

This publication contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members. The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission and has not been subject to the official reporting process or changed in any way.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

Friday 29 January 2010

### **Written Answers to Questions**

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

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

##### **European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what actions they plan to take to comply with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

(AQW 2688/10)

##### **First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):**

Our Department currently complies with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages by applying the agreed Guidance on meeting the UK Government commitments in respect of Irish and Ulster Scots. This Guidance provides the framework for enabling our Department to comply with the principles of the Charter.

Contained within the Guidance are Codes of Courtesy for Irish and Ulster Scots; these provide specific advice on dealing with issues such as personal names, face to face interviews and meetings, telephone calls, correspondence and addresses.

Our Department has translated a number of documents into Irish and plans to continue to comply with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

### **Anti-Bullying Publications**

**Mr A Ross** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) what anti-bullying publications their Department has funded and distributed to schools; and (ii) what feedback their Department has received.

(AQW 3834/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

The Children and Young People's Unit produced and distributed an anti-bullying eight page comic called "Big Bully" to children in primary schools here in support of Anti-Bullying week (16-20 November). The comic was aimed at providing children with information in an interesting format on how to deal with bullying behaviour.

Since the comic was distributed, the Children and Young People's Unit has received numerous requests for extra copies from head teachers who were very happy with the publication and feedback from several parents who welcomed the information.

The Department also received feedback from two head teachers who stated that the block capitals used in the comic were not suitable for Key Stage 1 children and that the panel depicting the parents with the head teacher could encourage antagonistic exchanges. Their comments have been noted for future reference when producing material for this age group.

### **Capital Assets Realisation Taskforce**

**Mrs N Long** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the work of the Capital Assets Realisation Taskforce; (ii) how targets and plans are being adjusted in light of the changing property markets; and (iii) how assets will be prioritised and progressed for realisation during the current Assembly term.

(AQW 3857/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

The downturn in the land and property market has meant that it has not been appropriate to pursue disposals of development sites during 2008 and 2009. No sales took place during 2008-09 and it is unlikely that any sales proceeds will now be realised during 2009-10. The position for 2010-11 is being kept under review.

The policy remains that public bodies should dispose of surplus assets, but any prospective asset realisations are subject to appraisal under DFP's "Green Book" Guidance on appraisal and evaluation to ensure value for money before a decision to proceed with disposal or other form of realisation is taken.

A Capital Assets Realisation Team (CART) led by the Strategic Investment Board continues to monitor the current market and to work with departments on options to realise value from surplus or under-utilised assets. It is in this context that CART has been working with departments on a number of potential development opportunities, including Grosvenor Road, Colintown Town Centre and East Belfast Development Project. This work is ongoing.

In view of the current difficulties with the land and property markets, the First Minister and deputy First Minister asked Ed Vernon to review the original recommendations of the Capital Realisations Taskforce, and his report is now under consideration.

### **Disabled Access at Portadown Railway Station**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action they are taking under their equality and disability remit, to make NI Railways/Translink provide proper disabled access in Portadown Railway Station, which is the access point for more than 400,000 rail passenger journeys per year.

(AQW 3890/10)

#### **First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), places a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of a building which make accessing a service impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people. This includes providing disabled access in railway stations.

Part 3 of the DDA gives disabled people a "right of access" to goods, services and facilities. OFMDFM recently made the Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations (Northern

Ireland) 2009 lifting the exemption which applied to transport providers from Part 3 of the DDA. This means that from 25 January 2010 transport providers must not discriminate against disabled people when providing goods, facilities and services.

Responsibility for transport issues falls to the Department for Regional Development. The Minister for Regional Development has advised that Portadown Railway Station will be upgraded but, owing to pressures on available capital budgets, the work may not be completed until 2014. The Minister further advises that in his answer to question AQW 3149/10, he highlighted the work in place to overcome the current shortcomings. The Minister for Regional Development has still to agree capital plans with Translink for the next few years. It is expected this will be completed, in the context of budgets available, within the next few months.

### **Disability Discrimination Acts**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail any action they have taken under Disability Discrimination Acts in the past three years.

(AQW 3891/10)

#### **First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

In the past three years the following legislation has been introduced using powers within the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006).

- The Disability Discrimination (Premises) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007;
- the Disability Discrimination (Service Providers and Public Authorities Carrying Out Functions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007;
- the Disability Discrimination (Questions and Replies Order (Northern Ireland) 2007;
- the Disability Discrimination (Private Clubs, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008;
- the Disability Discrimination (Guidance on the Definition of Disability)(Appointed Day) Order (NI) 2008;
- the Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations (NI) 2009; and
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Commencement No 10) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) requires public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to: promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. Public Authorities are also under a duty to submit Disability Action Plans to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland explaining how they propose to fulfill these disability duties in relation to their functions.

OFMDFM published its first Disability Action Plan in July 2008 and this was revised in April 2009. The Plan is available on the OFMDFM website at:

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/dap - revised version 2009.pdf>.

One of the key indicators for OFMDFM in the plan is to remove barriers to participation and achieve a measurable improvement in specified aspects of the lives of people with disabilities by 2012. On 3 December 2009 we received the Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability. The Working Group was chaired by a Senior Civil Servant and made up of representatives from the voluntary and community sector and government departments. Publication of the report marks a culmination of the significant work of the Group and various subgroups. The Executive will now be asked to respond to the report and we anticipate a public consultation on how Government plans to take the work forward.

### **Disability Discrimination**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the extent of their enforcement powers in matters relating to disability discrimination.

(AQW 3892/10)

#### **First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

Enforcement of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is a matter for the courts or industrial tribunals. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has responsibility for keeping under review the working of the Act. The Commission also have specific powers under the Act to keep under review the “disability duties” placed on public authorities.

The legislation does not provide us with the power to enforce disability legislation.

## **Equality Legislation**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the extent of their enforcement powers relating to equality legislation.

(AQW 3893/10)

### **First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 came into force in January 2000 and placed a statutory obligation on all designated public authorities to ensure that they carry out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine social categories:

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

Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a designated public authority must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) has a statutory responsibility for keeping the effectiveness of Section 75 under review.

The legislation does not provide us with the power to enforce equality legislation.

OFMDFM's Equality Scheme states that the department "is fully committed to the fulfilment of the obligations on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations required under Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998". Our equality scheme sets out how OFMDFM proposes to fulfil those obligations.

We have a responsibility to oversee the implementation of these equality obligations throughout the devolved administration, and we have a particular interest in ensuring that our department shows

leadership and sets the best possible example for other public authorities. Accordingly, we maintain close oversight of the commitments contained in our Equality Scheme.

The Equality Directorate in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister provides advice, support and challenge to other civil service departments in relation to their Section 75 duties.

### **Disability and Equality Staff**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many staff are employed in the sections of their Department which deal with disability and equality; and (ii) what the total salary costs of these staff have been in each of the past three years.

(AQW 3894/10)

#### **First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

The Equality, Rights and Social Need Division covers a wide range of policy and legislative areas relating to equality and disability. Staff in post is currently 39. Within this overall total, one member of staff has lead responsibility for legislative disability issues and a second works exclusively on disability legislation.

Separately, a member of staff in the Central Anti Poverty Unit deals with policy matters surrounding disability.

The total divisional salary costs for each of the past three years is:

2009/10	£1.7 million
2008/09	£1.8 million
2007/08	£1.5 million

### **Review of Public Administration**

**Mr D McClarty** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the Department's implementation of the Review of Public Administration; (ii) if it is on target to meet the March 2011 RPA saving targets; and (iii) how staffing levels have been reduced as a result of RPA.

(AQW 4108/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:**

As a result of the Review of Public Administration reforms (i) there are no implementation decisions impacting OFMDFM (ii) no savings targets to be met; and (iii) no staffing levels to be reduced.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Livestock Losses**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how many farm animals perished during the recent floods in Fermanagh; (ii) what compensation is available to farmers in respect of these livestock losses; and (iii) how much compensation has been paid to date.

(AQW 3759/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew):**

Following communication with local officials and rendering plants in Fermanagh, there is no evidence to suggest any animals were affected adversely during the recent floods.

There are currently no financial support measures available for farmer's losses due to the severe weather. I will however make representation to Executive colleagues, and if there is agreement I will direct officials to make an assessment of the damage incurred.



### **Livestock Losses**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how many farm animals perished during the recent cold weather; (ii) what compensation is available to farmers in respect of these livestock losses; and (iii) how much compensation has been paid to date.

(AQW 3760/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Following communication with local officials and rendering plants in Fermanagh, there is no evidence to suggest any farm animals were affected adversely during the recent cold weather.

There are currently no financial support measures available for farmer's losses due to the severe weather.

### **Financial Assistance to Fish Farms**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the financial assistance her Department has given to fish farms in each of the last five years; (ii) the reasons for the awarding of the financial assistance; and (iii) which fish farms have received assistance.

(AQW 3762/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** The information requested is provided in the table below:-

<b>Year</b>	<b>Name of Business</b>	<b>Assistance Provided</b>	<b>Reason for assistance</b>
2005	Silverstream Trout Fisheries	£11,637.56	Improved fish welfare and water quality
2006	Silverstream Trout Fisheries	£23,385.66	Modernisation of Trout Production Unit
2007	Northern Salmon Co. Ltd	£223,570.80	Expansion of Facilities
2008	Blue Valley Fish Farm	£43,201.23	Modernisation of Fish Production

2008	Glen Oak	£58,600.00	Efficiency through Technology
2008	Northern Salmon Co. Ltd	£32,036.70	Predator Prevention and Site Security Measures

### **Single Farm Payments**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she can confirm that she challenged the findings of a Single Farm Payment panel that found in favour of two appellants from south Down, and that she further challenged the finding of a Court that also found in their favour; and for her assessment of the impact on these farmers of being denied their Single Farm Payments.

(AQW 3790/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I can confirm that two farmers from South Down asked for a review of my Department’s decision not to allow them to add land to their Single Farm Payment (SFP) application after the time allowed for this had expired. They relied on the “obvious error” provision of the EU Regulations. In one case the External Panel recommended that the Department’s decision should be changed. In the other case the External Panel recommended that the Department’s decision should not be changed. In both cases, I considered all options within the EU rules and decided that the Department’s original decision in each case should stand.

The farmers applied for a Judicial Review of these decisions. The Court directed that the cases be referred back to the External Panel for further consideration and provided guidance about the way in which cases of “obvious error” should be considered.

The Department applied to have the Court's decision reviewed by the Court of Appeal, which allowed the Department's appeals, set aside the orders made in the lower court and said "there being no obvious error the Minister applied the proper test".

No SFP has been denied to these farmers. They received all the SFP entitlements they applied for in 2005. As confirmed by the Court of Appeal, there is no provision in the EU rules that would allow me to increase their SFP entitlements.

#### **Fishing Organisations**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has had any discussions with fishing organisations to ascertain how she can help them maintain their livelihood in light of the 9% drop in quotas.

(AQW 3791/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I expect to receive a report from the Fisheries Forum by the end of March which will make recommendations generally on the future strategic direction for the fishing industry and specifically on the EFF investment that it thinks should be made. Axis 1 of the EFF provides for adaptation of the fleet and the Forum will, no doubt take account of recent changes in fishing opportunities and anticipated future prospects. When I have had the opportunity to consider those recommendations I will engage directly with the Forum, before reaching a final decision.

### **European Fisheries Fund**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the amount of funding allocated by the Scottish Parliament to assist fishing communities, to explain why her Department has not allocated European Fisheries Fund monies.

(AQW 3792/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** There has been a delay in getting the EFF started in the north of Ireland as a result of having to complete Measure Level business cases on my Department's investment proposals. Four key measures are now open and two further measures for "vessel modernisation" and the "small scale and coastal sector" will open early in 2010. I will consider the case for further measures within Axis 1 once I have the report of the Fisheries Forum and provided a robust business justification can be established.

To date, we have received 28 applications seeking approximately £3.5 million of EFF grants. Two selection panels were convened before Christmas to consider the applications that have been received to date. My officials have issued letters of offer to 12 successful projects, which represents an investment of £1.1 million. There will be further meetings of the EFF assessment panel in February to appraise the remaining applications.

### **Fishermen**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to enable fishermen to seek and gain quotas for lease.

(AQW 3793/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Quota leasing is a commercial matter and my Department does not get involved in the arrangements that are made between fishing businesses.

### **Fishing Fleets**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she is aware of the quota cuts made by Brussels for the Spanish, French and German fishing fleets; and how this compares to the quota cuts here.

(AQW 3798/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I have not carried out any comparison of this nature. The Commission will make its proposals for particular stocks based on its interpretation of the scientific advice. In the case of Area VII nephrops stocks the Commission was clearly influenced by the ICES advice on harvest ratios. Since the Commission has some doubts about this, our resources are best spent on carrying out further scientific work to establish a harvest ratio, that everyone will agree represents an appropriate level of fishing consistent with a management objective of maximising the sustainable yield of nephrops.

I will be considering with AFBI, the industry and colleagues in the south of Ireland how best to take this important work forward.

### **Potato Crops**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the damage to potato crops as a result of the previous heavy rainfall that prevented harvesting of crops and the recent frost; the financial impact this will have on potato growers; and what level of compensation or financial assistance her Department will provide to potato growers who have lost

crops.

(AQW 4057/10)

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:** I am aware that the heavy rainfall and the more recent frost caused great difficulties to many potato growers and my heart goes out to all those affected.

There are currently no financial support measures available for potato growers and my Department is currently facing significant financial resource pressures across the board. Accordingly, in order not to raise expectation, my Department has not assessed loss at this time.

I do however intend to make representations to Executive colleagues, and if agreement can be reached and money found, I will direct officials to assess the damage and resulting financial loss from the bad weather.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

## **DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE**

### **Hotels Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure 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 3933/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland):**

In the last five years one hotel room was booked but not used at a cost of £129.

### **Flights for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure 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 3934/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:**

In the last five years four flights were booked and not used. The total cost of £1015.67 is detailed as follows:

2005/06 - £540.00

2006/07 - £291.80

2009/10 - £183.87

### **Coleraine Library**

**Mr B Leonard** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he can confirm that proposed cutbacks in his Department's 2010/11 budget will not affect or delay the building of Coleraine library.

(AQW 3944/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:**

My Department is currently considering an Economic Appraisal for improved library facilities in Coleraine.

Libraries NI are working towards a potential partnership with Coleraine Borough Council on the Market Yard site. This multi purpose development includes a museum, tourist information facilities, a café, outdoor event space and a new library located within the listed walls of the former Coleraine market.

No major expenditure is planned on this project for 2010/11 and I can therefore confirm that the draft funding allocation to Libraries NI for 2010/11 will not affect or delay the project.

### **Coleraine Library**

**Mr B Leonard** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the collection known as 'the Irish Room' will be fully re-integrated into the new Coleraine Library.

(AQW 3945/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The proposal for the new Coleraine Library forms part of Libraries NI's projected capital programme and my Department is currently considering the Economic Appraisal for this project.

The preferred option in this appraisal includes accommodation for 'The Irish Room' collection.

### **Mountain Biking**

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what he is doing to promote mountain biking.

(AQW 4001/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Responsibility for the promotion of mountain biking rests, in the first instance with the governing body for the sport, Cycling Ulster. Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), however, which is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland has, over the last three financial years, provided £202,507 to Cycling Ulster towards the development of all cycling disciplines, including mountain biking. In that time, it has also provided almost £50,000, through its Athlete Support Programme, to assist a number of talented mountain bikers develop their full potential. Furthermore, SNI has funded a part-time Development Officer to work closely with local cycling clubs, including mountain biking, to help them improve and develop their sport. It has also provided advice to the Forestry Service on how to improve mountain biking provision in the Mourne Mountains and part funds the Countryside Activity Access Network (CAAN) which is currently considering options to develop world class mountain biking facilities in Northern Ireland.



## The Arts

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much each council spent on the arts in each of the last three years; and what this represents in terms of spend per person in those council areas.

(AQW 4047/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure does not hold figures in relation to district council arts expenditure over the last three years. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland uses data collected by the Department of the Environment to produce details of arts expenditure for each council area. The most up to date data compiled by the Arts Council relates to district councils' expenditure during the 2006 – 2007 financial year.

The attached table sets out the expenditure by each council in 2006/07 and how this equated to spend per person.

<b>Council</b>	<b>Arts Funding</b>	<b>Spend Per Person*</b>
Belfast	7,738,643	£28.94
Cookstown	842,255	£24.22
Armagh	1,327,301	£23.37
Lisburn	1,872,920	£16.58
<b>Strabane</b>	574,613	<b>£14.68</b>
Fermanagh	704,123	£11.62
Coleraine	506,961	£8.94
Newry and Mourne	775,195	£8.30
Antrim	420,755	£8.17
Moyle	131,833	£7.97
Newtownabbey	631,283	£7.77
Ballymoney	233,631	£7.65
Down	520,836	£7.62
Omagh	344,121	£6.74
Craigavon	577,924	£6.66
Derry	629,725	£5.84
North Down	281,839	£3.58
Dungannon and South Tyrone	183,179	£3.50

<b>Council</b>	<b>Arts Funding</b>	<b>Spend Per Person*</b>
Ards	266,040	£3.49
Ballymena	210,793	£3.44
Banbridge	153,553	£3.38
Limavady	72,319	£2.11
Carrickfergus	72,263	£1.82
Larne	49,519	£1.58
Castlereagh	70,859	£1.08
Magherafelt	15,668	£0.37

\*Spend per person based on total expenditure for each council on arts development/support and theatres and public engagement. Population figures used were NISRA's 2006 mid year estimates.

