

Official Report (Hansard)

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 21 May 2010
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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 21 May 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Funding for Childcare Provision

Mr P Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the level of funding provided by the Executive for childcare provision in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6334/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): Childcare here in Northern Ireland is funded through many different routes, some of which provide childcare directly and others indirectly. The apportionment of funding to these different services however is not broken down by the various elements within the service. 'Surestart', for example, has an important childcare element but this is not its primary function. Therefore, 'family services' may often provide an element of childcare that is not separately quantified.

A second issue is the difficulty of apportioning staff costs to childcare related functions. For example, DHSSPS staff engaged in the process of vetting, inspection and registration of childcare places are not providing childcare directly.

There are however a number of functions that are directly related to childcare where financial information is available and these are outlined in the table below.

Programme/Dept.	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	Total
Rural Childcare Programme (DARD)	£ N/A	£ N/A	£1.3m	£1.3m
NICMA Funding (DE)	£68k	£69k	£70k	£207k
Steps to Work Programme – The Childcare Allowance Scheme (DEL)	£587K	£585K	£633K	£1.8m
Further Education-Care to Learn (DEL)	£150K	£326K	£351K	£827k
Further Education Awards (DEL) *	£99K	£213K	£379k	£691k
Further Education - Support Funds (DEL)	£111K	£137K	£ Not available until July 2010	£248k
European Social Fund (DEL)	£230K	£394K	£383K	£1.0m
Children and Young People's Fund (DSD)	£881K	N/A	N/A	£881k
The Women's Centres Childcare Fund (DSD)	£ N/A	£850K	£889K	£1.7m
Neighbourhood Renewal – Childcare element (DSD)	£630K (est)	£630K (est)	£630K (est)	£1.9m (est)
Gingerbread (Derry) Funding (DSD)	£ N/A	£ N/A	£19K	£19k

Programme/Dept.	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Total
Overall Total	£2.8m (est)	£3.2m (est)	£4.7m (est)	£10.6m (est)

* FE Awards relate to the childcare costs of students and are not just FE awards i.e. student grants.

In addition to the above, approximately 15,000 in-work recipient families are beneficiaries of the childcare element of the working tax credit with an average weekly amount in payment of £82.61 which equates to approximately £1.23 million per week.

An economic appraisal, considering a range of strategic options for childcare provision here, will soon be presented to officials. The appraisal report will then be considered by Ministers and copied to the OFMDFM Committee. It is expected that this report will detail a wide range of direct and indirect costs relating to childcare provision here.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the development of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy and programme.

(AQW 6530/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We agreed the core of the programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration on 23 February 2010. Officials have circulated a draft copy of the document to devolved departments including the newly formed Department of Justice for the input of policies, programmes and activities that will begin to construct the cross-cutting elements of the programme.

Departmental replies have begun to come in and officials in OFMDFM are continuing the development of the document with this material. A more complete version of the draft programme will be referred to the Assembly Committee and considered by the Executive.

The programme will then be the subject of a full public consultation which will provide an opportunity for all stakeholder groups to comment and contribute to its development.

The public consultation is likely to begin in June 2010 and continue until at least the end of September.

Once the responses to the consultation have been collated they will be taken on board within the context of a revised text as appropriate. The redrafted programme will again be referred to the Assembly Committee and the Executive for final clearance.

It is anticipated that the final agreed programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration will be published before the end of the year.

The Assembly Ombudsman

Mr J Shannon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the protocol for MPs wishing to contact, or make referrals to, the Assembly Ombudsman.

(AQW 6532/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Ombudsman deals with complaints from people who believe they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration by government departments and public bodies in Northern Ireland. The current powers and responsibilities of the Ombudsman are laid down in the Ombudsman (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and the Commissioner for Complaints (Northern Ireland) Order 1996.

The jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman relates to specified Northern Ireland bodies. Those bodies fall within the competence of the Assembly. This is why the Ombudsman (NI) Order 1996 makes provision for complaints to be referred to the Ombudsman by MLAs rather than MPs.

All complaints, whether made by a member of the public or an MP, must be referred to the Ombudsman by a Member of the Assembly (MLA). A completed complaint form, or letter of complaint, should be sent to the individual's chosen MLA, asking him/her to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman. In such cases, all correspondence from the Ombudsman will be sent to the chosen MLA, who will then ensure that the complainant is kept informed of progress.

Honours System

Mr J Shannon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if they have any plans to introduce an honours system for Northern Ireland separate, but similar, to the system used for the whole of the UK. **(AQW 6533/10)**

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have no plans to introduce an alternative to the current system but remain open to further consideration.

Honours are an excepted matter under the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Ciubotaru v Moldov Judgement by the European Court of Human Rights

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the implications, for fair employment monitoring and the residual method for assigning identity, of the Ciubotaru v Moldova (application no. 27138/04) judgement by the European Court of Human Rights. **(AQW 6552/10)**

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Ciubotaru case dealt with a specific issue within the Moldovan legal system and the decision of the European Court was highly dependent on the individual facts of the case. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to respect for private and family life), like most Convention Articles, does not confer absolute rights. In limiting such rights, the Court will look for a legal basis for the interference, whether the interference seeks to achieve a legitimate aim and whether the interference is in response to a pressing social need.

Monitoring the community background of the workforce here is a requirement of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations which are made under that Order. Fair employment monitoring was introduced to enable the composition of those who belong to the Protestant or the Roman Catholic community to be ascertained. Such monitoring is essential to enable the proper assessment of progress being made towards fair participation in the workforce by both communities.

The European Court accepts that there are areas in which national authorities are in a better position to decide what is best for their people. It is for each state to balance the rights and to act proportionally and for good reason in interfering with such rights. We believe that the Ciubotaru case does not invalidate the current system we have for recording and monitoring the community background of employees in Northern Ireland.

Attorney General

Mr T Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they expect to appoint the Attorney General. **(AQW 6597/10)**

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have consulted with the new Advocate General on our proposed appointment, in accordance with paragraph 13 of Schedule 7 to the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. We intend to make an appointment to this office in the near future.

Community Relations Budget

Mrs N Long asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they, or their officials, have had regarding the potential impact of a 70% reduction in the community relations budget within the Department of Education, given their overall responsibility for community relations.

(AQW 6615/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Officials in OFMDFM were informed of the cuts proposed by Minister Ruane. Discussions are ongoing on the Department of Education's contribution to the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.

Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr T Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the expenditure to date by their Department on (i) the Maze/Long Kesh site in total; (ii) the Maze/Long Kesh Master Plan; and (iii) the implementation strategy.

(AQW 6704/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The expenditure on the Maze/Long Kesh site to 30 April 2010 is £12.48m. Of this, £0.58m was spent on the 2006 Masterplan instituted under direct rule. We announced on 8 April 2009 that this Masterplan would not proceed in its original form. The remaining £11.9m was spent on work associated with the 2006 Masterplan, on a major programme of demolition and essential remediation of contamination, site maintenance and security costs as well as preparatory work by the Maze/Long Kesh Programme Delivery Unit (PDU) on a potential fresh implementation strategy. We provided details of the PDU's costs in our reply to AQ 4827.

Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr T Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list all bodies that have been established by their Department in relation to the Maze/Long Kesh site; and to outline the total cost to date of establishing and running these bodies.

(AQW 6716/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We refer the Member to the answers given to AQW 4824/10 and AQW 4827/10.

Sustainable Development Commissioner

Ms D Purvis asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they expect to have a Sustainable Development Commissioner in place; and to outline the reasons for the delay in making the appointment.

(AQW 6821/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The appointment of a Commissioner, within the Sustainable Development Commission, is an integral part of our plans to advance and promote sustainable development within government and beyond.

A competitive selection process has been conducted and we are currently considering candidates with a view to recommending the appointment of a Commissioner, in line with Sustainable Development Commission recruitment practices.

Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr T Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 6704/10, whether the £11.9m expenditure was paid solely by their Department or in conjunction with another Department.

(AQW 6823/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The £11.9m was spent solely by our Department on work at the Maze/Long Kesh site as detailed in our answer to you to AQW 6704/10, dated 17 May 2010.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Glastry Ice Cream

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department has helped Glastry Ice Cream with the promotion of its new lavender flavour.

(AQW 6800/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): Strict EU State Aid rules place severe constraints on the use of Government funds for promotional activities for local produce. Therefore DARD cannot provide direct funding for the marketing or advertising of a company's produce in the north of Ireland.

My Department, operates the NI Regional Food Programme (NIRFP), which provides financial support to 'not for profit' agri-food groups, to help promote quality regional food. Through groups who benefited from this programme, Glastry Farm have had the opportunity to avail of promotional and sales opportunities at events such as the Magherafelt Christmas Fair, Taste of Ulster Artisan Forum and the Balmoral Show.

