street site.

Donegall Gardens Area of South Belfast

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development what action she intends to take to provide new extensions to Housing Executive properties in the Donegall Gardens area of south Belfast. (AQW 3873/10)

Minister for Social Development: There are currently no plans to provide new extensions to Housing Executive dwellings in Donegall Gardens.

Pensioners Bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on when the refurbishment of the pensioners bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor is due to start. (AQW 3898/10)

Minister for Social Development: Improvement works to the one bedroom bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate were programmed in three phases. Phase 2 of the proposed improvement works includes the 44 dwellings at Ballyree Drive and the work is now programmed to start in September 2010. This is, however, dependent on the availability of funding.

Social Fund

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (1) the total number of applications made to the social fund for (a) crisis loans; and (b) budgeting loans in the past six months, for money to pay (i) electricity bills (ii) gas bills (iii) home heating oil bills; (2) the number of these applications which were successful; and (3) the total of monies awarded in loans to successful applicants. (AQW 3913/10)

Minister for Social Development: This information is not recorded in the format requested. The overall number of applications received, awards made and associated expenditure is set out in the table below and covers the 6 month period from 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2009.

| | Number of Applications Received | Number of awards made | Total amount awarded (£) |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Crisis Loans | 75,478 | 56,578 | 6,954,429 |
| Budgeting Loans | 84,128 | 68,378 | 31,493,993 |

Urban Regeneration and Community Development

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department has a strategy or policy framework for urban regeneration and community development; and if so, how she intends to involve the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of this policy or strategy. (AQW 4020/10)

Minister for Social Development: A Project Team has been established to take forward the development of a strategy and policy framework for urban regeneration and community development in Northern Ireland. It is intended that the framework will be ready for May 2011. It is also intended that any stakeholders central to the delivery of any new policies or strategies that may evolve during the course of this work, will be fully consulted during the production process.

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