### **Libraries NI**

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why Libraries NI currently rents two offices in Lisburn with annual running costs of £80,000, when it owns a building in Ballynahinch that is better equipped to deliver services.

(AQW 4092/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** Libraries NI's offices in Lisburn were rented to temporarily house the project teams tasked with the setting up of the organisation's corporate services functions. Libraries NI is now operational and is in the process of deciding where these corporate functions should be located on a permanent basis.

The offices in Lisburn were never intended to be a permanent home for Libraries NI and their short term leases reflect this.

Libraries NI are currently preparing an Economic Appraisal which considers the options for their headquarters functions. This appraisal should be presented to the Libraries NI Board in February or March 2010 and will consider the option of using vacant space in a number of library buildings (including the former SEELB Library HQ at Ballynahinch).

The process for deciding on the new headquarters location will take account of the Bain Review's recommendations on the location of Public Sector Jobs.

### **Libraries NI**

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why Libraries NI is carrying out a public consultation six weeks after a decision was taken to close its headquarters in Ballynahinch; and if a full equality impact assessment has been carried out.

(AQW 4093/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Board of Libraries NI have identified the potential for efficiency savings through the rationalisation of the number of its Regional Administrative Centres from 5 to 4.

No final decision has been taken by the Board and the proposal to close Ballynahinch as a Regional Administrative Centre is currently out to public consultation.

The public consultation will include full consideration of any Equality impacts arising from the proposed decision.

I would encourage everyone with an interest in the future of Ballynahinch library HQ to contribute to this important consultation process.

### **Libraries NI**

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the decision by NI Libraries to remove services from Ballynahinch prior to identifying a location for its new headquarters; and if a short-list of potential locations for the new headquarters has been agreed.

(AQW 4094/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The Libraries NI proposal to stop using the former SEELB Library HQ at Ballynahinch as a Regional Administrative Centre is a separate exercise from the identification of a future location for Libraries NI's corporate (headquarters) functions.

An Economic Appraisal which considers the options for locating Libraries NI's corporate functions is being prepared and this should be presented to the Libraries NI Board in February or March 2010. As such the process of identifying and short-listing potential locations is ongoing.

Ballynahinch former library HQ is being considered as a location for Libraries NI's corporate services functions in this Appraisal, along with other underutilised library accommodation and other options (such as renting or buying a new headquarters). Ballynahinch will not be closed until a decision regarding the location for Libraries NI's corporate functions has been agreed.

No final decision has been taken by the Libraries NI Board on the location for its corporate functions.

### **Review of Public Administration**

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) for an update on his Department's implementation of the Review of Public Administration; (ii) if he is on target to meet the March 2011 RPA saving targets; and (iii) how staffing levels have been reduced as a result of RPA.

(AQW 4106/10)

#### **Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:**

The Department has successfully delivered its commitments to establish Libraries NI from 1 April 2009 and to transfer the functions of the Fisheries Conservancy into the Department from 1 June 2009. The remainder of the Department's commitments are largely on target to be achieved by May 2011. The Department is currently developing a Museums Policy for Northern Ireland that includes reviewing how best the functions of the Northern Ireland Museums Council can be achieved by March 2011.

The Department had RPA Savings targets of £600k in 09/10 and £1,200k in 10/11. These are on target to be achieved.

The establishment of Libraries NI has already delivered a reduction of 13 senior staff. Libraries NI plans to achieve a further reduction of around 25 staff in 2010, mainly in middle management grades.

Department of Education

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### **Burst Pipe Incidents**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Education to detail, since the start of December 2009, (i) the number of burst pipes which have occurred in (a) schools; and (b) other buildings owned by her Department; (ii) the number of such incidents where serious damage was caused to property; (iii) the nature and extent of the damage in each incident; and (iv) the estimated total cost of repairs associated with all burst pipe incidents.

(AQW 3799/10)

#### **Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane ):**

*Tá freagracht ar na boird oideachais agus leabharlainne, a sholáthar an t-eolas don fhreagra seo, as cothabháil agus cóiriú na scoileanna agus na bhfoirgneamh eile sna hearnálacha oideachais rialaithe agus faoi chothabháil.*

The maintenance and repair of schools and other buildings in the maintained and controlled education sectors is the responsibility of the education and library boards who have provided the information in this answer.

- (i) (a) 279 schools have been affected by burst pipes;
- (b) 34 other buildings have been affected by burst pipes;
  
- (ii) In 18 incidents serious damage has been caused to property;
  
- (iii) The nature and extent is typified by damage caused to ceilings, light fittings, floor coverings, walls, kitchen repairs, burst underground pipes and frozen heating circuits causing radiators to split.
  
- (iv) The estimated total cost of repairs is £247,500.

### **Education and Skills Authority**

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Education what discussions she has had with her Ministerial colleagues since December 2009 about the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 3884/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Is eol go forleathan, áfach, go bhfuil na saincheisteanna a éiríonn as leasuithe a bhí leagtha amach ag Oifig na mBillí faoi réir comhfhreagrais ó chomhghleacaithe an Choiste Fheidhmiúcháin. D'iarr mé go sceidealófar na saincheisteanna seo chun plé a dhéanamh orthu ag tábla an Choiste Fheidhmiúcháin chomh luath agus is féidir.*

It is widely known that the issues arising from amendments that have been laid in the Bill Office are the subject of correspondence with Executive colleagues. I have asked for these issues to be scheduled for discussion around the Executive table at the earliest opportunity.

You will also be aware that many of these issues have been discussed publicly for over a year since the Bill moved to the Committee for Education in December 2008. Their resolution ultimately rests with the Executive Committee. My officials and I have worked diligently with the Committee, with a wider range of stakeholders including Ministerial colleagues throughout this time to secure agreement to all the issues which attend to implementing the Executive's agreed policy on implementing the RPA proposals.

Regrettably, the delay in progressing the Bill means that the benefits of establishing a unitary authority, generating millions of pounds of annual savings and improving the service available to pupils will not be realised as quickly as we had hoped. I trust the Member will support me in calling for early progress on these matters and the rapid enactment of the Bill.

**Inappropriate Relationships between Teachers and Pupils**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Education the number of inappropriate relationships (i) sexual; and (ii) other between teachers and school pupils recorded in each of the last five years, broken down by gender of teacher.

(AQW 3935/10)

**Minister of Education:**

The protection of children and young people is of paramount importance and schools have a very particular and significant role to play in this safeguarding task.

*Ní choinníonn mo Roinn an t-eolas a iarradh. Ní mór déileáil le gach líomhain, áfach, maidir le gaolmhaireacht neamhoiriúnach idir foireann scoile agus daltaí i gcomhréir le treoir reatha, mar bheart araíonachta nó mar tharchur chuig na gníomhaíochtaí imscrúdaithe, más iad sin seirbhísí sóisialta nó na péas.*

My Department does not hold the requested information. However, all allegations of inappropriate relationships between schools' staff and pupils must be dealt with in line with current guidance, as a disciplinary matter or as a referral to the investigating agencies, either social services or the police.

Records of allegations made about schools' staff and the action taken are held at school level. Where the allegation of an inappropriate relationship is made against a member of staff, in addition to the normal reporting arrangements at the time to the investigating agencies, a separate record must also be kept of all allegations made and the action taken and presented to the Board of Governors for scrutiny once per year. The Department does not collect information from individual schools about any allegations of child abuse.

### **Area Based Planning**

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent to date on Area Based Planning in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 3980/10)

#### **Minister of Education:**

To date spending on area-based planning has been limited to the exercise taken forward by Adeline Dinsmore and colleagues to explore the efficient and effective delivery of the Entitlement Framework on an area basis and which resulted in the publication of the "Together Towards Entitlement" Report. Total cost of the exercise, which took place between March 2008 and November 2009, including publication of the report and dissemination of the findings was £136,000. This was a central initiative and costs were not incurred on an education and library board basis.

*Faoi Athbhreithniú ar Riarachán Poiblí, beidh pleanáil cheantar-bhunaithe faoi chúram an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna. Tá an dréachtreachtaíocht i dtaca leis an ghné seo faoi réir mionscrúdaithe réamhreachtaigh ón Choiste Oideachais.*

Under the Review of Public Administration, area-based planning will become the operational responsibility of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). The draft legislation relating to this aspect is currently the subject of pre-legislative scrutiny by the Committee for Education.

Spending on area-based planning in future years will be dependent on its roll out following the establishment of the ESA and will be contained within planning budgets for that organisation.

### **Area Based Planning**

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has set aside for Area Based Planning in the next three years.

(AQW 3981/10)

**Minister of Education:**

To date spending on area-based planning has been limited to the exercise taken forward by Adeline Dinsmore and colleagues to explore the efficient and effective delivery of the Entitlement Framework on an area basis and which resulted in the publication of the “Together Towards Entitlement” Report. Total cost of the exercise, which took place between March 2008 and November 2009, including publication of the report and dissemination of the findings was £136,000. This was a central initiative and costs were not incurred on an education and library board basis.

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Under the Review of Public Administration, area-based planning will become the operational responsibility of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). The draft legislation relating to this aspect is currently the subject of pre-legislative scrutiny by the Committee for Education.

Spending on area-based planning in future years will be dependent on its roll out following the establishment of the ESA and will be contained within planning budgets for that organisation.

### **Specialist Schools**

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on specialist schools since they were introduced; and how much has been set aside for these schools in the next two years.

(AQW 3983/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Ó ainmníodh saincoileanna den chéad uair i mí Mheán Fómhair 2006, tá £12,690, 700 leithdháilte ag mo Roinn. Meastar go mbeidh £5.55 milliún breise de dhíth go mí Lúnasa 2011 nuair a chríochnaíonn Clár na Saincoileanna.*



Since Specialist Schools were first designated in September 2006, my Department has allocated a total of £12,690,700. It is estimated a further £5.55 million will be required until August 2011 when the current Specialist Schools programme comes to an end.

### Transfer Tests

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Education to detail the cost of (i) design; (ii) administration; and (iii) marking of transfer tests set by the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, in the three years prior to their abolition.

(AQW 3988/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Go dtí 2008/09, bhí an Scrúdú Aistrithe faoi riarachán an Chomhairle Churaclaim, Scrúduithe agus Measúnachta (CCSM) thar ceann na Roinne. Sholáthar CCSM na figiúirí thíos.*

Until 2008/09, the Transfer Test was administered on behalf of the Department by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

The figures below have been provided by CCEA.

**Transfer Test Costs 2006/07 - 2008/09**

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	£	£	£
<b>Design</b>	<b>210,882</b>	<b>202,806</b>	<b>203,464</b>
<b>Administration</b>			
Question Paper Production	36,651	42,317	24,145
Distribution	30,000	30,000	30,000
Staff	46,730	43,064	41,772
	<b>113,382</b>	<b>115,381</b>	<b>95,917</b>
<b>Marking</b>	<b>153,951</b>	<b>143,893</b>	<b>154,286</b>
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>478,214</b>	<b>462,079</b>	<b>453,668</b>

## Primary and Secondary School Enrolment

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the most recent projected figures for primary and secondary enrolment until 2020; and (ii) when the research was last updated.

(AQW 3989/10)

### Minister of Education:

*Tá líon réamh-mheasta na bpaistí a bheidh ar aois éigeantach bhunscoile agus iar-bhunscoile go dtí 2010 liostaithe thíos. Glacadh na figiúirí*

*ó réamh-mheastacháin daonra na Gníomhaireachta Staidrimh agus Taighde a rinneadh sa bhliain 2008 agus a foilsíodh i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2009.*

Projected numbers of children of compulsory primary and post-primary school age until 2020 are listed below. The figures are taken from 2008-based NISRA population projections which were published in October 2009.

Year	Children Aged 4-9	Children Aged 11-15
2009	159590	123312
2010	159469	122396
2011	161219	120840
2012	164724	118593
2013	167993	115888
2014	171168	113902
2015	173514	112593
2016	175293	113380
2017	176731	114722
2018	177135	117093
2019	176351	120684
2020	175791	123317

Source: NISRA population projections (2008 based).

Note:

1. Age is at 30 June each year and relates to the total projected persons of that age.
2. Children aged 4 - 10 taken as of compulsory primary school age, ie, in Year 1- 7.
3. Children aged 11 - 15 taken as of compulsory post-primary school age, ie, in Year 8 - 12.

The department also uses NISRA population projections to model projected numbers by school type up until 2015/16. The figures are published on the DE website

### **Post Graduate Certificate in Education**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to ensure that the Post Graduate Certificate in Education is recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland.

(AQW 4003/10)

#### **Minister of Education:**

*Le bheith in ann a theagasc i ndeisceart na hÉireann, ní mór do shealbhóirí cháilíocht múinteoireachta a chlárú le Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta na hÉireann agus an táille iomchuí a íoc ar dtús. Ní mór dóibh siúd a bhfuil cáilíocht acu nach bhfuil ar liosta faofa Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta na hÉireann tústáille iarratais a íoc le go measfar a gcáilíocht le haghaidh aitheantais.*

In order to teach in the south of Ireland, holders of a teaching qualification first need to register with the Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI) and pay an appropriate fee. Those holding a qualification which is not on the TCI's approved list must pay an additional initial application fee in order to have their qualification assessed for recognition.

It is a matter for individual institutions to apply to the TCI to have their degree and/or PGCE programmes recognised for registration purposes and added to the TCI's approved list. It is, however, for the TCI to determine whether a qualification meets the pedagogical and curricular requirements in the south or whether additional training is required.

I am aware that certain courses provided by the University of Ulster are already on the TCI's approved list of qualifications, and Queen's University Belfast have advised that they are currently exploring this issue with the TCI in relation to their PGCE programmes. In this context, I have asked my officials to write to all of the local Initial Teacher Education providers to request that they consider seeking formal recognition of their courses where appropriate. However, ultimately, this will be a decision for each providing institution in the north.

### **Interim Education and Library Boards**

**Mr M Storey** asked the Minister of Education what steps she has taken to appoint councillors to the interim Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 4046/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Tá na próisis le haghaidh roghnaithe agus ceapacháin faoi shiúl chun baill a cheapadh ar na Boird le linn na hidirthréimhse roimh bhunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna. Thug mé cuireadh do gach Comhairle ainmniúcháin chomhairleoirí a chur isteach a bheadh toilteanach a fhónamh ar na poist a raibh le fáil ina gceantair Bhoird faoi seach le linn na hidirthréimhse.*

***Selection and appointment processes are underway to appoint members to the Boards during the transitional period up to the establishment of ESA. I invited each Council*** to submit nominations of councillors who would be willing to serve during the transitional period for the posts available in their respective Board areas. In line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance, there will be an eligibility sift of the application forms from Councillors and ‘conversations with a purpose’ will be held with eligible candidates to confirm and validate the suitability of candidates for the post. The decision on those who will be appointed will be made by me taking into account that each Board’s membership is balanced in terms of diversity of skills and experience.

Until the transitional arrangements are fully in place, I have extended the terms of office of some existing members in each of the four Boards from 1 January ***from the Transferors, Trustees and the General Member (Teacher) categories of board member.***

**Decline in School Population**

**Mr J McCallister** asked the Minister of Education to provide a comparison of the actual percentage decline in (i) the primary school; and (ii) secondary school population since 2004 against the percentage decline projected in the Costello Report, taking into account the rise in birth rates since 2000 and increased immigration.

(AQW 4065/10)

**Minister of Education:** *Déanann an tábla thíos comparáid idir athruithe céadatáin i ndaonra iar-bhunscoile, mar a tuaradh i dTuairisc Chostello 2004, ‘Socruithe Todhchaí Iar-bhunscoile i dtuaisceart na hÉireann’ agus figiúirí iarbhíre.*

The table below compares projected percentage changes in post primary school population, as projected in the 2004 Costello Report, ‘Future post-primary arrangements in the north of Ireland’, with actual figures

**Percentage change in post-primary school enrolments from 2002/03 (actuals and 2002 based projections)**

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
<b>Projected (2002based)</b>	-1%	-2%	-4%	-5%	-7%	-7%	-8%

<b>Actuals</b>	0%	-1%	-3%	-4%	-5%	-5%	-5%
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Source: School Census.

Note: excludes pupils in special units.

The Costello Report did not project primary school enrolments over the same period. The table below shows the percentage change in Year 1 – 7 enrolments in primary schools from 2002/03.

**Percentage change in Year 1 - 7 enrolments in primary schools from 2002/03**

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
<b>Percentage Change</b>	-1%	-3%	-4%	-5%	-6%	-7%	-8%

Source: School Census.

Note: excludes pupils in special units.

### **Education Bill**

**Mr F Cobain** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the Education Bill.

(AQO 624/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Ag tús mhí Dheireadh Fómhair 2009, iarradh ar an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin breithniú a dhéanamh ar an seasamh i dtaca le leasuithe a mhol an Coiste Oideachais, a mhol comhaltaí den Tionól agus a mhol mise, mar Aire. Go dtí seo, níor cuireadh an mhír sin ar sceideal gnó an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin le haghaidh a mbreithníthe.*

**The Executive was asked at the beginning of October 2009 to consider its position on amendments proposed by the Committee for Education, members of the Assembly and myself, as Minister. To date, that item has not been scheduled for Executive consideration. I will ask the Business Committee to schedule the Consideration Stage of the Bill as soon as the Executive's position on amendments is decided.**

Whilst I am disappointed at the delay in completing these important reforms, I remain committed to Raising Standards, increasing efficiency and inclosing the attainment gap between the best and the lowest performing schools.