Glastry Farm have used the technical services provided by my Department through the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) at Loughry Campus. In 2009, CAFRE technologists were asked by the company, to develop a signature ice cream for The National Trust's Mountstewart Estate, using flavours that could be grown or sourced within the Estate's gardens. Following trials and tastings, the raspberry & lavender ice cream was chosen as the exclusive ice cream.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Libraries NI

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he would consider reviewing the extension of the retirement age for employees of Libraries NI.

(AQW 6673/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): Libraries NI (LNI) operates a retirement procedure that ensures that staff aged 65 have the right to request to work beyond normal retirement age for a fixed or indefinite period. This procedure is based on the retirement requirements set out in the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

In considering the requests the Employer (LNI) may (1) approve the request; (2) approve a compromise extension period; or (3) refuse the request.

All decisions taken are based on the business needs of the organisation. It is an open and transparent process. The application of this procedure is an operational issue for Libraries NI.

Department of Education

Gaelscoil na Speiríní, Draperstown

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education how much funding has been allocated to Gaelscoil na Speiríní, Draperstown, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6640/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Leagtar amach sa tábla thíos an cistiú a leithdháileadh ar Ghaelscoil na Speiríní sna cúig bliana a chuaigh thart. Seasann na figiúirí don bhliain 2006-07 go dtí an bhliain 2008-09 do gach cistiú athfhillteach don scoil, ó ráitis fhoilsithe Táirgeachta Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt. Tá sonraí Táirgeachta don bhliain 2009-10 faoi choinníoll ag an

dáta seo. Soláthraítear sa tábla leithdháileadh tosaigh buiséid don scoil fosta, a leithdháiltear faoi shocruithe na Foirmle Coitinn Cistithe (FCC), don bhliain airgeadais reatha 2010/11.

The table below sets out the funding allocated to Gaelscoil na Speiríní in the last five years. Figures for 2006-07 to 2008-09 represent all recurrent funding for the school, from the North Eastern Education & Library Board published Outturn statements. Outturn data for 2009-10 is provisional at this date. The table also provides the initial budget allocation for the school, distributed under the Common Funding Formula (CFF) arrangements, for the current 2010/11 financial year.

£000'S

2006/07 ⁽¹⁾	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
67	125	138	146	134

Notes

- (1) Gaelscoil na Speiríní established for grant-aid funding from September 2006
- (2) Funding allocations in 2007-08 onwards excludes carry-over from previous financial year
- (3) Provisional for 2009/10

Gaelscoil na Speiríní, Draperstown

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the in-take of pupils; and (ii) the number of teachers and classroom assistants employed at Gaelscoil na Speiríní, in each of the last five years **(AQW 6641/10)**

Minister of Education: Rinneadh scoil dheontaschúnta de Ghaelscoil na Speiríní sa bhliain 2006/07. Roimhe sin, bhí sí ina scoil neamhspleách. Tá cúntóir ranga amháin a oibríonn 20 uair in aghaidh na seachtaine ag an scoil sa bhliain 2009/10. Léirítear sa tábla thíos eolas ar iontógáil daltaí, ar rollú agus ar líon na múinteoirí.

Gaelscoil na Speiríní became grant-aided in 2006/07. Prior to that, it existed as an independent school. The school has one classroom assistant working 20 hours per week in 2009/10. Information on pupil intake, enrolment and teacher numbers is displayed in the table below.

GAELSCOIL NA SPEIRÍNÍ – ENROLMENTS 2006/07 – 2009/10

Year	Year 1 enrolment	Total enrolment	Full-time equivalent teachers
2006/07	12	21	2
2007/08	5	23	2
2008/09	4	24	2
2009/10	12	24	3

Note:

- 1 Enrolment figures are sourced from the school census.
- 2 Teacher information is derived from the annual Pupil: Teacher Ratio statistical return.
- 3 Information on the number of classroom assistants was supplied by the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

Whitehouse Primary School, Newtownabbey

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education how she intends to accommodate pupils at Whitehouse Primary School, Newtownabbey in the long-term.

(AQW 6652/10)

Minister of Education: Thug mé údarás do Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt an conradh chun scoil nua a thógáil la haghaidh Whitehouse Primary School a bhronnadh. Ba chóir go n-éascódh sé seo tús a chur le hobair foirgníochta laistigh de roinnt seachtainí. Ba chóir go gcuirf deireadh leis an scoil nua roimh fhómhar na bliana seo chugainn.

I have authorised the North Eastern Education and Library Board to award the contract for the new build school for Whitehouse Primary School. This should enable construction work to begin within a few weeks. The new school should be completed by the autumn of next year.

Pre-school Nursery Provision

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail the level of pre-school nursery provision in each Education and Library Board area; and (ii) for her assessment of whether this provision is sufficient to meet the demand.

(AQW 6676/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Léirítear sa tábla líon na n-áiteanna cistithe réamhscoile atá ar fáil faoi láthair don scoilbhliain 2010/11. Úsáidtear cóhort P1 na scoilbhliana reatha mar sheachtháscaire chun leibhéal an tsoláthair réamhscoile a áireamh don bhliain ina diaidh sin i ngach limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne. Meastar go bhfuil an cur chuige seo ar an chur chuige is cruinne maidir le hiarracht a dhéanamh ar éileamh ar áiteanna sa toadhchaí a thuar. Tugtar faoi deara, áfach, go n-athraíonn na figiúirí ó bhliain go bliain agus féadann tuismitheoirí a chur isteach ar áiteanna lasmuigh den limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ina gcónaíonn siad.
- (ii) The table below shows the number of funded pre-school places currently available for the 2010/11 school year. The level of available pre-school provision in each Education and Library Board area is calculated using the current school year's P1 cohort as a proxy indicator for the following year. This method is considered to be the most accurate in trying to predict future demand for places. However, it should be noted that numbers vary from year to year and parents can apply for places outside of the Education and Library Board area in which they live.

	No. of places in Statutory Sector	No. of funded places in Voluntary/Private Sector	Total No. of funded places available in 2010/11	P1 numbers in current school year - 2009/10	% level of provision available (using 2009/10 P1 cohort as a proxy)
BELB	2834	552	3386	3269	103.58
WELB	2548	1280	3828	3774	101.43
NEELB	3048	1780	4828	5145	93.84
SEELB	2938	1450	4388	4715	93.06
SELB	2834	2093	4927	5455	90.32
	14,202	7155	21,357	22,358	95.52

Under the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme additional provision has been introduced on a phased basis since the 1998/99 school year. Since that time the overall level of provision has risen from 45% to over 90%. As not every parent wants to avail of a pre-school place for their child this level of provision was considered sufficient to meet demand.

- (ii) The admissions process to pre-school provision in the 20010/11 school year is still ongoing. Education and Library Boards are indicating an unprecedented increase in demand for pre-school places for the forthcoming school year.

Education and Library Boards are now going through the re-allocation of places process for those children who were not placed at the end of the initial process of admissions which was completed on 30 April 2010. It is expected that this process will be completed by the end June 2010. Education and Library Boards will seek to extend the number of places in existing settings, where possible, or admit to the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme new pre-school providers in the voluntary/private sector to address any shortfall.

In the 2009/10 school year the Department secured additional funding to meet demand for extra places. In order to maintain this increased level for the forthcoming school year an additional £300,000 of funding has already been made available to Education and Library Boards.

The Department will continue to liaise with the Education and Library Boards to ensure that, as far as possible, this significantly increased demand for pre-school places is met.

Funding for School Maintenance

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of funding for maintenance at each school in North Down (i) in 2009/10; and (ii) budgeted for 2010/11.

(AQW 6683/10)

Minister of Education: Mionsonraítear sa tábla thíos an caiteachas ar chothabháil áitreamh na scoileanna rialaithe agus ar chothabháil áitreamh na scoileanna atá faoi chothabháil ar an Dún Thuaidh sa bhliain 2009/10. Ní leithdháileann Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt, atá freagrach as cothabháil na scoileanna seo, buiséid ar bhonn scoil ar scoil. Ní féidir, mar sin, buiséid chothabhála a sholáthar le haghaidh scoileanna ar an Dún Thuaidh don bhliain 2010/11.

Spending on the maintenance of controlled and maintained schools' premises in North Down in 2009/10 is detailed in the table below. The South Eastern Education and Library Board, which is responsible for the maintenance of these schools, does not allocate budgets on a school-by-school basis. It is, therefore, not possible to provide 2010/11 maintenance budgets for schools in North Down.