Until the Bill is enacted I have put in place interim arrangements to safeguard the services and resources for which the existing bodies have responsibility.

I, nevertheless, remain concerned that the progress we need to make in delivering world class education to all our pupils is held up by the delay in enacting the legislation.

### **Schools: Capital Projects**

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Education what impact her review of all capital projects has had on schools' capital spending plans.

(AQO 625/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Go dtí seo, ní dheachaigh an t-athbhreithniú ar gach tionscadal caipitil i gcion ar dhul chun cinn phleananna caiteachais chaipitiúla. Tá an t-athbhreithniú leanúnach agus tá m'fheidhmeannaigh ag bailiú na fianaise ábhartha go léir.*

To date, the review of all capital projects has not impacted on the progress of any capital spending plans. The review is ongoing and my officials are currently assembling all relevant evidence.

The review is designed to ensure that the reshaping of our schools estate and any subsequent investment plans are consistent with and supportive of the policy framework I have put in place to promote equality and target social disadvantage.

As Minister for Education, I need to ensure, particularly in the current economic climate, that the available resources are used to secure the best outcomes for children and maximum value for the taxpayer

I want to make sure that the right type of schools are in the right place and I believe review of all current capital projects will ensure that there is viable and sustainable provision which supports the delivery of high quality education for all young people.

### **Post Primary Education in East Antrim**

**Mr S Neeson** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to develop post-primary education facilities further in East Antrim.

(AQO 626/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Tá freagracht ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne agus Comhairle na Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil as pleanáil eastáit na scoileanna faoi láthair ach beidh freagracht ar an Údarás um Oideachas agus Scoileanna asti go luath faoi mo bheartais choinbhéirseachta.*

The planning of the schools estate is currently the responsibility of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) in the first instance. Under my convergence plans it will shortly become the responsibility of the Education and Skills Authority in the first instance, with the Department of Education retaining ultimate responsibility for all planning and investment.

Proposed major capital works schemes for a number of post primary schools in the East Antrim area are at Economic Appraisal stage. These include Belfast High School, Carrickfergus Grammar and Carrickfergus College, Larne High School and the newly formed St Killian's College.

My Department and the Education and Skills Authority will assess all proposed major works projects in the context of the Sustainable Schools Policy and area based planning, as well as within the Department's wider policy framework ensuring the promotion of equality and targeting of social disadvantage.

### **Department of Education Budget**

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister of Education if she can provide an assurance that the £73 million cut to her departmental budget, in addition to existing budgetary pressures, will not, as far as possible, impact on front-line services.

(AQO 627/10)

**Minister of Education:** *Tá mé ag breathnú faoi láthair ar roghanna le coigiltí breise atá riachtanach a sholáthar ón bhuiséad oideachais. Is substaintiúil atá scála na gcoigiltí breise atá le déanamh, agus beidh sé dúshlánach iad a sholáthar ar bhealach a íoslaghdaíonn an éifeacht ar sheirbhísí tosaigh -ach is é sin é a bheidh mé ag iarraidh a dhéanamh.*

I am currently considering options for delivering the additional savings required from the education budget. The scale of the additional savings to be found is substantial and presents a significant challenge to deliver in a way that minimises the impact on front line services - but that is what I will be seeking to do. A key issue for me will be to ensure action is taken to reduce excessive bureaucracy. We had already been planning on the basis of securing some £13 million through the establishment of ESA and that funding is already out of the Education budget. The longer the establishment of ESA is delayed the longer it will take to deliver these savings and that without question will impact on other areas. I have written to the Education Committee seeking their views on how savings can be achieved. In terms of equality my

officials will carry out an equality assessment on each of the proposals and no decisions will be made until this process has been completed.

### **Glastry College, Newtownards**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Education if she is aware that Glastry College, Newtownards was over-subscribed by 57 pupils this year, and to explain why two meetings scheduled by her Department to discuss a new build for Glastry College have been cancelled.

(AQO 628/10)

**Minister of Education:** The popularity of any school is most appropriately measured by the number of parents expressing a first preference on the Transfer Form for that school. Figures provided by the South Eastern Education and Library Board show that for admission to year 8 in September 2009, Glastry College received 107 first preference applications relative to an approved admissions number of 110 and so the College was not oversubscribed at first preference stage.

*Maidir le ceist an fhoirgnimh nua do Glastry College is féidir liom a chur in iúl go bhfuil Comhairleoirí Teicniúla na Roinne Oideachais i dteagmháil le hoifigigh i mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt i dtaca le pleanáil na scoile nua agus bhuail siad leo ar roinnt ócáidí le míonna beaga anuas le plé a dhéanamh ar na ceisteanna éagsúla pleanála.*

On the issue of a new build for Glastry College I can advise you that the Department of Education's Technical Advisers have been liaising very closely with SEELB officials in respect of the planning of the new school and indeed have met with them on a number of occasions in recent months to discuss various planning issues. Further meetings were requested by the SEELB but in light of the need for the Economic Appraisal (EA) for Glastry College to be updated, it was considered that further meetings should be deferred until this work has been completed.

### **School Maintenance**

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has allocated for school maintenance in 2010/11.

(AQO 629/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Tá an buiséad don bhliain 2010-11 faoi bhreithniú faoi láthair agus ní dhearnadh aon chinneadh air go dtí seo.*



The budget for 2010-11 is currently under consideration and no decisions have been taken at this point in time.

### **Grammar School Admissions**

**Mr R McCartney** asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the continuing 'grade drift' in grammar school admissions.

(AQO 630/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Is é Aistriú 2010 beartas mo Roinne ar aistriú iar-bhunoideachais agus tá córas i bhfeidhm againn anois nach bhfuil áit don roghnú acadúil ann. Léiríonn an fhianaise ón scrúdú státurraithe deireanach go bhfuil mórán scoileanna gramadaí ag múineadh do dhaltaí a bhfuil réimse leathan ábaltachta acu.*

Transfer 2010 is my Department's policy on post-primary transfer and we are putting in place a system that puts equality and equal opportunities for every child at the core.

Evidence from the final state-sponsored transfer test illustrates clearly that many grammar schools are already educating pupils of a broad range of ability.

Not one grammar school admitted exclusively A Grade pupils, and eight grammar schools had intakes where at least half of the pupils admitted obtained a Grade B2 or lower.

Despite a declining school population, grammar schools have continued to fill to their capacity, admitting pupils with lower transfer test grades who would previously have been admitted to secondary schools. In doing so, grammar schools have become less and less academically exclusive.

Only through the abandonment and rejection of academic selection can grammar schools provide true equality for prospective pupils.

For a full picture on the grade profile of grammar schools I would refer the Member to my reply to AQW 3385/10 published in the official report on 11 December 2009.

### **Early Years Strategy**

**Mrs M Bradley** asked the Minister of Education when the 0-6 Years strategy will be published.

(AQO 631/10)

**Minister of Education:**

*Tá sé ar intinn ag mo Roinn Straitéis Luath-Bhlianta (0-6) a fhoilsiú le haghaidh comhairlithe go luath sa Gheimhreadh sa bhliain 2010.*

**My Department intends to publish the Early Years (0-6) Strategy for consultation in early Spring 2010.**

**Special Educational Needs: Expulsions**

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Education how many children with special educational needs have been expelled in each of the last five years and what percentage this represented of the total children expelled.

(AQO 632/10)

**Minister of Education:**

The application of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 5-stage approach to behaviour management was set out in 'Promoting and Sustaining Good Behaviour; A Discipline Strategy for Schools'. The strategy placed an emphasis on early intervention and on progressively more intensive support as necessary leading, where appropriate, to a Statement of special educational needs because of behavioural difficulties. The first 3 stages are based in the school, calling as necessary on external specialists; at Stages 4 and 5 the Board shares responsibility with schools. It is only at Stage 5 that a pupil has a Statement of special educational needs. In the 2008/09 school year, there were 60,520 pupils at Stages 1 – 5 of the Code of Practice, which represents 18.3% of the school population.

The decision to expel pupils, including those on the Code of Practice, must only be in response to very serious breaches of the school's discipline policy, and normally as a final step when all other alternative strategies have been tried and have failed.

*Bailíonn mo Roinn staitisticí ar dhaltáí a díbríodh ón scoil ó na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne gach bliain; ach tá an méid iomlán neamhsheasmhach agus níor chóir amharc air mar dhea-tháscaire d'iompar daltaí.*

My Department collects expulsion statistics annually from the Education and Library Boards; however the overall total is volatile and should not be regarded as a good indicator of pupil behaviour. A single major incident in a school resulting in multiple expulsions could create the impression of a serious deterioration.

During the course of the last five years 223 pupils were expelled, of which 89 were at Stages 1-5 of the SEN Code of Practice. Figures in relation to the 2008/09 were published last week and, to put these in context, out of a population of just over 280,000 (actual 280,127), there were 36 expulsions. 22 of these pupils were on the SEN Code of Practice, which represents 0.008% of the relevant school population and 0.04% of the number of pupils on the SEN Code of Practice. In the previous four years, the number of pupils expelled were 25 (2007/08), 45 (2006/07), 54 (2005/06) and 63 (2004/05). Of these pupils, 11 (2007/08), 18 (2006/07), 16 (2005/06) and 22 (2004/05) respectively were on the SEN Code of Practice.

Department for Employment and Learning

## **DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING**

### **Disciplinary Action**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many times disciplinary action has been taken against (i) lecturers; (ii) other teaching staff in (a) universities; (b) other further or higher education institutions; and (iii) the nature of the offences and sanctions imposed in each of the last 10 years, broken down by institution.

(AQW 3724/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey):**

The information requested has been placed in the library.

You may wish to note that the information provided for a number of the institutions is either absent or incomplete as those institutions remove disciplinary information from their records once the warning has expired.

### **Transferring Students from Jordanstown to Magee**

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if the University of Ulster has considered transferring students from the Jordanstown Campus to Magee campus; and if not, to explain why the issue has not been considered.

(AQW 3761/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

The University of Ulster has stated that while, as part of its academic planning processes, it keeps the nature and campus location of its course provision under review, it does not currently have plans to transfer any courses.

You may wish to note that almost 40% of the University's students at the Jordanstown campus are completing their courses by part-time study and this is an important part of the University's widening access policy. The University advises that these students are taught by the same staff and use the same facilities as the full-time students, often sharing classes. Therefore, in transferring courses, the University must consider its part-time students who cannot realistically be expected to travel to the Coleraine or Magee campuses.

I can advise, however, that the University is in the process of introducing three new courses at the Magee campus, comprising two at undergraduate level and one at postgraduate level, in areas where there is a high level of demand and which will provide further opportunities for both full-time and part-time students at the Magee Campus.

**Northern Ireland Science Park Foundation**

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) what procedures were followed by the University of Ulster in August 2005 when it returned the £4.5 million received from the Northern Ireland Science Park Foundation in 2003 to support Science Park activities at the Coleraine and Magee campuses; (ii) what decision-making processes were followed in deciding to abort the Science Park project; (iii) to indicate if (a) local councils; (b) local politicians; (c) the general public; (d) staff in the university; (e) the University Senate; or (f) the University Council, were informed of the decision; and (iv) in what format they were informed of or involved in the decision.

(AQW 3763/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

This question relates to a matter between the University and the Northern Ireland Science Park and, as such, my Department does not hold, or have access to the requested information.

### **Redunancies: West Tyrone**

**Mr A Bresland** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking in response to recent redundancies in the West Tyrone constituency.

(AQO 637/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The Department has provided information and advice to those made redundant in West Tyrone to help them find alternative employment or improve their skills through the Department's employment, training and further education programmes. Jobs & Benefits staff delivered on-site clinics to those who had received notice of redundancy. All redundant workers who attended Jobs & Benefits offices or JobCentres received the full range of employment and careers services.

An awareness event outlining the Department's services will be held in Omagh on 17 February. This is one of a series of events targeted at local councillors and business representatives.

### **Student Fees**

**Mr F McCann** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the final report on the review of Student Fees will be published.

(AQO 638/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

**I have received an interim report from Joanne Stuart, independent chairperson of the review of variable fees and student finance arrangements. I am very grateful for all the hard work that Joanne has undertaken.**

**The chairperson is now finalising this report to take account of further key data on enrolments published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010.**

**I expect to receive the chairperson's final report in the next few weeks. It will then be brought**

before the Committee for Employment and Learning in advance of a public consultation exercise, at which stage it will be published.

### **People not in Education, Employment or Training**

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his Department's plans to reduce the number of people not in education, employment or training.

(AQO 639/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:** The Department has almost completed a Scoping study to learn more about those who are not in education, employment or training. Any action plan or strategy resulting from this study will need to be carried forward on a cross-departmental basis and with this in mind I intend to bring the results of this work to my Executive colleagues for consideration. Much work is already being done by the statutory and voluntary sectors to help the life chances of these young people. I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of Barnardos and address those attending their important event last December which highlighted the key issues facing all of us who have a role to play.

### **University of Ulster: Magee Campus**

**Ms M Anderson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his consideration of the Magee Strategic Development Plan; and whether he is prepared to bid for the additional resources required to increase the Maximum Student Number cap.

(AQO 640/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

The University has submitted a Strategic Outline Case for the Magee Strategic Development Plan. This is required under the revised guidance for economic appraisals issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The Strategic Outline Case is currently being considered by economists within my Department and clarification on a number of issues has been sought from the university.

I have already stated that my Department would consider working with the University to develop funding bids for expansion at Magee in the context of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. The potential costs of expanding student numbers at Magee will, however, need to be considered in line with other Departmental priorities. Each additional 1,000 students costs approximately £8 million per annum.

I will also need to take into account the contribution of the North West Regional College where 12% of the current intake, in academic year 2009/10, are studying at higher education level.

In 2007/08 the number of students from the North West region, enrolled on a full-time undergraduate course at a Higher Education Institution in the UK, as a percentage of the 18 to 21 year old population in the North West region is around 4-5% higher than the percentage from NI as a whole.

### **Economic Policy**

**Mr A McFarland** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department has sought to obtain feedback from councils and business representatives in different parts of Northern Ireland on the effectiveness of his Department's response to the economic downturn.

(AQO 641/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

I am currently carrying out a series of awareness raising events aimed at highlighting the services available from my Department. These events are targeted at local businesses and elected representatives in the six Workforce Development Forum regions. The first event was held in Londonderry before Christmas and was well attended and well received. The Department has held a number of JobFairs and advice forums as part of its response to the economic downturn, formal and informal feedback is requested from all attendees.

### **Portrush: Catering College Site**

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the development of the site of the former Catering College in Portrush.

(AQO 642/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

The site and buildings of the former catering college in Portrush are owned by the University of Ulster. The University advised in July 2009 that these were surplus to requirements and that planning permission for residential use had been obtained. It was proposed that the site be offered for sale at an appropriate time with all proceeds being reinvested in the University's core business. The University of Ulster has advised me that the position has not changed.

In July 2009 the site had already been decommissioned. To reduce security and health and safety risks, and associated costs, the University had proposed that the buildings be demolished. The University has advised me that the demolition of the buildings is now complete.

### **Universities: Funding**

**Mr T Clarke** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he intends to cut funding for universities, given the funding cuts to universities in Great Britain.

(AQO 643/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**

Subject to the outcome of the consultation process and following decisions of the Executive, I intend to at least maintain current levels of revenue funding as far as possible.

### **North West Lifelong Learning Association**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much financial support his Department has provided to the North West Life Long Learning facility in the last two years.

(AQO 644/10)

**Minister for Employment and Learning:**



NorthWest Lifelong Learning Association's *Skills 4Service Project* is funded by the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2007-13, which is managed by my Department. Funding commenced in April 2008, and in the 2008/09 financial year the Association was paid £108,000, of which £66,461 came from the European Social Fund and the remainder from my Department. To date, in the current financial year the project has been paid £128,258, of which £78,930 came from the European Social Fund and the remainder from the Department. In addition, a total of £3,825 has been paid to the Association as an Employer subsidy under the New Deal programme, during the current financial year.

### **DEL Budget**

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the impact of the proposed cuts to his budget, following the recent statement from the Minister of Finance and Personnel.

(AQO 646/10)

#### **Minister for Employment and Learning:**

My Department will take forward a range of measures to deliver the additional savings of £19.7million current expenditure and £9.0million capital investment next year agreed by the Executive. As part of the Budget 2008-11 process the current expenditure baseline increased by £49m in 2010/11 and wherever possible the savings have been targeted at these growth monies, in order to protect the existing 2009/10 level of provision. These savings derive from smaller than planned increases and greater efficiencies in higher education funding and a review of priorities in both employment support programmes and the further education sector. In addition, outcomes achieved from current levels of support to external organisations will be examined with a view to achieving the same with less. The capital savings are being realised from changes in the level of funding for infrastructure in higher education.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

### **Arntz Belting site in Derry**

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the Arntz Belting site in Derry is subject to any covenants on usage or occupation ; and to detail the nature of any such

conditions.

(AQW 3822/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):** Invest NI no longer has any controlling interest in the estate or the sites therein. Invest NI's predecessor, the Industrial Development Board, sold the freehold of the Arntz Belting site in 1994 in line with prevailing Government policy at the time. Invest NI therefore has no record of any covenants or controls which may currently apply on the usage of the site.

### **Flights Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of flights booked for Civil Servants in her 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 3967/10)

#### **Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

Financial Year	Number of Flights Booked	Cost	Loss of Revenue
2005-06	18	£2,392	£352
2006-07	18	£2,060	£856
2007-08	12	£858	£285
2008-09	15	£6,194	£1,174
2009-10 To Date	12	£2,204	£29
Total	75	£13,708	£2,696

### **Hotels Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of nights in hotels booked for Civil Servants in her 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 3968/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

Financial Year	Number of Hotel Nights Booked	Cost	Loss of Revenue
2005-06	5	£464	£120
2006-07	6	£1,071	£0
2007-08	3	£648	£0
2008-09	14	£3,572	£1,497
2009-10 To Date	5	£1,128	£1,000
Total	33	£6,883	£2,617

**Off-Shore Wind Farms**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department has taken since 2007 to develop off-shore wind farms.

(AQW 4004/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

DETI has undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of its draft Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan 2009-2020 to develop offshore wind and marine renewables in Northern Ireland waters. The draft Plan and the SEA have been issued for consultation and, when finalised in Spring 2010, will form the framework within which The Crown Estate can issue a call for offshore wind and marine renewable energy projects in Northern Ireland waters in 2010-2011.

**Tidal Energy Resources**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department has set targets for the amount of electricity generated from tidal energy resources; and if she intends to review these targets.

(AQW 4006/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** DETI is currently consulting on a draft Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan 2009-2020 to develop offshore wind and marine renewables in Northern Ireland waters. This draft Plan has proposed a target of 300 MW of tidal energy by 2020. This target will be reviewed in light of the consultation feedback prior to the finalisation of the Plan in Spring 2010.

### **Broadband Speeds**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 3333/10, to detail the current broadband speeds available at the 166 telephone exchanges; and what speed will be available after the proposed upgrade.

(AQW 4050/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

All of the BT exchanges listed in AQW 3333/10 can currently deliver speeds of at least 8 Megabits per second (Mbps). Once the investment roll-out phase of the next generation broadband contract has been completed all 166 exchanges will be delivering a minimum of 24Mbps. However, in each instance, the actual speeds experienced by many customers will be less than that available at the exchange because of the significant effect distance has on broadband speeds. It is also the case that significantly higher speeds can be provided from all these exchanges should customers require these services and be willing to pay the appropriate charges.

## **Fuel Tsar**

**Dr A McDonnell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, following the overwhelming support in the Belfast Telegraph poll for the establishment of a Fuel Tsar, what plans she has to set up a regulatory body to protect consumers and to ensure that oil suppliers operate an open, transparent and fair pricing policy.

(AQW 4163/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department is committed to ensuring a diverse and competitive energy market and is working with the Utility Regulator to ensure electricity and gas costs are as low as possible. DETI agrees with the Regulator's assessment that regulation of the local oil industry would not protect Northern Ireland consumers from volatile movements in international oil prices. It remains unclear if significant benefit could be achieved by regulation and the creation of a Fuel Tsar, which would impose sizable regulatory costs on a competitive oil supply and distribution sector. This, in turn, would impact on the cost of fuel to business and domestic users. It is also important to note that neither Great Britain nor the Republic of Ireland regulates the oil sector.

DETI is committed to work with the Northern Ireland Consumer Council and the Utility Regulator to promote energy efficiency, and with DSD to reduce fuel poverty. As part of this process DETI has put in place voluntary agreements with the Northern Ireland Oil Federation and Federation of Petroleum Suppliers, who together represent most of the local large distributors, to encourage consumers to use energy more efficiently thereby reducing their fuel bills.

## **The Rural Economy**

**Mr P McGlone** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to improve investment, enterprise and employment opportunities in Mid-Ulster and other rural areas.

(AQO 657/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

My Department, through the support mechanisms provided by Invest NI, continues to actively assist business development projects in Mid-Ulster and across Northern Ireland.

Between 2002/03 and 2009/09, Invest NI made 1,825 offers of assistance to businesses in Mid-Ulster. These were valued at £38 million and have leveraged a total of £224 million of new investment in the constituency. They included support for both foreign and locally-owned companies such as Powerscreen, McCloskey International, SDC Trailers and the McEvoy Group.

My Department also continues to work closely with the councils in Mid-Ulster to identify locally based innovation, entrepreneurship and R&D projects that have the potential to be supported under the current European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme's Local Economic Development measure.

Of course there is much more that still needs to be done, and my Department remains fully committed to working in partnership with the councils and business bodies in Mid-Ulster to continue to support worthwhile economic development opportunities.

## **Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme**

**Mrs C McGill** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the role of the main banks in the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme.

(AQO 658/10)

### **Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

The Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme is a UK wide initiative of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. It provides participating banks with a 75% guarantee against loans to businesses. The decision to lend is entirely a matter for the banks concerned, based on their assessment of the proposal put forward by the business. The participating banks in Northern Ireland are Bank of Ireland, First Trust Bank, Northern Bank, Ulster Bank, Barclays, HSBC and Alliance & Leicester.

Details of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme and a general guide to accessing business finance, developed by the Institute of Directors, the British Bankers' Association and Invest Northern Ireland, are available on [nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk).

## **Gas Network**

**Mr T Buchanan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the extension of the gas network to western areas.

(AQO 659/10)

### **Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

The Department, in conjunction with the Utility Regulator, has commissioned consultants to undertake a study to determine the technical and economic feasibility of bringing natural gas to towns in the west and remaining areas of the north-west of Northern Ireland. The study is nearing completion and I expect to receive the report shortly.

## **Foreign Direct Investment**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that her Department will be limited in its ability to award capital grants for foreign direct investment in the future, what steps she is taking to ensure that there will be equality of opportunity across Northern Ireland to avail of such grants.

(AQO 660/10)

### **Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

Looking forward, the EU State Aid thresholds for the use of Selective Assistance to industry in Northern Ireland will gradually decline until the scheme comes to an end in 2013. However, in my recent statement

to the Assembly on the Independent Review of Economic Development Policy (IREP), I signalled my intention to ensure that a strong case is made for a new scheme post 2013.

In the interim, DETI, through Invest NI, will continue to use its resources to help rebuild the economy in the immediate aftermath of the recession, both to encourage export-led growth in locally-owned companies and to attract new inward investment. In the short term this may require ongoing financial assistance to support employment, and before the ability to use SFA comes to an end.

The issue of how financial assistance is allocated is an issue that I am frequently asked about, in particular as to why one location as opposed to another benefits from an investment. That is why I instructed the IREP Panel to specifically consider the issue of the sub-regional distribution of inward investment, and particularly, my Department's ability to influence this. As expected the Panel concluded that there is little that can be done to influence specific location decisions and that companies must be allowed to locate where they generate the highest investment returns.

Lastly, and to conclude, financial assistance is available to all companies with eligible and viable projects that meet additionality and value for money thresholds.

#### **INTERREG IV**

**Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many projects within her Department are being held up by the delay in funding from Interreg IV.

(AQO 661/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

DETI continues to work closely with the Special EU Programmes Body, the Managing Authority for the INTERREG IVA programme, to expedite applications under the Enterprise and Tourism themes.

I can advise that no projects are currently being delayed within DETI.

#### **The Green Economy**

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to promote a green economy in the next financial year.

(AQO 662/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:**

I chair a cross departmental working group which amongst other things, is looking at the opportunities to maximise the economic benefits offered by sustainable energy in particular.

Invest NI is leading this work and during the next year will continue to offer a range of activities to promote the Green Economy.

Budget and approvals permitting these will include funding resource efficiency programmes such as the Carbon Trust, which aim to deliver economic benefits through waste prevention/minimisation and by encouraging the use of sustainable energy and clean technologies.

Likewise consultancy support will be available to business for scoping or implementing sustainable development projects, along with advice and information on sustainable energy solutions from Invest NI's Sustainable Development Team.

Invest NI will continue to be actively engaged in the development of the renewables sector in Northern Ireland through designated resources to identify business opportunities within the sector and to build awareness of these within local industry.

Over the coming months my Department will also be working closely with colleagues in OFMDFM to provide input into the Draft Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan, and in doing so, will seek to ensure the realisation of the full potential that exists in promoting a Sustainable Economy.

Department of the Environment

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Review of Public Administration**

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on the Review of Public Administration and councils re-organisation.

(AQW 3886/10)

**Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots):** The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which includes provisions to make preliminary arrangements for local government reorganisation was introduced to the Assembly on 22 June 2009. The Bill has completed its Committee Stage and will proceed to Consideration Stage in the next few weeks.

It is proposed that policy proposals for the reorganisation of local government will be taken forward in the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill, which is currently with the Executive. Subject to Executive agreement, the proposals will be issued for consultation as soon as possible.

The PwC economic appraisal was published back in October and the Strategic Leader Board considered the responses to the appraisal at its meeting on 9 December.

The preferred option (Transformation with Regional Collaboration – Option 5) recommended by the Economic Appraisal will:

Realise the vision of strong local government in Northern Ireland with 11 new councils working to ensure positive outcomes for citizens, communities and businesses; and opting to collaborate with each other locally or regionally.



This option provides the opportunity to deliver a world-class, cutting-edge, effective, efficient and value-for-money system of local government in Northern Ireland.

In response to the Stakeholder Engagement on the report, from across the local government sector, some concerns were raised in relation to the proposed Business Service Organisation. I have therefore, requested that local government, through NILGA, put forward an alternative solution to the proposed Business Service Organisation with the intention of discussing this new option in detail at the next Strategic Leadership Board on 25 February 2010. With regards to the Single Waste Disposal Authority this has been supported in principle subject to a detailed business case.

I have had initial discussions with the Finance Minister to explore the implementation and longer-term funding options. I feel there is a reasonable case to be made that the funding for the reform should come from both central and local government and have therefore asked the local government members of the Strategic Leadership Board to consider this and to give their views on what proportion of the costs set out in the PwC Report might be funded by local government. Once responses are received, I will consider them with all the other relevant information before putting detailed proposals to the Executive as early as possible.

I have also considered the Final Recommendations Report of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and have circulated a paper to Executive colleagues for consideration. Subject to their agreement, the Final Report, draft Local Government (Boundaries) Order and a statement about modifications will be laid before the Assembly for consideration as soon as possible to allow elections to take place to the new local government districts in May 2011.

### **Windfarm Applications in North Antrim**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the windfarm applications in North Antrim that were submitted between 2005 and 2008 which are still in the planning system; (ii) the reason for the delays; and (iii) which applications are expected to be completed this year.

(AQW 3888/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** (i) Four applications were submitted in the North Antrim Constituency between 2005 and 2008 and are still in the system. They are:

G/2006/0754/F Elginny Hill (10 turbines, 20MW), G/2006/0842/F Rathsherry (9 turbines, 20MW), D/2006/0599/F Glenbuck 2 (3 turbines, 7MW) and D/2008/0404/F Corkey Extension (1 turbine, 2.5MW)

(ii) Windfarms raise complex policy and other issues as detailed in PPS 18. These applications are accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement which considers the likely significant

environmental effect of the proposals. In many cases, the information received has proved to be unsatisfactory and Further Environmental Information (FEI) needs to be submitted by the applicant.

(iii) The Elginny Hill and Rathsherry applications were the subjects of requests for substantial FEI and the applicants have submitted information which is currently under consideration. There is also a very high level of third party objections to these schemes. The Glenbuck 2 application has also been the subject of a FEI request. The information has only recently been received but is still unsatisfactory and the applicant has been asked to address this as a matter of urgency. The Corkey Extension application has been the subject of discussion with the Planning Service. To address the concerns of consultees, the applicant has been advised to withdraw the application and re-submit it. Failure to address the matters raised may result in a refusal of permission

It is anticipated that all four applications will be determined this year.

### **Habitat or Refuge for Wildfowl**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment if there is any financial assistance available for projects to create a habitat or refuge for wildfowl.

(AQW 3936/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) provides funding towards projects that conserve and enhance key elements of the environment and its wildlife through its Natural Heritage Grant Programme. Grant applications are assessed through an annual competition and grant awarded according to priority and budget.

Non-government organisations and district councils may apply for funding where the work is not covered by other government grant schemes. Applications from individuals will only be considered where the funding contributes directly to a habitat or species action plan or if there is direct public benefit meeting the objectives of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985.

NIEA supports a number of NGOs to manage sites which provide habitat and refuge for wildfowl.

### **Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the work he carried out at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

(AQW 3972/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** I was in Denmark for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to show my interest in the UN Climate Change conference. Secondly, I was there to visit energy from waste and recycling facilities as we are about to embark on the largest waste infrastructure development programme ever undertaken in Northern Ireland. The climate change and waste agendas are connected in that if we reduce landfill we will be reducing greenhouse gas emissions that are linked to climate change.

In terms of the UN Conference negotiations it was important for me, as the Environment Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive, to show support to UK negotiators in the very difficult task of securing agreement on reducing emissions globally.

In the run up to the event I had emphasised the need for any deal reached to be truly global. All countries must commit to tackling the problem, otherwise economic activity will just be displaced and there will be no overall benefit to the environment. In Copenhagen itself I was given a firsthand account of progress at the negotiations and afforded the opportunity to discuss my views directly with UK and devolved administration Ministers and officials. I also attended the Scottish Government's "Low Carbon Mission" event where I met with my Scottish and Welsh counterparts as well as a wide range of interested parties from all over the world.

Being able to link attendance at the conference with visits to a number of waste facilities confirmed for me the importance of the lessons countries such as Denmark have to teach us as we move towards establishing the network of new waste facilities Northern Ireland needs. The sites I visited included one of Denmark's twenty- nine energy from waste plants as well as recycling facilities, and provided ample proof that incineration facilities can be integrated effectively into local environments without adversely impacting on air quality or health. They also demonstrated that energy from waste plants are not the enemy of recycling but rather that a sophisticated and effective waste management system needs both. It will take a high level of investment by both local and central government to bring this about, and central government has already stepped up to the mark in this regard with a commitment of £200 million in the form of the Strategic Waste Infrastructure Fund. What will be important as we move forward is to ensure that we have an effective vehicle for delivery of the infrastructure, and I am happy to take this opportunity to endorse the work done to date in this regard by the three Waste Management Groups, while acknowledging the scale of the challenges that still lie ahead.

### **Offshore Wind-Farms**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department has taken in relation to developing offshore wind-farms since 2007.

(AQW 3974/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Department of the Environment is responsible for regulating construction activities within the marine environment. Planning permission is required for development up to the low water mark and a FEPA licence for construction from the high water mark.

In carrying out its regulatory functions the Department seeks to engage positively with those who bring forward proposals for all forms of low carbon energy production.

### **Spot Checks on Buses and Coaches**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 3115/10, if the spot checks carried out on buses and coaches during the reported period, from April 2007 to September 2009, were randomly selected or targeted.

(AQW 4010/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** During the period April 2007 to September 2009, the Driver & Vehicle Agency carried out spot checks on 903 buses and coaches resulting in 281 operators being reported with a view to prosecution. One of the Agency's strategic objectives is to reduce the number of illegal operators and vehicles using the roads through intelligence-led targeted enforcement. The 281 detections came from a combination of targeted operations, based on complaints from the bus industry and members of the public, or in relation to events that traditionally attract a large number of illegal operators and random selection by DVA enforcement staff.

### **Strategic Waste Management Board**

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister of the Environment what policies have been adopted by the Strategic Waste Management Board to ensure that land-fill waste disposal sites, selected by waste management groups, adhere to the laws for protected species.

(AQW 4035/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Strategic Waste Board is an advisory body established to oversee and monitor implementation of the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy. It is not part of its role to establish policies for the approval of landfill development proposals, this being a matter for the relevant statutory authorities, Planning Service and NIEA. It is the responsibility of the three district council Waste

Management Groups to identify the type, scale and locations for waste facilities within their areas, and to ensure that they comply with all statutory requirements.

### **Landfill Sites**

**Mr J Dallat** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) if he will review the capacity of land fill sites, given that the volume of waste has fallen; and (ii) what steps he intends to take to ensure that waste is disposed of locally.

(AQW 4036/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** In Northern Ireland District Councils are responsible for the management of controlled waste and it is they who decide what arrangements are appropriate for the disposal of waste within their area. In developing their approach consideration is given to the need for, siting and capacity of landfill sites and their resultant proposals form part of the waste management plans drawn up by the Waste Management Groups. The waste management plans, which are subject to full public consultation and Departmental approval, were last approved in 2006. The Waste Management Groups are due to submit new waste management plans in 2011 and this will provide a further opportunity to consider Councils' proposed arrangements.

I acknowledge and very much welcome the reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate District Councils for playing their part in significantly reducing the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being sent to landfill.

### **Hotels Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of the Environment 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 4048/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The number of hotel rooms booked for civil servants in DOE but never used is not recorded by Departmental Travel Desks. Hotel room expenditure is usually paid for by civil servants who claim it back through travel and subsistence expenses and therefore, this information could only be researched at disproportionate expense. However, the cost of unused hotel bookings is likely to be very low as Departmental travel booking policy allows for the majority of cancellations to be fully refunded at relatively short notice.

Department of Finance and Personnel

## DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

### Constructing Excellence NI

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the value for money to the taxpayer; (ii) the value to the construction industry; and (iii) the value to the Executive and its Departments, provided by Constructing Excellence NI.

(AQW 3820/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson):** The construction industry makes a very valuable contribution to the economy of Northern Ireland. It has an annual turnover of approximately £3bn and employs almost 70,000 workers.

In 2006, a Construction Industry Capacity Study identified the need to establish Constructing Excellence Northern Ireland (CEni) to assist the construction industry to deliver improved performance resulting in a sustainable construction industry that could compete in the global market.