School	Expenditure 2009/10
Ballyholme Primary School	£12,519.96
Ballymagee Primary School	£29,639.44
Ballyvester Primary School	£14,145.96
Bangor Academy And 6th Form College	£2,669.97
Bangor Central Nursery School	£18,960.39
Bangor Central Primary School	£32,043.78
Bloomfield Primary School	£76,760.66
Clandeboye Primary School	£23,466.12
Clifton Special School	£33,050.81
Crawfordsburn Primary School	£45,381.13
Donaghadee Primary School	£32,286.30
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	£75,437.83
Glenlola Collegiate	£27,360.40

School	Expenditure 2009/10
Grange Park Primary School	£5,720.48
Hollywood Nursery School	£5,353.63
Hollywood Primary School	£12,283.23
Kilcooley Primary School	£78,678.79
Kilmaine Primary School	£15,942.66
Lakewood Special School	£0.00
Millisle Primary School	£19,823.54
Priory College	£21,436.08
Rathmore Primary School	£11,497.66
Redburn Primary School	£12,017.72
St Anne's Primary School	£3,418.09
School	Expenditure 2009/10
St Columbanus' College	£67,965.28
St Comgall's Primary School	£33,130.12
St Malachy's Primary School	£8,145.65
St Patrick's Primary School	£48,903.12
Towerview Primary School	£232.92
Trinity Nursery School	£8,435.89

Capital Works

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the remedial capital works planned for 2010/11, in light of the delay in capital works for schools in Hollywood.

(AQW 6684/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt in iúl nach bhfuil aon phleananna i bhfeidhm aige, faoi láthair, le haghaidh oibreacha feabhais caipitil do na scoileanna ar an Choill Naofa atá liostaithe sa chlár um oibreacha caipitil. Is iad na scoileanna seo ná Priory College, Hollywood Primary School, Hollywood Nursery School agus Redburn Primary School.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that, at the present time, it has no plans in place for remedial capital works for the Hollywood schools listed on the capital works programme. These are Priory College, Hollywood Primary School, Hollywood Nursery School and Redburn Primary School.

Braidside Integrated School

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed capital build for Braidside Integrated School.

(AQW 6689/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta ar na freagraí a thug mé ar AQW 6540/10 agus AQW 6630/10 a chuir Declan O'Loan agus Mervyn Storey faoi seach síos agus a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 14 Bealtaine 2010.

I refer the member to my answers to AQW 6540/10 and AQW 6630/10 tabled by Declan O'Loan and Mervyn Storey respectively and published in the Official Report 14 May 2010.

Pre-school Places

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of surplus pre-school places available in the 2010/11 academic year, broken down by pre-school and constituency.
(AQW 6705/10)

Minister of Education: Tá socraithe agam go gcuirfean an t-eolas a iarradh i Leabharlann an Tionóil.

I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Convergence Delivery Plan

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail any direct communication, since March 2010, issued by her Department to education sector staff in relation to the Convergence Delivery Plan.
(AQW 6715/10)

Minister of Education: Scríobh mo Roinn chuig na Cathaoirligh agus chuig na Príomhfheidhmeannaigh ar na naoi eagraíocht neamhrannacha phoiblí maidir leis an Phlean Soláthair Choinbhéirseachta ar 27 Aibreán. Scríobh an Roinn chuig Cathaoirleach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair ar 26 Aibreán agus chuig Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt ar 29 Aibreán fosta.

My Department wrote to Chairpersons and Chief Executives of the nine Non-departmental public bodies about the Convergence Delivery Plan on 27 April. The Department also wrote to the Chairperson of the Western Education and Library Board on 26 April and to the Chief Executive of the North Eastern Education and Library Board on 29 April.

A meeting of a Communicating Change Consultative Group involving officials from the department and the bodies involved in convergence took place on 22 April. The Chief Executive designate of ESA also met with the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards on 30 April.

Teachers Pensions

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education why the pensions of retired teachers have been frozen; and what plans she has to address this issue in the future.
(AQW 6731/10)

Minister of Education: Is í an Roinn Airgeadais agus Pearsanra, ina cáil mar ionadaí na Státseirbhíse ar an Choiste Oifigiúil um Phinsin Ghairme, atá i gceannas ar a leithéid de shaincheisteanna agus tugann sí comhairle gurb í an Státchiste a shocraíonn an ráta.

The Department of Finance and Personnel, in their capacity as the Civil Service representative on the Official Committee on Occupational Pensions, is the lead on any such issues and they advise that the rate is set by the Treasury.

Applied Behaviour Analysis in Treating Autism

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the effectiveness of Applied Behaviour Analysis in treating Autism spectrum disorders; and if she has any plans to extend this programme to specialist schools, as is the case in the Republic of Ireland.
(AQW 6750/10)

Minister of Education: Athraíonn riachtanais oideachais speisialta na bpáistí ó pháiste go páiste agus tá riachtanais na bpáistí ar speictream an uathachais go háirithe éagsúil.

The special educational needs of children differ from child to child and the needs of children on the autistic spectrum are particularly diverse.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have statutory responsibility for identifying, assessing and meeting the special educational needs of children including those with autism. ELBs do so taking into account the individual needs of each child and, therefore, there will be variations in the provision made, based on the assessed needs of the child. Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is one of many methods of intervention for autism. Currently all ELBs are providing a variety of ABA based programmes, including the provision of classroom assistants trained in ABA.

I am determined that all children with special education needs receive the very best start in life by ensuring that their education provision is tailored to their very different individual needs. Interventions for children with autism, in line with the recommendations of the Report of the Task Group on Autism, should be child-centred. The Task Group Report, launched in 2002, sets out very clear reasons why it would not be appropriate to advocate only one approach to meeting the needs of children with autism.

The Department of Education does not have any plans for specialist schools for ABA. Any proposal for an ABA specialist school would have to be developed in conjunction with the appropriate Education and Library Board (ELB) or indeed all ELBs before approaching DE through the normal development proposal route.

New Build Schools in Upper Bann

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education for an update on each proposed new build for schools in the Upper Bann constituency.

(AQW 6808/10)

Minister of Education: Tá seacht n-olltionscadal tógála i dtoghcheantar na Banna Uachtair faoi láthair; tá ceann amháin á thógáil; agus tá sé cinn ag céimeanna éagsúla den phleanáil.

There are currently seven major building projects in the Upper Bann constituency; one under construction and six at various stages of planning.

School name	Project description	Planning stage
Banbridge Academy	Extension & Refurbishment	Project under construction, due to complete Nov. 2011
St Mary's PS, Banbridge	New school on extended site	Stage D revision awaited
St Teresa's PS, Lurgan	New school on extended site	Stage D revision under consideration
Tannaghmore PS	New school on existing site	Stage D revision awaited
Lurgan College	New school on existing site	Project on hold – awaiting strategic plan for Craigavon area from SELB
Portadown College	New school on existing site	Stage C awaited
St Patrick's College, Banbridge	New school on extended site	Stage D under consideration

As you will be aware the review of all proposed major capital work projects, including the six planned projects in your constituency, is ongoing and my officials are working to complete the process. Given the importance of this task, however, it is essential that robust evidence is collated and that full consideration is given to each project, before a decision is taken. While I recognise the challenging circumstances, I am not in a position at present to give specific dates for future progress of any particular scheme.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Employment Opportunities in the Comber Area

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had about creating employment opportunities in the Comber area and regenerating the town's businesses. **(AQW 6583/10)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): I have not had any recent specific discussions with stakeholders from within the Comber area in relation to job creation opportunities or in relation to regenerating the town's businesses. However, I have visited a number of businesses within the wider Strangford constituency including LE Pritchett and EDM Spanwall.

Over the last five years, Invest NI has issued 480 offers of assistance to businesses in the Strangford Parliamentary Constituency, which includes the Comber area, which, if fully implemented, will lever total investment of nearly £70 million, leading to the creation of 381 new jobs and safeguarding a further 151 others.

Invest NI assistance has helped ambitious growth plans put forward by companies such as Willowbrook Foods, John Huddleston Engineering and TG Eakin. You will be aware that TG Eakin this year received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade and I hope to be visiting with the company in the near future.

Invest NI's full range of support is available to businesses in the area. It will continue to work proactively with local companies and entrepreneurs to assist any worthwhile eligible business opportunities, as well as helping them to minimise the impact of the economic downturn.

Ferry Operators and Tourism

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she would consider introducing a scheme to help people with the often prohibitive cost of travelling by sea between mainland UK and Northern Ireland to attend game fairs and events, thus benefitting ferry operators and tourism. **(AQW 6608/10)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I have no plans for introducing a discount scheme for ferry travellers. However, my Department through the agencies funded by it, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland Limited, work actively with event organisers and ferry operators to ensure that visitors and passengers attending events in Northern Ireland have quality tourism and travel experiences. Indeed a number of the major events, such as the North West 200, work with the tourist agencies and the ferry operators to provide cost effective travel packages for those travelling to their events.

The Consumer Council works with the ferry companies to ensure high standards of service, and has produced 'Plain Sailing' – a helpful passenger's guide to planning and using ferry travel, which includes advice on how to get the best deal when travelling by sea.

Ferry travel between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, from which Northern Ireland tourism benefits, is provided by private sector ferry companies. Fare levels are a matter for their commercial judgement, having regard to prevailing market conditions.