Under the strategic leadership of its Management Committee CEni has achieved its primary objectives. In particular it has:-

- i. Facilitated communication among industry, clients, consultants, government and academia to address sector challenges and deliver improved performance;
- ii. Developed and disseminated best practice knowledge through local engagement and via the wider UK Constructing Excellence network;
- iii. Assisted Government in delivering the 'Achieving Excellence in Construction' initiative through focusing on performance measuring and benchmarking;
- iv. Improved the industry image by taking action to create a step change in culture and in the development of people;
- v. Engaged with the community and the industry and its clients to develop a more sustainable built environment; and
- vi. Assisted Further and Higher Education in their collaboration with industry in order to keep teaching and research relevant to industry needs.

By forming a bridge between the construction industry, government and academia, CEni has assisted the industry to develop and embed best practice and improved overall performance.

Improvement in the industry's performance means that better performing contractors, consultants and government clients are available to deliver construction projects that represent best value for money for the Executive and ultimately for the tax payers of Northern Ireland.

A benefits realisation report on the CEni project will be reviewed by CPD on its completion in April 2010.

### **Constructing Excellence NI**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the running costs of Constructing Excellence NI for each of the last three years; and to provide a breakdown of these annual costs.

(AQW 3821/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The table overleaf details the running costs of Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni) for the four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010. The costs are set out in calendar years in line with CEni's financial reporting arrangements to its Management Committee. **CEni Running Costs from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010**

<b>Cost</b>	<b>2006 April-Dec £</b>	<b>2007 Jan-Dec £</b>	<b>2008 Jan-Dec £</b>	<b>2009 Jan-Dec £</b>	<b>2010<sup>4</sup> Jan-Apr £</b>
Director and Executive Assistant <sup>1</sup>	30,292.96	43,334.15	46,751.83	49,303.21	13,292.88
Payroll (Staff Salaries)		50,492.66	152,290.23	149,644.86	30,500.00
Non Payroll <sup>2</sup> (Miscellaneous)		11,691.63	19,232.40	19,579.98	25,500.00
Overheads & Services <sup>3</sup>	12,117.18	42,207.38	87,309.78	87,411.22	27,717.15
<b>Annual Totals</b>	<b>42,410.14</b>	<b>147,725.82</b>	<b>305,584.24</b>	<b>305,939.27</b>	<b>97,010.03</b>
<b>Accumulative Totals</b>	<b>42,410.14</b>	<b>190,135.96</b>	<b>495,720.20</b>	<b>801,659.47</b>	<b>898,669.50</b>

Note 1: The Director and the Executive Assistant work on behalf of CEni for 50% of their time.

Note 2: The 'Non-Payroll' cost includes consumables and printing, reimbursable expenses, telephones, advertising and the fees associated with employing a consultant to undertake the work of a Development Officer, who resigned at the end of July 2009, for the remaining 8 months of 2009-10.

Note 3: The University's 'overhead and services' covers accommodation; operating costs such as heating, lighting and cleaning and the provision of IT, HR and financial support services.

Note 4: The figures for 2010 include projected costs for the period Jan to 4 April 2010.

### Constructing Excellence NI

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many staff are currently employed in Constructing Excellence NI; and how does this compare to each of the last three years.

(AQW 3823/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The table overleaf summarises the number of staff employed by Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni) for the four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010.

**Staffing Levels in CEni from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010**

Post	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Director <sup>1</sup>	1 x 9 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths
Executive Assistant <sup>1</sup>	1 x 9 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths
Development Manager	1 x 3 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths
Development Officer 1	0	1 x 2.5 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 12 Mths
Development Officer 2	0	1 x 2.5 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 4 Mths
Development Officer 3 (Temp Cons) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0	1 x 8 Mths
Communications Officer	0	1 x 5 Mths	1 x 12 Mths	1 x 10 Mths

Note 1: The Director and the Executive Assistant work on behalf of CEni for 50% of their time.

Note 2: Following the resignation of Development Officer 2 at the end of July 2009, CEni employed a consultant to undertake the duties of Development Officer 2 for the remaining 8 months of 2009-10.

### Buildsoft Programme

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the cost to his Department of acquiring the 'Buildsoft' programme.

(AQW 3866/10)



**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The cost to Central Procurement Directorate of the initial set-up of the 'Buildsoft' software program, staff training, annual licence fee for all Centres of Procurement Expertise involved in construction and the provision of technical support is detailed in the Table below.

<b>Cost of 'Buildsoft' software</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Cost</b>
2007	Initial set-up and staff training	£6,850
	Annual licence & technical support	£12,500
2008	Annual licence & technical support	£12,500
2009	Annual licence & technical support	£12,500
	Modification to software to allow sustainability objectives to be recorded	£3,000
2010	Annual licence & technical support	£12,500
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£59,850</b>

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the procurement process used to acquire the 'Buildsoft' programme.

(AQW 3867/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The procurement process used by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to acquire the 'Buildsoft' programme commenced with the preparation of a specification for a program that could be used by CPD and the Centres of Procurement Expertise to record, calculate, benchmark and report on a suite of Key Performance Indicators for construction projects.

Competitive tenders were invited on 13 October 2006. Two tenders were received and the contract was awarded on 13 December 2006 to Building Software Ltd ('Buildsoft') who submitted the most economically advantageous tender.

### **Constructing Excellence NI**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the relationship between Constructing Excellence NI and his Department.

(AQW 3868/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Within the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) is responsible for interfacing with Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni).

CEni is a partnership between government, the construction industry and the University of Ulster. CPD entered into an agreement with the University to grant fund CEni for a four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010. The relationship between CPD and CEni is subject to Terms and Conditions of Grant and an associated Financial Memorandum.

CPD's engagement with CEni is principally through its participation in

the CEni Management Committee which provides strategic direction and leadership for the CEni project.

### **Constructing Excellence NI**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the relationship between Constructing Excellence NI and Central Procurement Directorate.

(AQW 3869/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), within the Department of Finance and Personnel, is responsible for interfacing with Constructing Excellence in Northern Ireland (CEni).

CEni is a partnership between government, the construction industry and the University of Ulster. CPD entered into an agreement with the University to grant fund CEni for a four year period from 5 April 2006 to 4 April 2010. The relationship between CPD and CEni is subject to Terms and Conditions of Grant and an associated Financial Memorandum.

CPD's engagement with CEni is principally through its participation in the CEni Management Committee which provides strategic direction and leadership for the CEni project.

### **Proposed A5 Road**

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has had with the Minister for Regional Development regarding the provision of finance for the proposed A5 road.

(AQW 3889/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I have not had direct discussions with the Minister for Regional Development regarding the financing of the A5 road scheme.

However, the 2007 CSR provided DRD with their requested funding for this scheme in the budget period 2007-2011. The current ISNI included indicative allocations for the scheme in subsequent years and also reflected the £400m contribution from the RoI Government for the joint A5 and A8 Initiative.

In addition, there have been a number of meetings between senior officials in my department and those of DRD along with senior officials from the Republic's Department of Finance and Department of Transport.

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the running costs of the Buildsoft programme for each of the last three years.

(AQW 3959/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The annual running cost of the 'Buildsoft' program in each of the last three years was £12,500. This covers the annual licence fee and the provision of technical support to all Centres of Procurement Expertise.

In 2009, modifications were made to the system to allow the recording of performance data against sustainability objectives at a one-off additional cost of £3,000.

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) which branch within his Department has responsibility for the Buildsoft programme, including the development and maintenance of the programme; and (ii) how many staff within this branch are trained to use Buildsoft software.

(AQW 3960/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Within the Department of Finance and Personnel, Quality Standards Branch in Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) is responsible for the development, management and maintenance of the 'Buildsoft' program.

There are two staff in Quality Standards Branch who are fully trained to use the 'Buildsoft' software.

Individual project managers, across CPD and other Centres of Procurement Expertise, are responsible for entering and maintaining project specific data on the system.

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what the cost is to his Department for training one member of staff to use the Buildsoft programme.

(AQW 3961/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The initial set-up cost of the 'Buildsoft' program was £6,850. This included the configuration of the database to suit the needs of Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs). The setup cost also included the creation of training materials and the delivery of training to a total of 31 staff from CPD and the CoPEs. The cost of training one member of staff is not, therefore, separately identifiable.

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel on what date the Buildsoft programme became operational within his Department.

(AQW 3962/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The 'Buildsoft' program became operational on 23 March 2007 following configuration of the database, testing and staff training.

### **Buildsoft Programme**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if staff input can be traced on the Buildsoft programme; and if so, how many staff have inputted into the Buildsoft programme.

(AQW 3963/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Prior to December 2009 the 31 staff from Central Procurement Directorate and the Centres of Procurement Expertise, who were trained in the use of the 'Buildsoft' program, shared common logins with other staff in their business areas. The entry of project specific data on to the 'Buildsoft' program was therefore recorded only by business area. Prior to this date it is not therefore possible to identify individual staff who input data on to the 'Buildsoft' program.

Following the release of a new version of the software on 11 December 2009, personal logins were issued to 184 staff. From this date, 12 staff have entered data on to the 'Buildsoft' program.

### **Deaths from Obesity**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel the number of deaths in which obesity was mentioned as a cause on the death certificate in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4100/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Obesity is only recorded on a death certificate where the doctor certifying the death considers this to be the underlying cause of death or where obesity has contributed to the death.

The attached table gives the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland by year, 2004 to 2008, and the number of deaths registered in the first three quarters of 2009<sup>P</sup>, where obesity was mentioned on the death certificate.

<sup>1</sup> International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision code E66.

<sup>P</sup> Provisional data

**Table:** Number of obesity related deaths registered in Northern Ireland, 2004-2009 Quarter 1 to Quarter 3<sup>P</sup>.

<b>Registration Year</b>	<b>Number of obesity related deaths</b>
2004	21

2005	26
2006	30
2007	30
2008	33
2009 Q1-Q3 <sup>P</sup>	33

### **Northern Ireland Dormant Accounts Scheme**

**Mr M Durkan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Northern Ireland Dormant Accounts Scheme.

(AQW 4105/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** Public consultation on the spending priorities for the Northern Ireland Dormant Accounts Scheme was held between 6th August to 29 October 2009.

127 responses were received from a broad range of private individuals and organisations representing community and voluntary organisations, faith based organisations, children and young people organisations, organisations supporting the elderly and disabled, statutory authorities, charities and financial institutions. I am currently considering these responses to ensure that a focused set of priorities is established and that the additional money is used to provide real benefits to all communities across Northern Ireland.

Subject to endorsement by OFMDFM, I will bring recommendations on the proposed spending priorities to the Executive in due course.

## **UK Migration Impact Fund**

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if their Department has received its allocation of £978,000 from the UK Migration Impact Fund to address pressures on public services relating to the transitional impacts of legal migration.

(AQO 673/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The Communities Secretary Hazel Blears and the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced the details of the Migration Impact Fund on 19 March 2009.

As a consequence of this decision, the Northern Ireland Executive received £978,000 in additional current expenditure funding for 2009-10, through the Barnett formula.

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

The additional funding arising from this Barnett consequential was included in the overall funding position considered by the Executive as part of the 2009-10 June Monitoring round.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Cancer Survival Rates**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is aware of the cancer survival rates in the rest of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, and other European countries; and how these compare to the survival rate in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 3712/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey):** The Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) 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>

In addition, NICR, in conjunction with the National Cancer Registry of Ireland, published a report in April 2009, *Cancer in Ireland 1994 – 2004: A comprehensive Report*. The report contains data for the whole of Ireland and can be accessed at –

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/FileStore/Filetoupload,177823,en.pdf>

Both the documents provide comparisons of cancer survival rates with the rest of the UK and other European countries.

### **Drugs for Preventative Conditions**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of his annual budget is spent on drugs for preventative conditions.

(AQW 3713/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** It is not possible to determine how much of the annual spend for Health Service Drugs went on drugs for preventative conditions as such information is not collated.

### **Anti-obesity Drugs**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of his annual budget is spent on anti-obesity drugs.

(AQW 3714/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

The cost of anti-obesity drugs to the HSC was £2.4m in 2008/2009. This represents 0.06% of my 2008/2009 revenue budget.



### **Hospital Services**

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of community involvement in planning hospital services over the last ten years.

(AQW 3718/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** A review of acute hospital services (Developing Better Services) was commissioned in August 2000 with the aim of modernising the acute hospital system. The recommendations from the review were subject to full public consultation prior to final Ministerial approval in 2003. Hospital service changes arising from the review were, unless immediate health and safety issues dictated otherwise, further consulted on through individual Health and Social Care Trusts and, where appropriate, passed for Ministerial approval.

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### **Long-term Carers**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people registered as long-term carers in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3721/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Information on the number of people registered as long-term carers is not collected centrally.

### **Vagus Nerve Stimulation**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the delay in the use of Vagus nerve stimulation for patients; and when he expects this treatment to be made available.

(AQW 3722/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Vagal nerve stimulation is currently available and performed at the Royal Victoria Hospital. A contracted service is in place for adults who require this treatment, however in relation to children requiring access to this service funding is sought from the HSC Board as and when required. The Trust will however endeavour to carry out the procedure as soon as possible following the approval of funding and receipt of the necessary equipment.

### **Ambulances**

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many ambulances there are in each Health and Social Care Trust; and how many are projected over the next five years.

(AQW 3729/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Regarding the first part of the question, I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQWs 1251/10 and 1252/10 on 20 October 2009.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has advised that projected fleet requirements are calculated for Northern Ireland as a whole and it cannot, therefore, provide figures for future fleet deployment in specific areas. Deployment will be determined on the basis of NIAS's tactical deployment plan at the time

I have announced a £100m investment programme over the next ten years to modernise estate and replace vehicles and equipment for NIAS on a rolling basis. This programme will substantially lower the average age of the fleet, improving its reliability and reducing the cost of maintenance.

### **Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin Wards at Knockbracken**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 3397/10, for his assessment of the adequacy of the consultation undertaken prior to the decision being taken to merge Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin wards at Knockbracken.

(AQW 3738/10)

#### **Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

Prior to deciding to merge Dorothy Gardner and Rathlin Wards, the Belfast Trust consulted with user and carer representatives and senior staff from within mental health services and carried out an Equality Impact Screening Assessment. They also consulted publicly in early 2009 about their proposal to reduce the reliance on inpatient beds by enhancing community mental health services. These proposals were accepted.

The Trust has agreed to consider further the provision of a female-only ward if acute provision can be reconfigured to accommodate this suggestion. In this regard the Trust has had further representation from interested parties.

### **Knockbracken Clinic**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the consultation process undertaken prior to the decision to merge the Knockbracken Clinic male and Innisfree Wards.

(AQW 3739/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Proposed changes and mergers on the Knockbracken site were included in the Belfast Trust's consultation 'Excellence and Choice' Documents. The merger of Knockbracken Clinic Male (KCM) and Innisfree wards is part of the Trust's resettlement strategy. Patients, their Carers and staff were consulted on the merger and support has been continually provided by User and Carer Advocates throughout the process. All appropriate community based placements identified were considered by patients, carers and advocates. Initial visits and trial periods of stay were arranged prior to confirmation of these placements.

The Trust has agreed to consider further the provision of a female-only ward if acute provision can be reconfigured to accommodate this suggestion. In this regard the Trust has had further representation from interested parties.

### **Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin Wards at Knockbracken**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what evidence or advice informed the decision to maintain admissions to Windsor House despite its current state, and to merge the Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin Wards.

(AQW 3740/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Since the introduction of Belfast Home Treatment Service and improvements in systems and processes within mental health services, Belfast Trust has moved from a position where acute inpatient beds were difficult to access, to the current position where there is reduced demand for beds across the three inpatient units at Knockbracken, Mater and Belfast City Hospital sites.

Longer term, the Trust aims to have one purpose built in-patient facility for Belfast with more community-based support. The Trust has developed proposals for a new inpatient psychiatric unit and is currently consulting on these, including options for the location for the new unit.

These proposals are in line with best practice and the Bamford recommendations.

### **Mental Health Provision**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the current decisions in respect of inpatient mental health provision in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area will impact on future development plans for Windsor House.

(AQW 3741/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Belfast Trust is currently consulting on proposals for a new inpatient psychiatric unit, including options for its location, and the outcome of this process will inform future development plans for Windsor House.

### **Osteomyelitis**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of diagnosed cases of Osteomyelitis; and (ii) the number of amputations resulting from Osteomyelitis, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3755/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

- (i) Information is not available on the number of diagnosed cases of Osteomyelitis.
  
- (ii) The number of amputations carried out in Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland, where a diagnosis of Osteomyelitis was recorded, is shown in the table below;

Year	Amputations
2004/2005	47
2005/2006	36
2006/2007	44
2007/2008	54
2008/2009	53

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

### **Child Abuse in Ards and Strangford**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many incidents of child abuse have been investigated in (i) Ards; and (ii) Strangford, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3756/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** It is assumed that this question refers to child protection investigations. Information on the number of child protection investigations is not available in the format requested.

### **Swine Flu Vaccine**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) if there is currently an oversupply of swine flu vaccine and associated anti-virals; (ii) the monetary value of this oversupply; (iii) to outline his plans for disposal of stockpiles of these drugs in the event they are not needed; and (iv) the estimated costs of disposing of any oversupply.

(AQW 3758/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** There is not currently an oversupply of swine flu vaccine or antivirals in Northern Ireland.

Antivirals can be used to treat the symptoms of other flu viruses, not just swine flu.

### **Disruption to Home Help Services**

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the extent of the disruption to home help services, and other healthcare provision in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area as a consequence of untreated and impassable roads during the recent extreme weather conditions.