Department of the Environment

Planning Service

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he is taking to make the Planning Service financially self-sufficient, with outgoings being equal to the revenue raised. **(AQW 6584/10)**

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): The Department's Planning Service is currently experiencing a budgetary shortfall of just over £8m, mainly due to a significant reduction in planning fee income associated with a reduction in the number of planning applications being received. In light of this much reduced volume of planning applications and reduced income, the Planning Service is seeking to identify cost reduction measures which will help it to align staffing levels and costs more closely with work demands and revenue.

I anticipate that the redeployment of 271 staff from the Planning Service will be necessary to deliver the required scale of cost reductions. Current plans are that the Northern Ireland Civil Service will be able to manage the workforce reductions in the Planning Service through the redeployment of surplus staff either to other suitable posts in the DOE or in another NICS Department.

The Planning Service will reorganise to live within its budget and reprioritise resources to ensure the impact from the reduction in staff is minimised and key services to customers can be maintained.

I will also ensure that the Department makes the appropriate representations to DFP for additional in year funding at the June Monitoring round. You may also wish to note that the Department has initiated a fundamental review of the nature and structure of the fees charged for planning services with the aim of ensuring that the fees charges for specific chargeable services are broadly consistent with the costs of providing those services.

Planning Service Staff

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment what (i) consultation; and (ii) cost-benefit analysis has been undertaken regarding the proposals to relocate Planning Service staff to other parts of the Civil Service.

(AQW 6616/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Department's Planning Service is currently experiencing a budgetary shortfall of just over £8m, mainly due to a significant reduction in planning fee income associated with a reduction in the number of planning applications being received. In light of this much reduced volume of planning applications and reduced income, the Planning Service is seeking to identify cost reduction measures which will help it to align staffing levels and costs more closely with work demands and revenue.

A report has been submitted to me on how Planning Service can live within its opening budget allocation which has identified 271 posts now considered surplus in terms of affordability.

I anticipate that the redeployment of 271 staff from Planning Service will be necessary to deliver the required scale of cost reductions. The Planning Service will reorganise to live within its budget and reprioritise resources to ensure key services to customers can be maintained and impact from the reduction in staff is minimised.

The Department is currently engaged in developing a Redeployment Scheme for all staff who will be becoming surplus in the near future. It is also developing a Regrading Scheme to enable Professional & Technical (P&T) planners to transfer voluntarily to the General Service discipline. This would open up the possibility of redeployment to vacancies across the NICS. P&T Planners cannot be required to regrade.

There are a number of stages to be completed including consultation with the Environment Committee, Corporate HR, the TUS, the staff affected, and other Departments who will be importing DOE staff before the formal process of redeploying staff from the Planning Service can commence.

I am confident however, that the Northern Ireland Civil Service should be able to manage the workforce reductions in the Planning Service through the redeployment of surplus staff either to other suitable posts in the DOE or in another NICS Department. While there may be costs associated with the redeployment of staff to new office locations, these costs are borne by the importing Department in line with the standard NICS Handbook provisions. It is not possible at this stage to estimate what

these might be as the Department has no information about the posts its surplus staff may be asked to fill.

I will also ensure that the Department makes the appropriate representations to DFP for additional in year funding at the June Monitoring round. You may also wish to note that the Department has initiated a fundamental review of the nature and structure of the fees charged for planning services with the aim of ensuring that the fees charged for specific chargeable services are broadly consistent with the costs of providing those services.

Planning Service Staff

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the criteria that will be used for selecting the 270 Planning Service staff for possible re-deployment to other positions in the Civil Service.

(AQW 6644/10)

Minister of the Environment: Subject to consultation with the Trades Union, the selection of staff to be redeployed as surplus will be based primarily on business requirements i.e. identifying the individuals most suited to the work functions remaining in the Agency, rather than identifying the individuals whose post is surplus. The personal preferences of staff will be taken into account, where possible. This will include anyone who wishes to volunteer for redeployment.

However if it is not possible to identify the individuals to remain based on business need, names may be selected randomly in a fair and transparent manner.

Planning Service Staff

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact of the re-deployment of Planning Service staff to other parts of the Civil Service on (i) levels of service for the public; (ii) the size of the case load, per officer, within the Planning Service compared to other UK regions; and (iii) the overall cost of re-deployment, including any subsistence payments.

(AQW 6645/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Department is experiencing a financial shortfall of c£16m for 2010-11. The Planning Service element of this shortfall is estimated at £8.3m the bulk of which (£6.4m) relates to a reduction in planning receipts.

The global economic downturn and its impact on the property and housing markets has clearly been a major factor contributing to the sharp fall in planning application numbers and also related fee receipts received by Planning Service. In light of the much reduced volume of planning applications and related fee receipts Planning Service has been considering ways to reduce its operating costs to align staffing levels and costs more closely to work demands and revenue. Significant staff reductions and redeployment of staff is necessary to align staffing levels and costs more closely to work demands and revenue. The Planning Service will therefore reorganise to live within its budget and reprioritise resources to ensure key services to customers can be maintained and impact on the economy from the reduction in staff is minimised.

The current average caseload in the Planning Service during the 2009/10 business year was 180 planning applications for each case officer which is slightly higher than the figure of 150 cases in GB. However, we have no information on the mix of applications in the GB total and so direct comparison may not be appropriate.

The Department is approaching the redeployment of Planning Service staff in line with the standard terms and conditions for dealing with such situations in the NICS. It is too early to estimate the overall costs of this redeployment exercise however, salaries for staff which are redeployed and therefore the cost of redeployment will be borne by the receiving Department.

Planning Service Staff

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment what plans are in place to ensure that Planning Service staff who are re-deployed under the current proposals, have ample opportunity to avail of training to keep their professional skills and registration current, in the event of a future upturn in planning applications.

(AQW 6646/10)

Minister of the Environment: In developing arrangements for the redeployment of specialist planning staff to other duties in the Department and the wider NICS, the Department will seek to incorporate provisions that would enable those staff to be considered for future vacancies in planning.

The Department's officials have already been in discussion with the RTPI and clarified that if a specialist planner is not working in a specialist planning role they can still retain their planning status provided they can demonstrate 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) over a 24 month period. It would be the Department's intention, with the co-operation of receiving Departments, to agree that specialist planning staff who are voluntarily re-graded and redeployed are provided with the opportunity to avail of CPD activity or training for 12 months from the date of redeployment.

Planning Service Staff

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact of the proposed re-deployment of Planning Service staff on the Strategic Projects Unit.

(AQW 6647/10)

Minister of the Environment: In response to your previous written questions I have already outlined the background and financial/economic reasons for the decision to redeploy the 271 planning service staff.

To reiterate, in light of the much reduced volume of planning applications and reduced income, the Planning Service is seeking to identify cost reduction measures which will help it to align staffing levels and costs more closely with work demands and revenue.

The Strategic Projects Unit, in common with all parts of the Planning Service, will have to reorganise to live within its reduced staffing allocation and reprioritise resources to ensure the impact from the reduction in staff is minimised and key services to customers can be maintained.

I will also ensure that the Department makes the appropriate representations to DFP for additional in year funding at the June Monitoring round. You may also wish to note that the Department has initiated a fundamental review of the nature and structure of the fees charged for planning services with the aim of ensuring that the fee charges for specific chargeable services are broadly consistent with the costs of providing those services.

Green Wedge Between Dundonald and Belfast

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQO 1021/10, whether he can confirm that Belfast City Council's submission to the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan supported the protection for the green wedge between Dundonald and Belfast being maintained; and that the Council has not withdrawn from this position. [R]

(AQW 6648/10)

Minister of the Environment: I can confirm that Belfast City Council submitted a detailed formal response to the proposals contained in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) on 25 January 2005. Although the Council does not make a specific reference to the Dundonald Urban Landscape Wedge, they do include support for Landscape Wedges. They also make reference to the Landscape Wedges that were included in the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001, and highlight the importance of these wedges in defining the limits of settlements. The Dundonald Wedge was one of the wedges included in the BUAP

Belfast City Council also submitted a further response to the BMAP Team on 2 November 2005, in which they counter objected to representations that had been placed on public display in relation to Draft BMAP. In particular they objected to proposals that would remove significant areas from the proposed Urban Landscape Wedge designations at Knock Golf Club.

I can confirm that Belfast City Council has not withdrawn from their position.

Electronic Planning Information for Citizens

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment what steps are being taken to ensure that the Electronic Planning Information for Citizens system is compatible with local councils' computer systems.
(AQW 6664/10)

Minister of the Environment: ePIC is a stand alone system based on Oracle, workflow and web based technology. Whilst at the initiation of the project there was no requirement for ePIC to be compatible with IT systems deployed in Local Councils. ePIC has been built to industry standards using mainstream I.T technology and can facilitate information sharing with Council IT systems.

Plans are in place to cost and to take forward a programme of work to ready ePIC for operational service within Local Government structures. In addition a project is underway by Local Government Policy Division to roll out Network NI to local government so that systems such as ePIC can be accessed via council headquarters.