(AQW 3764/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Western Health and Social Care Trust has advised that, since the onset of extreme weather, Trust staff and staff from the independent sector have worked extremely hard to ensure continuity of home care provision which, on a typical day, can involve 8,000 visits across the Trust. Staff have made every effort including walking great distances through snow to reach service users, accessing specialist vehicles including tractors, and working additional hours and days off.

The Trust has advised that, through these efforts, such disruption has been minimal. Where, despite these best efforts, service users could not be reached, Trust staff have liaised closely with family, neighbours and local community to ensure essential support is maintained. The Trust has also worked in partnership with other agencies, in particular the Roads Service, to help provide a coordinated response to the difficulties being experienced.

### **Healthcare Workers**

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will ensure that healthcare workers, including home-help providers can reach patients in rural areas during times of extreme weather conditions and freezing temperatures.

(AQW 3765/10)



**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

Every effort is made to provide health and social care services in all communities, in all circumstances. Outside factors such as road closures have the potential to bring most of Northern Ireland, including such services as health and social care, to a temporary halt. Each situation and circumstance will be different, requiring a range of different responses.

**Cost for Treating a Fracture or Broken Bone**

**Mrs C Hanna** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the average cost to the Health Service is for treating a fracture or broken bone.

(AQW 3768/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The estimated average cost of an episode in hospital where the patient had a fracture diagnosis is £2,922 for the financial year 2007/08. 2007/08 costs are the latest costs available at this time.

It should be noted that substantial A&E, outpatient, primary care, community and personal social services may also be provided to patients who suffer fractures. Costs for these services are not collected at the level of detail required to enable an estimate of what is spent treating people a fracture or broken bone.

### **Access to Medical Records**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail who can access patient medical records without explicit patient consent other than a doctor or the clinical caring team caring for a patient, and for what purpose; and (ii) on how many occasions patients' medical records have been accessed in such circumstances and by whom, in each of the last five years

(AQW 3804/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Patient medical records are defined as personal data within the Data Protection Act 1988. Organisations and individuals who hold medical records are required to register with the Information Commissioner as 'Data Controllers' and apply the provisions of the Data Protection Act in determining how they handle, share and disclose information, which includes access.

Ensuring appropriate access to medical records is the responsibility of each individual Data Controller. The Department does not hold centrally any data regarding access.

### **Department's Implementation Delivery Plan**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he intends to publish the Department's Implementation Delivery Plan for the Investment Strategy.

(AQW 3812/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

I do not intend to publish the DHSSPS Investment Delivery Plan until there is greater clarity on the budget for the period 2011/12 to 2013/14, following the outcome of the next CSR.

### **Stroke Strategy**

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the additional £9 million announced to support the Stroke Strategy, how this money is being divided between (i) statutory services, particularly acute care; and (ii) services provided by the voluntary sector, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 3816/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I have allocated an additional £14m over the CSR period for the implementation of the stroke strategy recommendations. This allocation is broken down as, £2 million in 2008/09, £3 million in 2009/10 and £9 million in 2010/11 and recurrently from April 2011.

The Health and Social Care Board as commissioner of health and social care services is responsible for allocating this money and its priority is to support and deliver services where needed most. I am advised that the allocation for 08/09 and 09/10 is being spent fully in stroke services and has included investment in Consultants, Allied Health Professionals and to strengthen infrastructure, staffing and training.

It has also supported service re-organisation and re-design so that the whole system, including primary, community, secondary, voluntary and independent sectors work collaboratively to improve the range of treatment, care and support available to stroke sufferers, their families and carers.

The voluntary sector has an important role to play in the delivering of these services and to date £150k has been spent with voluntary sector organisations. Bids from the voluntary sector for service developments at a cost of a further £100k are currently being considered.

### Organ Donation

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current waiting times for patients dependent on an organ donation from the NHS Organ Donor Register, broken down by type of organ donation.

(AQW 3842/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

**Average (median) waiting times to transplant – in days**

<i>organ</i>	<i>adult</i>	<i>paediatric</i>
<b>Kidney</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>1110</b> (1079-1141)	<b>277</b> (219-335)
<b>Kidney &amp; Pancreas</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>217</b> (194-240)	*
<b>Heart</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>184</b> (122-246)	<b>93</b> ** (39-147)
<b>Lung</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>519</b> (443-595)	*
<b>Liver</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>149</b> (135-163)	<b>86</b> (64-108)

<sup>1</sup> – based on patient registrations in the UK, 1 Jan 03 – 31 Dec 06

<sup>2</sup> – based on patient registrations (including pancreas only) in the UK, 1 Apr 04 – 31 Mar 08,

<sup>3</sup> – based on patient elective registrations in the UK, 1 Apr 06 – 31 Mar 09

\* too few cases to provide

\*\* based on less than 100 cases

Figures in brackets are 95% confidence intervals

These figures are for the United Kingdom and are provided by NHS Blood and Transplant

### **Palliative and End of Life Care**

**Mrs N Long** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact efficiency savings in the Health Service are having on the availability and level of the provision of palliative and end of life care for individuals who wish to be cared for in their own home; and whether there has been any reduction in the funding or services available to patients and their families.

(AQW 3862/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Over the current CSR period, a total of £44 million has been made available to improve the range of services available to people with chronic conditions, prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and ensure that wherever possible people with such chronic conditions can be cared for and die in their place of choice in the community.

Despite the challenges of the current financial climate, all Trusts have ensured that the efficiency savings have not affected their provision of palliative and end of life care for those who wish to be cared for at home; in fact, services are being developed and enhanced by integrated working between primary and community care teams and the voluntary care sectors.

In addition, *The Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy* seeks to support the Board and Trusts in the more effective deployment of existing resources against the recommendations and examples of good practice and will ensure that planning for the next CSR period will also be focused accordingly. The strategy is currently out for public consultation until 19 February and can be accessed at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/showconsultations?txtid=40197>

### **Prescription Charges**

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the annual cost to his Department of the reduced prescription charges; and the projected annual cost of the abolition of the charges.

(AQW 3865/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Annual figures are not available yet with regard to income following the reduction in prescription charges to £3 from 1 January 2009. It is not possible to give an accurate figure for the cost of abolition of the charges; however, prior to the reduction in charges the net annual income from prescription charges was approximately £13 million, which represented 3½% of the total drugs bill.

At present, approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in Northern Ireland.

### **Press Officers**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many press officers work in his Department.

(AQW 3895/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I refer the member to the answer provided in AQW 1754/10

### **Heart Operations**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been sent to the mainland UK or the Republic of Ireland for heart operations in each of the last three years; and what has the cost been to the Health Service in each of these years.

(AQW 3900/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The table below shows the number of referrals from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (the only Trust that provides cardiac surgery in Northern Ireland) to Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland for heart operations in the last three years and their cost.

<b>Number of referrals for heart surgery from Belfast HSC Trust to:</b>	<b>Year</b>		
	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>
<b>Great Britain or Republic of Ireland</b>	150	250	411
<b>Cost</b>	£2.3m	£4.4m	£6.9m

### **Heart Operations**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that support staff and surgeons are available to carry out heart operations instead of sending patients to other parts of the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 3902/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

Additional funding of £2.0m/£3.0m/£7.0m has been allocated for cardiovascular services in the period for 2008-09 to 2010-11. This funding has and will strengthen surgical services at the RVH. It is planned that a cumulative additional 700 cardiac surgery procedures/cardiological interventions etc are provided by March 2011.

Plans are being developed to increase cardiac surgery capacity (physical accommodation and staffing) to cope with the ever-increasing demand, so that Northern Ireland is self-sufficient in the provision of cardiac surgery by 2012/2013. The success of these plans will of course be dependent on the availability of the necessary additional funding.

**Child Abuse**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases of child abuse have been investigated in each parliamentary constituency in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3903/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** It is assumed that this question refers to child protection investigations. Information on the number of child protection investigations is not available in the format requested.

**Child Abuse**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many instances of reported child abuse have resulted in social workers having to attend court proceedings, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3905/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

### **Health and Social Care Trusts**

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the management structure of each of the Health and Social Care Trusts, including the number of people employed and their respective pay bands.

(AQW 3906/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:**

Details of the management structures are available on each of the Health and Social Care Trust's web sites.

The salary information requested is contained in the Trust's Annual Report a copy of which is also available on the individual web site.

### **Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Trust Salaries**

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the annual salary, or the pay band, of the Chief Executive of each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) any bonuses they have received this financial year; and (iii) for what these bonuses were awarded.

(AQW 3921/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** (i) Details of the annual salaries paid to HSC Trust Chief Executives are published in the Trust's annual reports.

(ii) The annual pay increases are set with the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel Minister. The increase due from 1 April 2009 is still under consideration.

Department for Regional Development

## **DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Water Charges**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to meet with NI Water to discuss the inevitable increase in water charges to farms and businesses that will arise as a direct result of the recent severe frost causing damage to metered supplies.

(AQW 3794/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):**

NIW has advised me that customers are responsible for the maintenance and repair of private supply pipes and they are informed in writing each year that it is their responsibility to regularly check meter readings, private pipe work and supply routes, and to identify and repair any leaks immediately. This would have been particularly important during the recent freezing weather conditions.

NIW recognises that some customers may be unaware that leakage is occurring and, in specified circumstances in line with its leakage policy, will grant allowances against bills where it considers the customer has not been negligent and repairs have been carried out effectively. NIW may also offer customers a repayment agreement which will enable increased bills to be paid over an extended period.

NIW is currently reviewing its leakage policy to ensure it is fair and consistent for all customers and will consult widely with stakeholders including elected representatives, farmers representatives, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Consumer Council NI. The review is scheduled for completion by 31 March 2010.

### **Burst Water Main Supply Pipes, Crotlieve**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the number of burst water main supply pipes that have occurred in the Crotlieve District Electoral area during the last 6 months.

(AQW 3795/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**



I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is not responsible for the supply pipe that runs from the customer's tap to the property boundary. The supply pipe belongs to the individual property owner and responsibility for any maintenance and repair rests with them.

NIW would not hold records of bursts on private supply pipes and is therefore unable to provide the information requested.

### **Road Gritting**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would consider supplying farmers with road gritting materials to be used in severe weather on rural and country roads.

(AQW 3797/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

One of the key outcomes of the most recent review of Roads Service'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.

As part of this review, the possibility of providing salt to the public, on a self help basis, during severe weather was considered. Apart from the cost implications, my Department's Roads Service also had concerns, due to health and safety considerations, about allowing the public access to operational depots, during salting activities. In addition, providing salt on such a basis could mean that scarce resources were being directed towards the salting of routes, which may not achieve the optimum benefit in terms of traffic volumes. In these circumstances, it was decided that such a service should not be provided.

As the situation has not changed significantly since the previous review was carried out, I have no plans to review this aspect of the Winter Service policy, at this time.

The Member may be aware that Roads Service does employ contractors and farmers to help remove snow from local roads, using their own equipment, in severe weather conditions.

### **Traffic Monitoring Exercise at the New Abbey Grammar School, Newry**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 2294/10, in relation to the traffic monitoring exercise at the new Abbey Grammar School, Newry (i) how long traffic monitoring will be carried out before a report is prepared; (ii) when the results will be made public; and (iii) if the availability of finance will determine whether any road safety measure identified in the exercise will be implemented.

(AQW 3826/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

I understand that traffic monitoring will be carried out by the headmaster on a monthly basis, in his role as Travel Co-ordinator on behalf of the school. My Department's Roads Service will also monitor the traffic situation. However, it should be noted that the effect on the Mourne Country roundabout, Ashgrove Road and Upper Damolly Road, cannot be fully determined until the new traffic patterns settle down and drivers have determined the most appropriate route to use on their journey to the school.

I can advise that the school will liaise closely with local residents as part of its obligations under the Travel Plan. I understand that an invitation has already been issued, from the headmaster, for residents to visit the school in the near future, at which time the results of his initial monitoring will hopefully be available.

I can confirm that the implementation of any identified road safety measures, on the adopted road network in the vicinity of the school, would be subject to the availability of finance, as is the normal case.

### **Easibus in Bangor**

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development the number of Easibus journeys in Bangor in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3830/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Translink that 52, 284 passenger journeys were carried out by Bangor Easibus in 2006/07, 51,914 in 2007/08 and 42,800 in 2008/09.

### **Easibus Service**

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the cost to Translink of the Easibus service; and (ii) what subsidy Translink received from his Department for this service, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3832/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

The cost to Translink in delivering the Easibus service and the subsidy provided by my Department in each of the last three financial years are set out in the table below.

	<b>Easibus Scheme</b>	<b>Cost to Translink (£)</b>	<b>Subsidy from DRD (£)</b>
<b>2006/07</b>	Bangor	136,900	37,500

	Belfast	164,200	102,800
	Derry	59,500	31,400
<b>2007/08</b>	Bangor	136,900	37,700
	Belfast	164,200	99,100
	Derry	61,200	33,400
<b>2008/09</b>	Bangor	136,900	38,400
	Belfast	163,400	83,400
	Derry	60,000	33,000

### **Partnership Agreement**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he has taken to maintain the partnership agreement made in 2001 between his Department and local councils.

(AQW 3848/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

The issue of the treatment of footways was given consideration during the most recent review of Roads Service's Winter Service policy, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly. At that time, it was recognised that the cost of salting footways was prohibitive, and that the basic logistics of providing such a service, which is largely a manual task, made it impractical to introduce.

It was proposed that, in periods of prolonged lying snow, the Department would seek to enlist the help of other agencies, such as district councils, to assist in clearing busy town centre footways. The then Minister wrote to each council, outlining proposals for partnering arrangements for the removal of snow and ice from town centre footways and pedestrian areas. Roads Service followed this up by writing to each council, explaining the proposals in detail, and enclosing a proposed model agreement.

In consultation with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, Roads Service drew up a draft legal agreement. However, only a small number of councils signed up to the agreement, and as such, the resources available to treat snow and ice on footways are somewhat limited. No further action was taken at that time. However, following the recent prolonged spell of wintry weather, I have asked the Chief Executive of Roads Service to revisit the partnering arrangements with the councils.

### **Gritting Schedule**

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development what immediate action he is taking to include Blackskull on this winter's gritting schedule.

(AQW 3864/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is currently assessing an earlier request from a local resident, for the inclusion of Blackskull on the winter gritting schedule. I have asked Mr Bertie Ellison, Deputy Divisional Roads Manager, Roads Service Southern Division, to advise you of the outcome of the assessment, which is due in early March 2010.

Roads Service has procedures in place 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. Should another period of freezing weather return, drivers in the Blackskull area may use the grit piles located on the verges of Donaghcloney Road, Killysorrell Road, and on both stretches of the Blackskull Road.

### **A2 Road Widening Scheme**

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact of

the A2 Road Widening scheme in the vicinity of Belfast High School.

(AQW 3880/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

As I advised the Member in my response to his earlier Question (AQW 8607/09), the road improvement scheme proposals on the A2 at Belfast High School include a dual carriageway with a central reserve. All local access to this road will be on a left in/left out basis, that is, there will be no right turn manoeuvres from local accesses. Turning manoeuvres will be accommodated at three locations on this section of the A2 - at Shore Avenue, Shorelands and Station Road. The proposals have been considered in association with Belfast High School and include an entrance and egress onto the Carrickfergus-bound carriageway, which will be constructed to appropriate standards. The design also includes a lay-by for buses on the Belfast-bound carriageway.

My Department's Roads Service has held a series of meetings with Belfast High School, over the past 3 years, with regard to the impact of the scheme proposal on their property, accommodation works required and bus parking facilities within the school grounds. I am advised that the School representatives are satisfied with the access and accommodation works proposed.

Belfast High School made representations to the Public Inquiry held into the scheme proposals in October 2007 that a lay-by should be provided in the proposed design. This resulted in the Inspector recommending that an assessment be carried out on the provision of a lay-by. A detailed assessment was carried out by Roads Service following the Public Inquiry and a decision, based on the findings, was taken that a lay-by for private cars would not be included in the proposal.

Full details of the 'Response to Public Inquiry Inspectors' Report' can be viewed on the Roads Service website at the following address: [http://roadimprovements.roadsni.gov.uk/response\\_report.pdf](http://roadimprovements.roadsni.gov.uk/response_report.pdf)

### **Proposed A5 Road**

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding finance provision for the proposed A5 road.

(AQW 3885/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

I can advise that I have not had direct discussions with the Minister for Finance and Personnel regarding the financing of the A5 road scheme.

However, the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review provided my Department with the requested funding for this scheme in the budget period 2007-2011. The current Investment Strategy included indicative allocations for the scheme in subsequent years and also reflected the £400 million contribution from the Irish Government for the joint A5 and A8 Initiative.

I can further advise that there have been a number of meetings between senior officials in my Department and those of the Department of Finance and Personnel, along with senior officials from the Irish Government's Department of Finance and Department of Transport, in relation to the proposed scheme.

### **Resurface the High Bangor Road**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans the Roads Service has to resurface the High Bangor Road at the new water treatment plant.

(AQW 3899/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has advised that they plan to carry out resurfacing work on the High Bangor Road, Donaghadee, between the High Trees junction and the Kylestone Road.

Given the overall length of this stretch of road, and the costs involved, Roads Service intends to carry out the work in three sections. The section you have referred to at the new water treatment plant, represents the middle section to be resurfaced.

Some preparatory drainage work on the first section of road, at the Kylestone Road end, commenced recently, and a new surface should be laid before the end of the current financial year.

Roads Service intends to resurface the second section of this road, most probably the middle section at the new water treatment plant, in the 2010/11 financial year, subject to the availability of sufficient funding, and other competing priorities.

The third section of this road, at the Donaghadee end, will be considered for inclusion in the 2011/12 works programme.



### **Gritting and Snow Removal**

**Mr K Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision Roads Service has made for (i) gritting; and (ii) snow removal for the remainder of this financial year.

(AQW 3901/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has sufficient finance, labour and materials to operate the Winter Service programme for the remainder of the 2009/2010 financial year.

I should advise the Member that Roads Service has no statutory obligation to salt roads. However, it does earmark funds to provide a salting service, aimed at helping traffic move safely and freely in wintry conditions, through the removal of snow and the gritting of the salted network across the North.

### **Flights Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development 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 3908/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** The number of flights booked for Civil Servants in my Department (excluding Water Service, now NI Water) which were paid for wholly, or in part, but never used, and the costs and loss of revenue incurred booking these flights in each of the last five years, is set out in the table below.

Year	No. Flights Cancelled/ Part Cancelled	Cost of cancelled flight & admin fees
05-06	25	£899.13
06-07	20	£1,229.38
07-08	18	£737.81
08-09	15	£1,325.85
09-10*	15	£1,098.00

\*This period covers 1 April 2009 to 20 January 2010

### Hotels Booked for Civil Servants

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development 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 3909/10)

#### Minister for Regional Development:

The information available from the Department's records on the number of nights in hotels booked for Civil Servants and paid for but not used, and the associated costs, is set out in the table below.

Year	(i)	(ii)	
	No. of Nights	Cost	Loss
2009-2010	1	£138.00	£138.00
2008-2009	-	-	-
2007-2008	1	£70.00	£70.00
2006-2007	-	-	-
2005-2006	-	-	-

### **Staffing at Jubilee Road Office, Newtownards**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many staff are employed in his Department's office at Jubilee Road, Newtownards (i) currently; and (ii) in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3938/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it currently employs 12 staff at Jubilee Road, Newtownards and has done so in each of the last three years.

### **Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Track**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development if the Coleraine to Londonderry railway track relay is to proceed as planned, and if so, what is the start date for the project.

(AQW 3941/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

At present, the Coleraine to Derry railway track relay is proceeding as planned. Translink are in the process of preparing an Economic Appraisal for the project which is expected to be with my Department by March 2010. Subject to approvals and available funding, the preliminary work is planned to commence in 2011.

### **Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Track Signalling System**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development if the signalling system system will be modernised during any relay of the Coleraine to Londonderry railway track, and if so, what affect will this have on the signalmen employed on the line.

(AQW 3947/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

With the advances in technology in the field of rail operations, Translink have indicated that it is their intention to explore the feasibility of centralising signalling in the North-West into the Coleraine signal cabin following the re-lay of track between Coleraine and Derry and upgrade of the signalling system.

The design and specification of such a scheme have not yet been finalised, however staff representatives have been appraised of these long-term plans and will be kept updated through further regular in-house consultation meetings.

### **Gritting in the North Down Area**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what was the cost to his Department of gritting the roads in the North Down area over the Christmas period.

(AQW 3951/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has advised that the cost of salting the road network in the North Down area, from 23 December 2009 to 4 January 2010 inclusive, was approximately £46,000.

### Industrial Tribunals

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister for Regional Development how much (i) his Department; and (ii) NI Water spent on industrial tribunals (a) in each of the last three years; and (b) on each tribunal.

(AQW 3952/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

The table below details how much my Department and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) have spent on industrial tribunals in the years 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10. It also gives details of the amount spent on each tribunal.

	Year	Number of Tribunal	Amount spent on tribunal (£)	Total spent on Industrial Tribunals in that year (£)
<b>DRD</b>	2007/08	0	0	0
	2008/09	1	37,353.30	37,353.30
	2009/10	0	0	0
<b>NIW</b>				
	2007/08	1	1,000	1,000
	2008/09	1	60,536	90,886
		2	16,150	
		3	2,200	
		4	1,000	
		5	1,750	
		6	9,250	
	2009/10	0	0	0

### NI Water

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to staff working within, or on behalf of, NI Water, who is responsible for (i) overseeing sickness levels; (ii) referring staff on long-term sick leave to in-house medical officers; and (iii) initiating absence related disciplinary proceedings for all (a) technicians; (b) assistant technicians; and (c) project assistants.

(AQW 3954/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the technicians, assistant technicians and project assistants referred to are employed by contractors engaged by NIW under a tendered contract arrangement. NIW has no role in the Human Resources process and responsibility for matters such as sickness procedures rests with the individual employers.

### **NI Water**

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister for Regional Development who is responsible for (i) the payment of salaries; and (ii) the human resources functions in relation to (a) technicians; (b) assistant technicians; and (c) project assistants performing duties, within or on behalf of, NI Water.

(AQW 3955/10)

### **Minister for Regional Development:**

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the technicians, assistant technicians and project assistants referred to are employed by contractors engaged by NIW under a tendered contract arrangement. NIW has no role in the Human Resources process and responsibility for matters such as payment of salaries and the Human Resources function rests with the individual employers.

### **NI Water**

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister for Regional Development who employs (i) technicians; (ii) assistant technicians; and (iii) project assistants working within, or on behalf of, NI Water.

(AQW 3956/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the technicians, assistant technicians and project assistants referred to are employed by contractors engaged by NIW under a tendered contract arrangement. The contractors involved are Williams Industrial Services, Orion Group and NI Computing.



### **NI Water**

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister for Regional Development who is responsible for setting (i) annual leave entitlements; and (ii) the annual salary review of (a) technicians; (b) assistant technicians; and (c) project assistants performing duties within or on behalf of NI Water.

(AQW 3964/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the technicians, assistant technicians and project assistants referred to are employed by contractors engaged by NIW under a tendered contract arrangement. NIW has no role in the Human Resources process and responsibility for matters such as annual leave entitlements and annual salary reviews rests with the individual employers.

## **Enterprise Rail Link**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he has taken to ensure that the Enterprise rail link is an integral part of Northern Ireland's tourist network in 2010 and over the next five years.

(AQW 3970/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department is working closely with colleagues in DETI and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) to ensure that the needs of tourism are built into our Transport Plans and Strategies within the context of current budget plans and relevant Transportation and Development Strategy.

In addition Translink have provided the following as examples of the various strategies and marketing promotions in relation to Enterprise services with an association to tourism:

- The dedicated annual budget and marketing strategy for Enterprise;
- The partnership approach with Irish Rail – including regular marketing meetings to plan future promotions and advertising to key market segments including domestic and international tourists;
- The New Eurail and InterRail All-Ireland products in conjunction with Irish Rail introduced in January 2010;
- Joint PR and marketing activity with Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Dublin Visitor and Convention Bureau;
- The Translink Summer Tourism Campaign for rail and bus services promotes good value travel in the North aimed at tourists and leisure day-trippers;
- The promotion of cross-border rail travel to event organisers and group travel operators;
- The “NI Breaks” product – public transport and accommodation packages in the North and targeting ROI and domestic market;
- Initial discussions for a “tourist train” pilot product on the Derry Line which would be widely promoted to the tourist market – groups and individuals;
- Translink tourism publications such as “Outings by Rail” promotes rail travel to tourist attractions across the local rail network and is available for tourists at stations and at Tourist Information Centres;
- The “Visitors” section on the Translink website provides information on rail and bus services, special offers, maps etc;
- The Tourist Information Display stands, maps and floor vinyls in Belfast Central Station (arrival point for Enterprise) provide information for passengers arriving from the South.

In addition, the two rail companies have developed a high level strategy to move towards an hourly service on the Enterprise service discussed recently at the NSMC Transport plenary. At this point an initial proposal to improve reliability of train capability is being explored but within the context of the current budget. A recent fares promotion introduced in the context of the recent re-opening of the full service remains in place.

### **Car Park Beneath the Square in Warrenpoint**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will consider commissioning a feasibility study in relation to providing a two or three level underground car park beneath the Square in Warrenpoint.

(AQW 3976/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

I am advised by my Department's Roads Service that, for most of the year, there is sufficient car parking capacity in Warrenpoint.

It is accepted that during the holiday months of July and August, parking would be at a premium, however, the costs associated with the construction of a two or three level car park, particularly underground, could not be justified in the current economic climate. Consequently, I will not be commissioning a feasibility study into such a project.

### **Proposed Newry Southern Relief Road**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he intends to take to ensure that the proposed Newry Southern Relief Road, linking the A2 with the main Dublin-Belfast route, will feature regularly on the North South Agenda.

(AQW 3978/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

I can confirm that the Newry Southern Relief Road, together with the Narrow Water Bridge Project, have been discussed regularly at meetings of the North South Ministerial Council (Transport Sector). Furthermore, my Department's Roads Service has discussed these projects with representatives from the National Roads Authority and the Department of Transport in the South, at the Cross Border Steering Group.

It is my intention that this dialogue will continue through these forums.

### **Road Signage for Newry**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will ensure that the road signage for Newry North, Newry South and Newry City Centre will be strategically sited along the new Newry By-Pass.

(AQW 3979/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that the direction signs to be provided on the A1 Beech Hill to Cloghogue dual carriageway scheme, have been designed in accordance with the recommendations of the Traffic Signs Manual.

In this context, while "Newry North", "Newry South" and "Newry City Centre" may be local destinations within the city, they are not recognised as primary destinations. Therefore, it is not considered appropriate to use these destinations on the direction signs that are being provided on this stretch of the A1 Key Strategic, Belfast to Dublin Route.

However, I can advise the Member that "Newry" will be signed at four of the five flyover junctions on the A1 Beech Hill to Cloghogue dual carriageway. At each of these junctions, there will be four large map-type signs, two on the southbound carriageway and two on the northbound carriageway. Therefore, on each carriageway there will be a direction sign at the junction indicating the appropriate destinations, including "Newry", and an advanced direction sign, located half a mile in advance of the junction. The advanced direction sign, in addition to indicating the same destinations, will also include the name of the junction in a separate panel at the top of the sign. The junction names from north to south on the scheme are "Sheepbridge", "Carnbane", "Camlough" and "Cloghogue".

Lagan Ferroviail, the Construction Contractor for this Design Build Finance and Operate project, has already erected both the direction sign, and the advanced direction sign on the southbound carriageway at Sheepbridge, and the direction sign on the northbound carriageway at Cloghogue. While the Construction Contractor provided a variable message sign as a temporary alternative to the advanced direction sign on the northbound carriageway, it was recently removed. However, Roads Service has asked for it to be reinstated, until the permanent advanced direction sign is provided.

I can also advise that, following a meeting with Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade, including representatives from the Buttercrane and Quays shopping centres, Roads Service is currently considering their request to replace the junction names “Sheepbridge” and “Cloghogue” with “Newry North” and “Newry South” respectively.

Finally, I can confirm that only the Bernish View Point will be signed at the fifth flyover junction on the dual carriageway at Chancellors Road.

### **Gritting of Footpaths**

**Mr M McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail a timeline of when responsibility for the gritting of footpaths will be established.

(AQW 3990/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

The Member may be aware that the issue of winter service, including treatment of footways, was previously reviewed and debated by the Assembly. At that time, it was recognised that the cost of salting

footways was prohibitive and that the basic logistics of introducing, what would be a largely manual task, would be impractical.

It was proposed that, in periods of prolonged lying snow, the Department would seek to enlist the help of other agencies, such as district councils, to assist in clearing busy town centre footways. The then Minister wrote to each council, outlining proposals for partnering arrangements for the removal of snow and ice from town centre footways and pedestrian areas. Roads Service followed this up by writing to each council, explaining the proposals in detail, and enclosing a proposed model agreement.

In consultation with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, Roads Service drew up a draft legal agreement. However, only a small number of councils signed up to the agreement, and as such, the resources available to treat snow and ice on footways are somewhat limited. No further action was taken at that time. However, following the recent prolonged spell of wintry weather, I have asked the Chief Executive of Roads Service to revisit these proposed partnering arrangements with councils.

### **Gritting of Minor Roads**

**Mr A McQuillan** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he plans to review the criteria for gritting minor roads following the recent cold spell.

(AQW 4002/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** One of the key outcomes of the most recent review of the winter service policy and procedures operated by my Department's Roads Service, 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 main through routes carrying 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 £5 million. An extension of the salting schedule to cover 90% or 100% of traffic volumes would increase the cost to approximately £10 million or £20 million per annum, respectively.

In addition small settlements in rural areas containing 100 dwellings or more now have salted links to roads on the main salted network. Salt bins/grit piles are also provided at various locations for people to use on a “self-help” basis, and Roads Service commits significant resources to maintain approximately 3,500 salt bins provided on public roads.

Following the severe wintry conditions experienced in the North at the start of December 2008, Roads Service carried out an examination of its operational response to areas around rural schools. This resulted in Roads Service introducing enhanced communication arrangements, and priority “secondary” salting to the 46 rural schools most affected by weather conditions throughout the winter of 2008/09, and the effectiveness of this service is currently being monitored.

While I can understand and appreciate the concerns of those who use the remaining, more lightly trafficked roads which are not on the salted network, it simply is not practical to salt all roads. The North is already one of the best performers, compared to other regions across these isles, in terms of the length of road salted per head of population, and there is a fine balance to be drawn between putting even more funds into salting, or into the many other worthwhile demands on Roads Service’s limited resources, many of which are also safety related.

As things have not changed significantly since the most recent review, I see little benefit in carrying out another review, at this time. However, as with all such significant weather events, Roads Service will examine the effectiveness of its response to the current occurrence, and take on board any lessons learned.



### **Water Meters**

**Mr J Craig** asked the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of commercial properties have water meters installed.

(AQW 4023/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it has records of 107,874 commercial properties of which 85,402 (79 percent) have water meters installed.

### **Beech Hill Road, Newry**

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the inaccessibility of the Beech Hill Road, Newry; and to detail the timescale for its reinstatement.

(AQW 4037/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

As the Member will be aware, it has been necessary to place an emergency road closure on the section of the Beech Hill Road between the A1 and Lisserboy Road, due to the very poor condition of the road surface.

My Department's Roads Service has arranged for repairs to be carried out on this stretch of road, commencing on Wednesday 27 January, which will take approximately four weeks to complete.

### **Trees or Hedges**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Minister for Regional Development if Roads Service has the power to insist that an individual cuts back a tree or hedge if it is sited on the corner of a road and is blocking the sight line for motorists.

(AQW 4051/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

Firstly, I should explain that most roadside trees and hedges are on lands adjacent to public roads, and it is the responsibility of property owners or occupiers of those lands to ensure that such trees and hedges do not endanger or obstruct road users. From time to time my Department's Roads Service places notices in local press, and in farming journals, reminding owners/occupiers of this responsibility.

Generally, overgrown trees and hedges that endanger or obstruct road users are identified by Roads Service during routine maintenance inspections. However, from time to time members of the general public would also report overgrown trees or hedges.

Initially, owners/occupiers are identified by Roads Service and are requested to remove or cut back overgrown foliage. If that fails, Roads Service has powers under Article 50 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, to serve a notice on the owner/occupier, requiring him to remove or cut back the tree or hedge so as to remove the danger or obstruction. Where an owner/occupier does not comply with the requirements of the notice, Roads Service may carry out the necessary works and seek to recover the costs.

That said, Roads Service has no authority to insist that a landowner cut back trees or hedges, within the confines of their own property, to improve sight distance.

### **Roads Service Structural Maintenance**

**Mr T Gallagher** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any plans he has to allocate the £15 million from the December Monitoring Round to Roads Service for structural maintenance.

(AQW 4061/10)

#### **Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has confirmed that, following the outcome of the December Monitoring Round, approximately £15 million has already been allocated to its Divisions.

Roads Service is well versed in dealing with end of year funding, with all Divisions having pre-determined programmes of work targeting the worst roads.

## **Grit Boxes**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy on the location of grit boxes.

(AQW 4079/10)

### **Minister for Regional Development:**

My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has procedures in place 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, provided the following criteria are met:-

- the location in question must be on the publicly maintained road network;
- the gradient of the road in question must be over 5%;
- no reasonable alternative route shall be available; and
- the subject road attains a minimum overall score, derived using a specific formula, where points are awarded depending on road geometry, residential usage, community welfare and commercial usage.

In addition, new salt/grit boxes can also be provided at the roadside adjacent to schools that are regularly affected by severe wintry weather. However, new bins will not be provided unless requested by a member of the public who also agrees to spread the salt provided.

Where salt bins are provided they shall:-

- be available for use from November to March inclusive. However, if necessary they may be removed during the summer months to prevent vandalism or theft;
- be inspected regularly and refilled as necessary during the winter months; and
- normally not be provided within 100m of another bin.

Roads Service already commits significant resources to maintaining approximately 3,500 salt bins it has provided on public roads.

### **Naming of Bridges**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy on the naming of bridges.

(AQW 4081/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I can advise the Member that my Department has no policy on the naming of bridges.

### **Rural Roads**

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will re-consider the possibility of enabling farmers to grit rural roads which Roads Service cannot reach in freezing weather conditions.

(AQW 4087/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:**

I would refer the Member to my previous response to his recent Assembly Question AQW 3797/10, which addresses the issue of farmers gritting rural roads.

### **Review of Public Administration**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for an update on his Department's implementation of the Review of Public Administration; (ii) if he is on target to meet the March 2011 RPA saving targets; and (iii) how staffing levels have been reduced as a result of RPA.

(AQW 4110/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** In September 2009, the Review of Public Administration (RPA) Executive Sub-Committee endorsed the refined suite of public realm functions that will transfer to local government from my Department's Roads Service. These functions include alleygating, pedestrian permits, permitting local events on roads, off-street car parking and on-street parking enforcement.