Pension Rights for Councillors

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association to ensure that pension rights for councillors are introduced in this financial year.
(AQW 6679/10)

Minister of the Environment: I have had no discussions with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association about the introduction of pensions for councillors this year.

Runway at Belfast City Airport

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of the Environment when he plans to publish the report compiled by the Civil Aviation Authority regarding the proposed extension of the runway at Belfast City Airport.
(AQW 6696/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Civil Aviation Authority Report is available to the public on request.

Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment what consultation took place with the National British Bird and Mule Club or any private clubs in relation to the revision of schedule 4 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
(AQW 6751/10)

Minister of the Environment: The National British Bird and Mule Club and the Mid Ulster British Bird Mule & Hybrid Club were included in the list of consultees to the public consultation exercise on the proposals to review the Wildlife Order. Both organisations responded to the consultation.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Corporation Tax

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans he has to take forward the proposal to reduce corporation tax.

(AQO 1227/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): The recent Northern Ireland Economic Reform Group's report on this issue set out a positive case for a reduced rate of corporation tax for Northern Ireland. The new Secretary of State, Owen Patterson, has also indicated that he intends to publish a paper on how responsibility for corporation tax could be transferred to devolved areas.

While I still have some concerns on the public expenditure implications and deliverability of this proposal we will liaise with the new Government on this issue and the Executive sub-group established to consider a new economic strategy for Northern Ireland can consider this issue further.

First Trust Bank

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has had with the Finance Minister in Dublin in relation to the Allied Irish Bank proposal to sell off the First Trust Bank.

(AQO 1233/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I am very concerned about the potential implications of Allied Irish Banks decision to put First Trust Bank up for sale. It is another indicator of the scale of the difficulties facing local banks and many local jobs are involved. While I cannot become involved in any commercial decisions it is very important that the Northern Ireland banking sector is able to meet the needs of the local economy.

That is why I gave a commitment to raise this issue with Minister Lenihan when I met with the Irish Banking Officials Association on the 27th April.

I was scheduled to meet Minister Lenihan on the 20th May 2010, however, Minister Lenihan can no longer attend this meeting, and Minister Mansergh will be taking his place. I will raise this issue with him then and again with Minister Lenihan when our meeting is rescheduled.

Private Finance

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of his current departmental budget, what consideration he has given to private finance and market mechanisms being harnessed to deliver socially desirable outcomes.

(AQO 1234/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Using procurement policy one of our key objectives is to deliver socially desirable outcomes whether publicly or privately financed.

Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy is committed to delivering 'Best Value for Money' which is defined as 'the optimum combination of whole life cost and quality to meet the customer's requirements'. This allows for the inclusion, where appropriate, of social, economic and environmental goals. It is for departments to determine the sustainable and social impact they wish to achieve from their programmes and projects.

In terms of my department's current budget, both capital and resource budgets are severely constrained and it is therefore very difficult to contemplate major investments whether publicly or privately financed.

Government Property

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the current rateable valuation of all Government owned property and the current figure for the utilisation of space available. **(AQO 1235/10)**

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I can speak only for the property owned and leased by DFP, namely the Government Office Estate. This currently comprises approximately 200 buildings with a total asset value of £300m. The space utilization within the Government Office Estate is approximately 16 square meters per person.

Digital Inclusion

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he is working with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on digital inclusion.

(AQO 1236/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Northern Ireland is well positioned with regard to Digital Inclusion - a Digital Inclusion Unit is based within the Delivery and Innovation Division in DFP. The Digital Inclusion Unit is responsible for Digital Inclusion, and focuses on ensuring that citizens across Northern Ireland are capable of accessing new digital services by establishing, funding and operating a number of digital support projects.

A key part of this involves collaboration and consultation with DETI and other Departments. The DFP and DETI Ministers consulted on a response to the Minister for Digital Inclusion in Westminster on the subject of "Delivering Digital Inclusion – An Action Plan for Consultation". Also, The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, in his capacity as Minister responsible for Digital Britain, recently published the "National Plan for Digital Participation". The responsibility for developing the Plan in Northern Ireland rests with the NI Digital Participation Hub which includes representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors including both DFP and DETI.

DFP officials will continue to work with Minister Foster's DETI officials, where required, to enable the implementation of the action plan and relevant digital inclusion initiatives.

Rates: Early Payment

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many ratepayers have availed of the 4% early payment discount in the current financial year compared to the previous three financial years. **(AQO 1237/10)**

Minister of Finance and Personnel: This legal provision allows ratepayers to receive a 4% discount on their domestic rate bill if payment reaches Land & Property Services by a date specified on the rate bill. This is generally around 35 days after the issue of the bill.

In the 2008-2009 rating year, 128,524 rate accounts received the discount; in the 2009-2010 rating year, 124,231 rate accounts received the discount. LPS does not hold this information prior to 2008.

To date in the 2010-2011 rating year, 94,589 rate accounts have received the discount. I should stress that the legal provision regarding discount applies to all domestic rate bills, including those issued during the year as people move house and so on. This year's figure therefore continues to rise on a daily basis.

I am aware of correspondence from a number of Members of behalf of their constituents who have not received the discount because their payments have been received by LPS after the quoted discount date. The law is clear – LPS must receive payment of a rate bill by the discount date stated on the bill. Last year, LPS made the provision very clear on the rate bill, in the leaflet accompanying the bill and in the media. The Agency has done so again this year.

Civil Service: Absenteeism

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress is being made in reducing absenteeism within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

(AQO 1238/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Recent years have seen steady progress in reducing absenteeism across the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The reduction from an average figure of 15.5 days sickness absence per employee in 2003/04 to 11.0 days in 2008/09 is encouraging, but more needs to be done.

A comprehensive action plan, building on the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, is in place to address sickness absence across all departments.

I am not yet able to report the final out-turn absence figures for 2009/10. I expect to see headline end-of-year figures for 2009/10 around the end of June 2010 and a substantive annual report on sickness absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service will be published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in September as normal.

I will ensure that this information is made available to the Assembly and to my Ministerial colleagues.

Civil Service: 2009 Pay Award

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the negotiations on the 2009 pay award for non-industrial grades below the Senior Civil Service.

(AQO 1239/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: A final offer was made to NIPSA on 28 April and their Executive Committee met the following day and reluctantly recommended acceptance of the offer to their members. NIPSA are now in the process of consulting their members and we should know the outcome of their consultation later this month.

Public Sector Reform

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of whether reform of the public sector is the best means of dealing with the fiscal deficit and whether cuts without reform pose the biggest danger to maintaining front-line services.

(AQO 1240/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: As we are all aware the current level of public sector borrowing in the UK is not sustainable and action will need to be taken in the short and medium term in order to reduce the level of national debt. As a result there will be constraints in public spending until at least 2015-16.

Although this is likely to have implications for the whole of the UK, I will be seeking to make sure that Northern Ireland is not disproportionately targeted. However, there is a need to recognise that local departments will inevitably face savings in the coming years.

In order that the implications of additional savings on the general public in Northern Ireland is minimised, it is essential that departments plan in a strategic manner how to achieve these savings. This may include reform in terms of how individual services are delivered, as well as the overall structure of governance and administration. I will continue to urge Ministers and departments to look beyond the quick fix in terms of simply salami slicing funding for front line services. These seemingly easy approaches to achieving savings will only store up future problems, as we are likely to be faced with a sustained period of public expenditure constraint.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Maxillo-facial Surgery

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the target planned waiting time for maxillo-facial surgery; (ii) the actual waiting time; (iii) the number of patients currently on the planned waiting list; and (iv) the longest and average planned waiting time.

(AQW 6538/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Admissions for planned surgery are determined by either clinical or social criteria. The appropriate time a patient waits for planned surgery will differ on a case by case basis. This will depend upon individual circumstances such as the patient's clinical condition. Consequently, patients awaiting planned surgery are not managed on a waiting list.

Front-line Services

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount of money transferred to front-line services as a result of the Review of Public Administration changes in the former Northern Health Board area.

(AQW 6558/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: To date £5.2 m of savings have been made in the NHSCT as a result of RPA and these have all been used to meet the costs of front line services. In addition, while it is not possible to identify from which HSSB area savings have been derived in 2009-10, the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency, Business Services Organisation and the Patient and Client Council have delivered a further £3.87m of RPA savings which have likewise been used to support front line services across Northern Ireland.

Review of Public Administration

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the commissioning of health services at local level, by locally based staff, will continue following the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 6592/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In implementing the reforms under the Review of Public Administration, the Health and Social Care Board remains committed to maintaining a strong presence in all of its local offices in Londonderry, Armagh, Ballymena and Belfast. This is considered particularly important to ensure that the Local Commissioning Groups are able to meet their obligations delegated by the Health and Social Care Board to commission services for the population each covers.