Roads Service has advised that these functions, and potentially up to 60 of its staff, would transfer to the new councils, which are due to be created in May 2011. An agreed budget will be transferred in conjunction with the transfer of these functions.

Roads Service are continuing to take forward the key aspects of the proposed RPA reforms, including:-

- working with local government officials, to enable the agreed public realm functions to transfer to local government in May 2011. This is a challenging timetable, and a delay at any part in the process could lead to the May 2011 timescale not being achieved;
- developing a mechanism with local government officials, that will facilitate greater input by councils into the decision making process, on local roads issues. This process will be incorporated within the proposed community planning framework; and
- considering the most appropriate structural changes for Roads Service, that could be introduced to reflect the new council boundaries to become effective in May 2011.

Department for Social Development

## DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Village Area of South Belfast

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development when her Department intends to honour the commitment it made at the public inquiry into the vesting of homes in the Village area of south Belfast, to release the transcript to anyone who requested a copy.

(AQW 3742/10)

**Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie):** The Department gave no commitment to release the transcript from the recent public enquiry into the “village”. Whilst the Independent Inspector who chaired the proceedings invited interested parties to seek the transcript from the Department at the end of the Inquiry if they so wished, he had no authority to approve the release of the document which is exempt from disclosure under section 32(2) (b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### Village Area of South Belfast

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development if she could confirm that the Housing Executive is not committed to courtyard layouts for new housing in the Village area of south Belfast as described in its selected option, and that the historic street pattern in the area will be retained.

(AQW 3743/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Housing Executive is not committed to courtyard layouts or any other particular layout in the design of the proposed new housing in the Village. The objective is to achieve the most suitable design and housing mix, working in partnership with all interested parties – all options can be considered.

### Village Area of South Belfast

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm (i) that in line with the assurances given at the public inquiry into new housing in the Village area of south Belfast, that the regeneration will be 'community led'; (ii) that this commitment should include community representation on the Design Team; and (iii) that there will be full consultation with the community on the selection of the other members of the Design Team.

(AQW 3745/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** Throughout the lengthy process of considering the various options for the regeneration of the Village Urban Redevelopment Area, all possible steps have been taken to engage with the various shades of opinion in the local community and to involve community

representatives and residents fully at each stage of the process.

As the emphasis now moves towards consideration of the design options for the new housing, the emphasis will remain on ensuring maximum involvement of the community and their representatives. The Housing Executive has already commenced the process of setting up a Design Team which will include community representation. The Housing Executive's District Manager has already arranged meetings with both the Greater Village Regeneration Trust and the Blackstaff Homeowners Association to consult them on the composition of the Design Team. It is not intended to place any residential restrictions on who the community chooses to represent them on the Design Team, but steps will be taken to ensure that all shades of opinion have the opportunity to be represented on the Design Team.

### **Village Area of South Belfast**

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to new housing in the Village area of south Belfast, (i) to confirm that 'community led' refers to residents living in the Urban Renewal Area; and (ii) what she proposes to do to make sure the community is provided with the opportunity to work in partnership with the Housing Executive on this project.

(AQW 3746/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** Throughout the lengthy process of considering the various options for the regeneration of the Village Urban Redevelopment Area, all possible steps have been taken to engage with the various shades of opinion in the local community and to involve community representatives and residents fully at each stage of the process.

As the emphasis now moves towards consideration of the design options for the new housing, the emphasis will remain on ensuring maximum involvement of the community and their representatives. The Housing Executive has already commenced the process of setting up a Design Team which will include community representation. The Housing Executive's District Manager has already arranged meetings with both the Greater Village Regeneration Trust and the Blackstaff Homeowners Association to consult them on the composition of the Design Team. It is not intended to place any residential restrictions on who the community chooses to represent them on the Design Team, but steps will be taken to ensure that all shades of opinion have the opportunity to be represented on the Design Team.

### **Village Area of South Belfast**

**Ms A Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development if she has any plans to allow owners of new homes in the Village area of south Belfast to pay a nominal rent between the period of vesting and acquiring a new, or refurbished house.

(AQW 3748/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** At the date of vesting all privately owned properties within the Redevelopment Area of the Village Urban Redevelopment Area will come into Housing Executive ownership and their occupants become Housing Executive tenants.

Those dwellings which are occupied will be charged a reduced rent plus rates in respect of their



dwelling to reflect that the property is situated within a Redevelopment Area. The rent for dwellings situated within a Redevelopment Area is determined using the Housing Executive's Rent Assessment Scheme then limited to one third of the resultant charge. This charge will continue until the tenant is permanently re housed.

### **Nelson Street Site in North Belfast**

**Ms C Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department has been involved in proposals to re-zone the Nelson Street site from social housing to private housing.

(AQW 3776/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) prepared by Planning Service has zoned the Nelson Street site for social housing. This site (along with a number of other sites within the BMAP boundary) was identified to Planning Service by the Housing Executive as part of its Housing Needs Assessment submission in 2006. The Housing Executive understands that there is no change in this status in terms of the social housing zoning.

### **Nelson Street Site in North Belfast**

**Ms C Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Social Development if she can confirm that her intention for the Nelson Street site in north Belfast is to develop social housing for people on the north Belfast housing list.

(AQW 3778/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** I am happy to confirm that current and projected housing need in North Belfast would certainly justify the delivery of a social housing scheme in Nelson Street or surrounding area.

Both the Housing Executive and Clanmil Housing Association remain committed to delivering such a scheme should land in the area become available.

### **Social Security Benefits**

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she has taken to ensure that changes to Social Security benefits affecting lone parents will not have a negative impact on single parents and their families.

(AQW 3813/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** From December 2008 lone parents with older children are no longer entitled to Income Support solely on the grounds of being a lone parent. Instead lone parents who are able to take up employment may claim Jobseeker's Allowance..

The aim of the changes is to encourage and support lone parents into work because paid work is the best route out of poverty for lone parents and their families.

As with all jobseekers, in applying the changes for lone parents, Advisers will have regard to their individual circumstances. Although there are flexibilities within the current Jobseeker's Allowance scheme that would enable lone parents to comply with the changes, additional operational flexibilities and safeguards have been introduced in Northern Ireland because I recognise that there is a shortage of suitable and affordable childcare here. I must emphasise that no lone parent in Northern Ireland will be penalised where suitable or affordable childcare is not available to them.

Lone parents will also be given information, advice and guidance they need to make decisions so that they do not have to take or remain in a job that makes them worse off. An Adviser can carry out a Better off Calculation which will provide advice to the lone parent about the range of benefits they may be entitled to and to estimate how much better off that person could be in work.

I believe that the Jobseeker's Allowance framework in Northern Ireland is sufficiently flexible to ensure that the changes will not have a negative impact on lone parents.

### **Private Rental Housing Benefit**

**Mr J O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many claimants there are for private rental Housing Benefit in (a) Gilford, Co Down; and (b) Laurencetown, Co. Down; and (ii) how much is paid annually in private rental Housing Benefit to claimants in (a) Gilford, Co.Down; and (b) Laurencetown, Co Down.

(AQW 3853/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Housing Executive does not hold the information sought at the level requested. However the caseload and expenditure of Banbridge District Office, which manages Laurencetown and Gilford, is detailed below.

Banbridge District Office

Private Housing Benefit Caseload as at 01/04/09	1061
Private Housing Benefit expenditure 2008/09	£571,701

### **Village Area of South Belfast**

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development why new houses being build in Roden Street in the Village area of south Belfast are not available for purchase by homeowners under the scheme announced in February 2009, to allow homeowners to buy a new home without having to meet the five year qualifying period.

(AQW 3870/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** I plan to publish a consultation document in the coming weeks that will seek to support those owner occupiers living in redevelopment areas whose homes have to be acquired to make way for redevelopment work..

Whilst the policy has been underdevelopment for some time now, it has not yet been introduced. When published for consultation, the paper will set out our plans to re-house former owner occupiers who wish to purchase new housing put back in a redevelopment area.

### **Village Area of South Belfast**

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development to provide information about the possibility of new houses being provided for homeowners at Maldon Street in the Village area of south Belfast.

(AQW 3871/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The regeneration of the Village will involve the construction of over 270 new homes alongside the refurbishment of many more. This new housing within the community should encourage those already living there to stay on post regeneration. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has supported Fold Housing Association in the proposed provision of 52 three bedroom (5 person houses) on a site at Maldon Street on a mixed tenure basis, however the scheme has yet to reach planning approval stage.

### **Village Area of South Belfast**

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development what action she intends to take to ensure that homeowners in the Village area of south Belfast, who have their homes vested and decide to move out of the area to alternative accommodation, are able to return to one of the new houses or a refurbished house within the Urban Renewal Area.

(AQW 3872/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department is currently developing plans that will support

owner occupiers in Urban Renewal Areas who wish to remain in their community post regeneration. The proposals will offer owner occupiers in such areas similar opportunities as already exist for tenants.

These proposals will be issued for formal consultation in the coming weeks.

### **Private Housing in the Donegall Road Area**

**Mr J Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development if she will consider purchasing private housing in the Donegall Road area to help encourage residents to stay in the wider community.

(AQW 3874/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The regeneration of the Village will involve the construction of over 270 new homes alongside the refurbishment of many more. This new housing within the community should encourage those already living there to stay on post regeneration. However, if this provision does not meet the housing needs of that community, I will be happy to see other proposals brought forward in due course.

### **Hotels Booked for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of nights in hotels booked for Civil Servants in her 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 3910/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The table below details (i) the number of nights in hotels booked for Civil Servants in my 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.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Number of nights in hotels</b>	<b>Costs and loss of revenue</b>
<b>2004/2005</b>	Not available	
<b>2005/2006</b>	Not available	
<b>2006/2007</b>	Not available	
<b>2007/2008</b>	Not available	
<b>2008/2009</b>	3	£20.16

### **Flights for Civil Servants**

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of flights booked for Civil Servants in her 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 3911/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The table below details (i) the number of flights booked for Civil Servants in my 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.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Number of Flights</b>	<b>Costs and loss of revenue</b>
<b>2004/2005</b>	82	£4464.47
<b>2005/2006</b>	169	£6909.23
<b>2006/2007</b>	101	£6157.44
<b>2007/2008</b>	109	£6892.49
<b>2008/2009</b>	92	£4441.69

### **Bloomfield Estate, Bangor**

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the new heating system planned for the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor.

(AQW 3925/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** There is currently one heating scheme in the Bloomfield area for 11 dwellings programmed to commence in January 2012. Other properties within the area which are still without oil or gas heating comprise 44 bungalows at Ballyree Drive and 27 bungalows at Balloo Road and Bloomfield Road South. These bungalows require extensive improvement works including heating and are programmed for Multi-Element Improvement works in September 2010 and March 2012 respectively. These schemes, however, are dependent on the availability of funding.

### **Benefit Appeals**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 3607/10, how many appeals were (i) allowed; and (ii) disallowed in the dates supplied.

(AQW 3987/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The information requested is provided in the table below

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Number of Appeals allowed</b>	<b>Number of Appeals Disallowed</b>
1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009	3,218	6,959
1 April 2009 – November 2009	2,266	4,574

### **Illegal Monument, Strabane**

**Mr A Bresland** asked the Minister for Social Development what action she intends to take in relation to the erection of an illegal monument on Housing Executive property at Townsend Street, Strabane.

(AQW 4027/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** In 2006 a memorial was erected on NIHE owned land within the Townsend Street area of Strabane. This was done without the prior knowledge, agreement or involvement of the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive's local District Manager voiced general objections at that time with particular reference to the site's proximity to a local school. The Housing Executive is not aware of any objections from local residents or the wider community.

The whole issue of paramilitary memorials from whatever community is a very emotive one. Experience suggests that once in place, these are unlikely to be removed without the agreement of the local community. I am committed to supporting local communities, remove sectional symbols and focus on developing more acceptable expressions of their cultural identity. I have already placed the Shared Future ethos at the heart of all my endeavours in housing and through the Shared Neighbourhood Programme, 30 existing Housing Executive estates will also be identified as communities who want to live together, not apart.

However, the erection of this monument together with the republican memorial in Newtownbutler and the loyalist memorial in Bangor shows that we still have much more to do albeit that we have at least made a positive start.

A pilot project delivered by the Rural College Network and a Pilot Project funded by Peace III will shortly get underway in a number of areas, including Newtownbutler, and this may well offer a better long term opportunity to address the wider community cohesion issues in the community that could see a resolution to a range of issues, including memorials such as this.

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**

**Laptops for Committee Meetings**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Assembly Commission if it has any plans to provide laptops for use in Committee meetings.

(AQW 3917/10)

**The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter):**

I would refer you to the answer given to your colleague in response to AQW 7129/09. The Chairpersons' Liaison Group has given consideration to the electronic provision of committee papers and the use of computer equipment in committee rooms on a number of occasions; however, the current design of the rooms and the furniture in them has precluded progress in this area.

Suitable solutions continue to be considered, particularly in the context of the recent provision of Room 30 as a committee room with modern facilities, and the Chairpersons' Liaison Group will receive regular updates on the matter.

You may be interested to know that, the Information Systems Office, on behalf of the Assembly Commission has conducted a research project examining alternatives to the use of laptops.

**E-books for Committee Members**

**Mr A Ross** asked the Assembly Commission if it has any plans to issue members with e-books for Committee notes rather than paper files.

(AQW 3918/10)

**The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter):**

I would refer you to the answer given to Dr McDonnell in response to AQW 3833/09 and can confirm that a pilot study of eReader technology has been undertaken in the context of considering possible options for the provision of committee papers electronically. The study involved Committee staff and a Member of the Committee for the Environment who tested the suitability of the technology for accessing committee papers

before and during a committee meeting. A review of the pilot project highlighted that while the technology is of interest, there are a number of difficulties with the current commercially available equipment.

As this is an emerging technology the Information Systems Office, on behalf of the Assembly Commission, will review the suitability of devices on an ongoing basis in conjunction with the Committee Office as part of the consideration and identification of improved methods for the provision of committee papers electronically. The Commission and the Chairpersons Liaison Group will be advised of developments on an on-going basis.



# WRITTEN ANSWERS

Friday 29 January 2010

## Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages  
Anti-Bullying Publications  
Capital Assets Realisation Taskforce  
Disabled Access at Portadown Railway Station  
Disability Discrimination Acts  
Disability Discrimination  
Equality Legislation  
Disability and Equality Staff  
Review of Public Administration

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

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Livestock Losses  
Financial Assistance to Fish Farms  
Single Farm Payments  
Fishing Organisations  
European Fisheries Fund  
Fishermen  
Fishing Fleets  
Potato Crops

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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Coleraine Library  
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## Department of Education

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Area Based Planning  
Area Based Planning  
Specialist Schools  
Transfer Tests

Primary and Secondary School Enrolment  
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Interim Education and Library Boards  
Decline in School Population  
Education Bill  
Schools: Capital Projects  
Post Primary Education in East Antrim  
Department of Education Budget  
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### **Department for Employment and Learning**

Disciplinary Action  
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Northern Ireland Science Park Foundation  
Redunancies: West Tyrone  
Student Fees  
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University of Ulster: Magee Campus  
Economic Policy  
Portrush: Catering College Site  
Universities: Funding  
North West Lifelong Learning Association  
DEL Budget

### **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment**

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### **Department of the Environment**

Review of Public Administration  
Windfarm Applications in North Antrim  
Habitat or Refuge for Wildfowl  
Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen  
Offshore Wind-Farms  
Spot Checks on Buses and Coaches

Strategic Waste Management Board  
Landfill Sites  
Hotels Booked for Civil Servants

**Department of Finance and Personnel**

Constructing Excellence NI  
Constructing Excellence NI  
Constructing Excellence NI  
Buildsoft Programme  
Buildsoft Programme  
Constructing Excellence NI  
Constructing Excellence NI  
Proposed A5 Road  
Buildsoft Programme  
Buildsoft Programme  
Buildsoft Programme  
Buildsoft Programme  
Buildsoft Programme  
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Northern Ireland Dormant Accounts Scheme  
UK Migration Impact Fund

**Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety**

Cancer Survival Rates  
Drugs for Preventative Conditions  
Anti-obesity Drugs  
Hospital Services  
Long-term Carers  
Vagus Nerve Stimulation  
Ambulances  
Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin Wards at Knockbracken  
Knockbracken Clinic  
Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin Wards at Knockbracken  
Mental Health Provision  
Osteomyelitis  
Child Abuse in Ards and Strangford  
Swine Flu Vaccine  
Disruption to Home Help Services  
Healthcare Workers  
Cost for Treating a Fracture or Broken Bone  
Access to Medical Records  
Department's Implementation Delivery Plan  
Stroke Strategy  
Organ Donation  
Palliative and End of Life Care  
Prescription Charges  
Press Officers  
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Child Abuse

Health and Social Care Trusts  
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### **Department for Regional Development**

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Proposed A5 Road  
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Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Track  
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Gritting in the North Down Area  
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NI Water  
NI Water  
NI Water  
NI Water  
Enterprise Rail Link  
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Proposed Newry Southern Relief Road  
Road Signage for Newry  
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Gritting of Minor Roads  
Water Meters  
Beech Hill Road, Newry  
Trees or Hedges  
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### **Department for Social Development**

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Hotels Booked for Civil Servants  
Flights for Civil Servants  
Bloomfield Estate, Bangor  
Benefit Appeals  
Illegal Monument, Strabane

**Northern Ireland Assembly Commission**

Laptops for Committee Meetings  
E-books for Committee Members