Increased Mileage Claims

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on increased mileage claims due to more staff having to travel to Belfast from County Hall, Ballymena since 1 April 2009.

(AQW 6593/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The additional expenditure incurred as a result of the reimbursement of staff mileage claims from Belfast to County Hall, Ballymena could only be determined at a disproportionate cost.

Staff at County Hall, Ballymena

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent in providing mobile phone technology since 1 April 2009 to enable staff who have relocated to Belfast to communicate with support staff at County Hall, Ballymena.

(AQW 6594/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: No additional mobile phone technology has been purchased since 1 April 2009 to enable staff who have relocated to Belfast to communicate with staff at County Hall, Ballymena.

Staff at County Hall, Ballymena

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the additional cost of relocating health posts to Belfast from County Hall, Ballymena.

(AQW 6595/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the answer provided in AQW 6556/10.

Specialist Multi-disciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children, in each Health and Social Care Trust, accessed specialist multi-disciplinary child and adolescent mental health services in 2009, broken down by (i) 0 to 3 years; (ii) 4 to 10 years; and (iii) 11 to 18 years.

(AQW 6605/10)

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

Cancer and Diabetes Services

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what he is doing to meet the recommendations on cancer and diabetes services outlined in the Public Accounts Committee's report of February 2010 into the Health Service.

(AQW 6609/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A Memorandum of Reply to the Public Accounts Committee's report, which includes my Department's response to the recommendations on cancer and diabetes services, was laid before the Assembly on 16 April 2010 and is available on the Department of Finance and Personnel's website. It can be accessed at –

<http://www.aasdni.gov.uk/pubs/MORs/8th%20&%209th%20Report%2009%20-10.pdf>

Mother and Baby Clinic in Crumlin

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Northern Health and Social Care Trust intends to take over management of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust's , Health Visitor led, Mother and Baby Clinic in Crumlin.

(AQW 6710/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently ongoing discussions and negotiations between the South Eastern and Northern Trusts regarding the transfer of responsibility for Health Visiting Services from the South Eastern Trust to the Northern Trust.

A joint meeting will be convened by both Trusts in June 2010 to agree the details of the new arrangement which will include timescales for the transfer of responsibility of these services.

Accident and Emergency Unit in the Causeway Hospital

Mr B Leonard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the re-organisation of accident and emergency services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, if he can provide an assurance that the Accident and Emergency Unit in the Causeway Hospital will not experience problems similar to those which occurred in the Antrim Area Hospital during the weekend of 15 and 16 May.

(AQW 6758/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised by the Northern Trust that activity at Antrim Area Hospital was higher than normal over the weekend of 15 and 16 May. There will always be occasions at both Antrim Area and Causeway hospitals where activity can be higher than normal and this can cause some delays. However, the Trust has assured me that the necessary measures to safely implement the service changes on 24th May will be in place and that they will be in a position to respond to the anticipated additional workload.

In addition, the consolidation of A&E services across two acute hospitals instead of four will mean that a larger team of doctors and nurses will be available to provide care at the Antrim Area Hospital and the Causeway Hospital A&E Departments.

Maternity Services Provided by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of maternity services provided by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6773/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Safe, sustainable maternity services are a key priority for my Department and I was pleased to note, in the recently published report on intrapartum care by the RQIA, that our standard of maternity care continues to strengthen and improve in spite of all the pressures that Trusts are currently facing.

I commend the commitment and dedication of staff working to provide safe and effective maternity services for women and their babies. In particular, staff have responded constructively to both regional and national serious incidents in maternity services, and have worked hard to implement the lessons learned from these incidents.

You will be aware that I recently announced a comprehensive review of maternity services, which will provide a strategy for the delivery of high quality, safe, sustainable and accessible maternity services in Northern Ireland.

Community Mental Health Services

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the proposed changes to community mental health services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area are compatible with the proposals of the Bamford report.

(AQW 6774/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust advises that the main focus of current developments in mental health services is to expand community based alternatives to inpatient services in line with Bamford recommendations.

Considerable progress has been made in; providing community based services for people with Dementia; Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Services introducing more equitable service provision across the whole Trust area for people with severe and enduring mental illness; further developing the rehabilitation and recovery services within the hospital and community and working with partners in the voluntary sector to maximise opportunities in supported living.

Accident and Emergency Services in the Antrim Area Hospital

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional resources he plans to allocate to the accident and emergency services in the Antrim Area Hospital to ensure that services can be safely transferred from the Whiteabbey Hospital and the Mid-Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 6775/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Trust has assured me that the necessary measures to safely implement these changes will be in place for 24th May and that Antrim Area Hospital will be in a position to respond to the anticipated additional workload.

The consolidation of A&E services across two acute hospitals instead of four will mean that a larger team of doctors and nurses will be available to provide care at the Antrim Area Hospital A&E. Additional physical space will be provided within the emergency department at Antrim Area Hospital and an additional 20 beds are being provided.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service will also be increasing ambulance cover in the Northern Trust area to support these changes to service delivery.

Altnagelvin Hospital

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the capacity at which the new south wing of Altnagelvin Hospital is currently operating; and what clinical services are being provided.

(AQW 6817/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised that the south wing of Altnagelvin Hospital provides the following clinical services, haematology/oncology, chemotherapy, maternity, neonatal intensive care, acute care of older people and rehabilitation.

Phase 3.2b of the south wing development was completed and handed over to the Trust on 19 February. The Trust and the Health and Social Care Board are working closely to finalise the funding required to support the services associated with this development with a view to ensuring that the new accommodation becomes operational as soon as possible. When opened, the facility will provide a coronary care unit, acute medical unit and a stroke unit.

Parkinson's Disease

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many full-time and part-time consultants specialising in Parkinson's work for the Health Service.

(AQO 1245/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A range of consultant staff across the health service will have an interest in the care of patients with Parkinson's disease. These may include those specialising in diseases of the elderly or working in our neurology departments. There are currently 17 consultant neurologists in Northern Ireland 9 of whom have a special interest in Parkinson's.

The majority of people living with Parkinson's disease will however have their care managed by their general practitioner who will have access to specialist advice when necessary. Other support services are of course important to Parkinson's sufferers and their carers including the input of specialist nurses and allied health professionals.

Spending Plan 2010-11

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he plans to produce his departmental spending plan for 2010/11.

(AQO 1246/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I will share my revenue spending plans with the Health Committee on 25 May and my capital spending plans on 20 May. This will, of course, be potentially subject to further amendment arising from the change in the UK government.

Inpatients

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average duration of an in-patient stay in hospital.

(AQO 1249/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The latest validated figures held by my Department relate to the 2008/09 year. Over all programmes of care, the average length of stay in hospital was 6.2 days.

Budget 2010-11

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an assessment of the adequacy of his current departmental budget.

(AQO 1250/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My CSR plan focussed on changes which would deliver upstream prevention and downstream management of conditions and which would have ensured we could still have an HSC in twenty years time. Now I am tasked with delivering £105m of revenue and £21.5m of capital cuts, my efforts to build in insurance for the future will inevitably be impaired.

I will continue to highlight to the Executive that short term cuts will debilitate the HSC for many years to come. I will endeavour to protect the front line, but the health service is bearing the burden of £700m efficiencies, added demographic pressures, and increased demand for hospital services. Furthermore I have no choice but to comply with a UK level 3 year settlement for Agenda For Change staff – 90% of staff - which includes a cost of living increase of 2.5%, much higher than general inflation.

I will share my spending plans with the Health Committee on 27 May. This will, of course, be potentially subject to further changes arising from a change in the UK party or parties of government.

Budget 2010-11

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an assessment of the impact of the cuts in his departmental budget in 2010/11.

(AQO 1252/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My CSR plan focussed on changes which would deliver upstream prevention and downstream management of conditions and which would have ensured we could still have an HSC in twenty years time. Now I am tasked with delivering £105m of revenue and £21.5m of capital cuts, my efforts to build in insurance for the future will inevitably be impaired.

I will continue to highlight to the Executive that short term cuts will debilitate the HSC for many years to come. I will endeavour to protect the front line, but the health service is bearing the burden of £700m efficiencies, added demographic pressures, and increased demand for hospital services. Furthermore I have no choice but to comply with a UK level 3 year settlement for Agenda For Change staff – 90% of staff - which includes a cost of living increase of 2.5%, much higher than general inflation.

I will share my spending plans with the Health Committee on 27 May. This will, of course, be potentially subject to further changes arising from a change in the UK party or parties of government.

Causeway Hospital: Renal Unit

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the development of the new renal unit for the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine.

(AQO 1253/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern HSC Trust has been asked to develop a business case for a new renal unit at Causeway Hospital. A key element of this process is to determine the availability of funding to support the scheme. Until the business case has been submitted and assessed by my officials I cannot give a commitment to any project in the planning stage.

In addition, given the current financial climate and uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the next CSR, I must look at all projects and be certain of availability of funding before any project can progress.

Tobacco Products

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking on the sale of tobacco products.

(AQO 1254/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In addition to increasing the age of sale for tobacco products to 18 years from 1 September 2008, I recently consulted on proposals for tougher sanctions on retailers who continue to flout the law on underage tobacco sales. I have also brought a paper to the Executive seeking approval for public consultation on draft regulations banning the display of tobacco products in retail premises and the sale of tobacco from vending machines.

In addition, I will continue to inform the public about the dangers of smoking, and further develop smoking cessation services with the aim of reducing smoking and tobacco sales in Northern Ireland.

Department of Justice

Breaches of Licensing Laws

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice how many licensees have been (i) charged with; and (ii) convicted of, breaches of licensing laws in each year since 2007.

(AQW 6424/10)

Minister of Justice (Mr D Ford): Liquor licensing is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development and the charging of licensees for breaches of licensing laws is an operational matter for the Chief Constable. Information on the number charged/reported to the Public Prosecution Service has been sought from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and is given in Table 1. Data are for the calendar years 2007 to 2009 and cover both breach of licensing offences which refer to the licensee in the offence definition and other breach offences, which do not identify the licensee specifically.

Table 2 gives the number of convictions for both for the calendar years 2004 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available). Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

It is not possible to reconcile PSNI data directly with conviction data as PSNI denote the offence as it has been initially recorded and this may differ from the offence for which a suspect (or suspects) is subsequently proceeded against.

TABLE 1: NUMBER CHARGED/REPORTED TO THE PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE FOR BREACH OF LICENSING LAWS¹ 2007-2009

Year	Licensee offences	Other breach of licensing offences ²	Total
2007	4	56	60
2008	17	92	109
2009	17	188	205

Source:

The statistics given in the table are derived from data supplied by PSNI. Figures are collated on the following basis: (i) if a person is charged more than once on separate occasions in the given year or charged for offences committed on separate occasions, a separate charge is included for each and (ii) if a person is charged for both licensee and other breach offences at the same time, they are included in the licensee offences.

TABLE 2: NUMBER CONVICTED FOR BREACH OF LICENSING LAWS¹ 2004-2006

Year	Licensee offences	Other breach of licensing offences ²	Total
2004	2	67	69
2005	0	44	44
2006	0	55	55

Source: Department of Justice

Notes:

- 1 Excludes offences relating to the purchase, delivery and consumption of alcohol which, by their definition, identify another party as the offender and not the licensee.
- 2 It is not possible to determine if it was the licensee charged/reported and convicted or if the offence was committed by another party.

Police Federation

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what contact he has had with the Police Federation; and how he plans to address concerns it has regarding the need for additional resourcing for the PSNI.

(AQW 6598/10)

Minister of Justice: I met with Terry Spence of the Police Federation on Monday 26 April to discuss the current security situation and the resources available to the Chief Constable. Further to that meeting Mr Spence wrote to me, copied to all Executive Ministers, requesting that the Executive and I collectively address the security threat. I have since written to Mr Spence expressing the Executive's condemnation of the actions of Dissident groups and our unanimous support for the PSNI in the work it is doing to create a safer and more normal policing environment.

The Treasury has made available to the PSNI an additional £37.4m in 2010/11 specifically to deal with dissident terrorist activity and where there is a clear case for further resource I will discuss that with the Minister for Finance and Personnel in the first instance.

Dissident Terrorist Activity

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what steps has taken to ensure that the PSNI has sufficient resources to deal with dissident terrorist activity.

(AQW 6600/10)

Minister of Justice: I have met the Chief Constable and discussed the PSNI's resource requirements in light of the security situation. The PSNI has been given a commitment that an additional £37.4m will be provided in 2010/11 specifically to deal with dissident terrorist activity. Where there is a clear case for further resource I will discuss the matter with the Minister for Finance and Personnel in the first instance.

Convicted Sex Offenders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many convicted sex offenders are currently living in each council area.

(AQW 6618/10)

Minister of Justice: The recording of information about the whereabouts of sexual offenders only applies to those who are currently subject to the notification requirements of Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (the 'sex offender register'). This information is a matter for the Chief Constable who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Children and Young People on Bail

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Justice how many children and young people currently on bail have an address in north Belfast.

(AQW 6621/10)

Minister of Justice: Bail can be granted by either the courts or the police.

Court Bail

There are currently 114 young persons¹ who are on bail granted by the courts and who have an address in Belfast North constituency

Police Bail

There are currently 452 young persons currently on police bail with an address in north Belfast.

Notes:

Both sets of figures are drawn from live databases and the numbers may change daily.

1. A young person is defined as a person aged between 10 and under 18 years of age.
2. Figures provided by PSNI Command Secretariat and cover North Belfast Area Command.

Anti-Social Behavior Orders

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the success of Anti-Social Behavior Orders and their impact on reducing anti-social behaviour.

(AQW 6639/10)

Minister of Justice: The 2008 report by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate into the operation and effectiveness of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) stated that there has been a sensible approach to the introduction of ASBOs in Northern Ireland. It also noted that ASBOs have a role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour but do not provide the full answer. They are used as part of a staged approach to tackling anti-social behaviour alongside other tools.

Dealing with this issue is not solely the responsibility of any one agency, it requires a partnership approach and my Department supports PSNI, district councils and Housing Executive in their actions to tackle anti-social behaviour. They are using the full range of tools available to them including verbal or written warnings, mediation, diversionary activities, acceptable behaviour contracts, injunctions, ASBOs, criminal prosecutions, and evictions.

My Department remains committed to tackling anti-social behaviour, and to deliver a 15% reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents by next March. We are currently on target to achieve this and tackling anti-social behaviour will continue to be a priority in any future plans on Community Safety.

Domestic Abuse

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the 24,482 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the PSNI in 2009/10, how many of these cases occurred in each policing district; and how many were regarded as serious.

(AQW 6670/10)

Minister of Justice: The recording of incidents of domestic abuse by the PSNI is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Annual Crime Figures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the annual crime figures released today by the Chief Constable, to provide a breakdown of the nature and number of crimes recorded in each Policing District for 2009/10.

(AQW 6671/10)

Minister of Justice: The recording of annual crime figures is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Unsolved Murders

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Justice how many murders have gone unsolved in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6677/10)

Minister of Justice: The investigation of murders and the collection of statistical data in respect of crime are matters for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Clearance Rates for Burglary, Rape and Assault

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Justice to detail the clearance rates for (i) burglary; (ii) rape; and (iii) assault in each policing district for each of the last three years.

(AQW 6678/10)

Minister of Justice: The collection of data in respect of clearance rates is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Offensive Weapons

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions secured for (i) being armed with an offensive weapon with intent to commit offence; (ii) possessing an article with a blade or point in a public place; and (iii) possessing an article with a blade or point on school premises, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6693/10)

Minister of Justice: The table gives the number of convictions for each of the offences requested. Convictions for other offensive weapon offences are also included for information.

Data cover the calendar years 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) and are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

NUMBER CONVICTED FOR OFFENSIVE WEAPON OFFENCES BY OFFENCE 2002-2006

Offence	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Armed with offensive weapon with intent to commit offence	0	2	2	1	3
Possessing article with blade or point in public place	17	15	10	20	24
Possessing article with blade or point on school premises	0	1	1	0	3
Possessing offensive weapon in public place	143	161	166	188	211
Possessing offensive weapon on school premises	0	0	2	0	1
Total	160	179	181	209	242

Alleged Victims of Sexual Assault

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, with particular reference to children and vulnerable adults, what measures are in place to protect the alleged victims of sexual assault after suspects have been charged and while their cases proceed through the court system; and whether these measures apply to both adult and juvenile suspects

(AQW 6701/10)

Minister of Justice: There are a number of ways in which the justice system seeks to provide such protection.

When an individual has been charged with committing a serious offence, including a sexual offence, the court may remand that person into custody, or place specific restrictions on them as part of the conditions of bail. There are also other legal remedies available (such as non-molestation orders) for those requiring protection from an abusive partner or who may be subjected to intimidation.

Risks to the public from a person within the criminal justice process who is suspected of a serious sexual or violent offence may be assessed and managed by the criminal justice agencies working together through multi agency public protection arrangements. Risks posed by young people under 18 are normally managed under social services child protection arrangements, but can be considered on a multi agency basis if necessary.

Once the case comes to court there are a range of statutory special measures available for victims of sexual assault to help them give their best possible evidence. This may include a facility to give evidence in private. All children under the age of 17, regardless of the nature of the offence to which the proceedings relate, are considered to be vulnerable witnesses and are automatically eligible for special measures.

Adult complainants of sexual offences are eligible for special measures on the grounds that the quality of their evidence is likely to be diminished because of fear or distress about testifying. In addition, such witnesses are automatically eligible to give evidence by live link.

The law also provides that a person charged with a sexual offence cannot cross-examine the complainant or a child witness in person.

Recorded Incidents of Violence

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of recorded incidents of (i) domestic violence; (ii) sexual assault; (iii) actual bodily harm; and (iv) grievous bodily harm, recorded in the East Antrim constituency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6703/10)

Minister of Justice: The recording of incidents of (i) domestic violence; (ii) sexual assault; (iii) actual bodily harm; and (iv) grievous bodily harm is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board, and I have forwarded this Question to the Chief Constable, who will respond directly.

Anti-social Behaviour Orders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 6210/10, how the six breaches of Anti-social Behaviour Orders were dealt with by the courts.

(AQW 6709/10)

Minister of Justice: I have been informed that four of the six ASBO breaches referred to in AQW/6534/10 (and pursuant to AQW/6210/10) were dealt with by the courts. Two received a Custodial Sentences (1 suspended), one received a Youth Conference Order and one received a Probation Order. The PPS has not yet decided how to proceed with one of the ASBO breaches and has decided not to prosecute in another case.

Department for Regional Development

Traffic Wardens

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the working hours of traffic wardens on duty in Belfast; (ii) what consideration has been given to extending the evening hours worked by traffic wardens to ensure that clearways, particularly on arterial routes are clear for a sufficient period of time to allow rush-hour traffic to pass.

(AQW 6601/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that the standard deployment hours for Traffic Attendants in Belfast are 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Saturday and 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Sundays. Additional deployment of Traffic Attendants is routinely provided in Belfast city centre to 10:30 pm.

Clearway restrictions in Belfast apply from 8:00 am to 9:30 am and from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, which are within the standard deployment hours for Traffic Attendants.

Pothole Repair Work in North Antrim

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide a timetable for pothole repair work in North Antrim, broken down by council area.

(AQW 6638/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the roads in North Antrim, like so many other roads across the North, were badly affected by the very cold weather experienced over the winter months. The repeated freezing and thawing cycle has had a damaging effect on the road network, causing the carriageway to split and potholes to form.

In January of this year the Executive allocated an additional £15 million, approximately, to Roads Service. This funding was used by Roads Service, to address the worst of the roads and also deal with the effects of the cold spell.

In the North Antrim constituency, which includes the Ballymena, Ballymoney and Moyle Council areas, Roads Service has now resumed operation of its normal inspection and repair system under the Maintenance Standards for Safety. Under these safety standards and procedures, there are established frequencies for road inspections, which are dependent on traffic volumes. It also specifies the response times for the repair of defects. The inspection frequencies vary between daily cycles to four

monthly cycles depending on road type, while response times for defect repairs depend on the severity of the defect and range from one calendar day, to inclusion in the next work programme.

Surface defects which are identified outside of these inspection regimes, for example, those reported by members of the public, or as a result of ad-hoc inspections, are also dealt with according to the afore-mentioned standards and remedial work arranged as necessary.

As the repair time is dependent on the severity of the defect, and road inspections are undertaken on a daily basis, Roads Service's timetables for the repair of carriageway defects are constantly being reviewed and re-prioritised. For this reason, Roads Service is unable to provide a definitive timetable for pothole repair work in North Antrim.

Roads Service will continue to undertake regular inspections and condition surveys, to ensure that the road network does not fall below satisfactory and serviceable levels.

Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Service

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the change in passenger numbers on the Coleraine to Londonderry railway line in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6659/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have provided the following information which details the changes in passenger numbers travelling on all or part of the line from Coleraine to Derry.

2007/08	264,934
2008/09	279,904
2009/10	276,157

Note: These statistics relate to ticket types reported on Merit but exclude Commuter Travelcards and School Passes.

The average number of those travelling in the 3 years quoted, represents a 75% increase on the equivalent figure for 2003/2004.

Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Service

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reliability of the Coleraine to Londonderry railway service's departure and arrival times in the last 12 months.

(AQW 6660/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have provided the following information about the punctuality of the Coleraine to Derry railway service's arrival times in the last 12 months as well as the reliability of the service. The Passengers Charter defines punctuality and reliability.

Month	Punctuality (percentage of trains arriving no more than 10 minutes late)	Reliability (percentage of trains running as planned)
April 09	99.24	100.00
May 09	98.51	99.55
June 09	97.29	99.88
July 09	97.79	99.41
Aug. 09	98.97	100.00
Sept. 09	98.82	100.00
Oct. 09	94.56	100.00

Month	Punctuality (percentage of trains arriving no more than 10 minutes late)	Reliability (percentage of trains running as planned)
Nov. 09	95.59	100.00
Dec. 09	94.97	99.87
Jan. 09	96.12	100.00
Feb. 09	97.34	99.70
March 09	98.44	100.00
Average	97.34	99.87

The Translink Passenger's Charter sets a punctuality target of 90% of trains on the Derry line arriving no more than 10 minutes late. This target was achieved in every month on this section of the line.

In line with the Passenger's Charter, the above information excludes services which are late due to reasons outside the control of NI Railways, for example extreme weather conditions.

Translink have indicated that NI Railways measures the arrival times of all services at their destination and not at their departure point. However, if a train arrives at its destination on time, that is normally a good indication that its departure and intermediate stations are reasonably close to being on time.

The Translink Passenger's Charter sets a reliability target of 99.2% of trains on the Derry line to run as planned. This target was achieved in every month on this section of the line.

A2 Dualling of the Maydown to Londonderry Airport

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development when the A2 dualling of the Maydown to Londonderry Airport will be completed.

(AQW 6661/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the works on the A2 dualling scheme, from Maydown to City of Derry Airport, are progressing to programme and should be substantially complete in November 2010.

Roads Service Repair Schemes

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development what Roads Service repair schemes are planned for (i) the Antrim Borough Council area; and (ii) the Newtownabbey Borough Council area over the next three years; and to provide a timetable for these repairs.

(AQW 6665/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Structural Maintenance allocations for this financial year are currently being finalised. However, proposed schemes for the Antrim Borough Council and Newtownabbey Borough Council areas, for this financial year, are contained in the Reports to Councils and can be accessed from Roads Service's internet site at:-

http://www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm

As the Structural Maintenance allocations for the following two years are not available, at present, Roads Service is unable to provide details of repair schemes beyond the current financial year.

Pedestrian Crossing at the Point crossroads, Laurencetown

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister for Regional Development when work will commence on a pedestrian crossing at the Point crossroads, Laurencetown, Banbridge.

(AQW 6666/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that an initial traffic survey at Banbridge Road, Laurencetown, was carried out on 23 January 2008. The results of that survey indicated that a further detailed investigation would be merited. However, there are currently higher priority pedestrian crossing schemes to be progressed in the Banbridge Council area. These schemes are likely to be completed before the pedestrian crossing on the Banbridge Road, Laurencetown, but the latter will be included in future programmes of work.

I should advise that completion of all proposed pedestrian crossings is subject to a suitable location being found, the need for additional supporting infrastructure, consultation with affected shopkeepers/householders and sufficient finance being available.

Public Hire Taxis

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline how the Roads Service liaises with the Taxi Enforcement Team to address public hire taxi drivers ranking illegally in Belfast city centre; and for his assessment of the co-operation and consistency of approach between the two bodies to reduce this problem.

(AQW 6667/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it liaises closely with the Driver Vehicle Agency's (DVA) Taxi Enforcement Branch and the PSNI, in relation to the enforcement of taxi rank locations in Belfast. Each enforcement body has its own area of responsibility for enforcement under current legislation, and Roads Service is responsible for the enforcement of parking restrictions.

NSL Services Group (NSL) is the private company contracted by Roads Service to provide parking enforcement and car park management services. NSL has participated in a number of joint operations with DVA and the Police at Donegall Square North. However, these types of operations are resource intensive and have a limited, short term impact, on the illegal parking of taxis.

Parking enforcement against taxis can be difficult, as the drivers are often in their vehicle or nearby, and when approached by a Traffic Attendant, they drive away before a Penalty Charge Notice can be issued.

Roads Service will continue to work with the other enforcement agencies to develop areas of mutual interest, in relation to parking enforcement. This co-operative approach includes Roads Service's attendance at the Belfast City Centre Management, Taxi Forum, which includes all enforcement agencies and representatives from the public hire taxis associations. The forum is used by all parties to discuss ongoing issues in relation to the public hire taxi operation in Belfast, including illegal parking by taxis.

Public Hire Taxis

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail any action taken by the Roads Service against public hire taxi drivers who have been ranking illegally in Belfast, in particular at (a) Donegall Square North; (b) Victoria Square at Victoria Street; (c) Glengall Street; and (d) Central Station; and (ii) whether health and safety assessments and risk assessments have been carried out at these locations.

(AQW 6669/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is aware of the problems caused by taxi-drivers parking illegally in the vicinity of the taxi-ranks at Donegall Square North, Victoria Street at Victoria Square, Glengall Street and in the bus-lane outside Central Station.

NSL Services Group (NSL) is the private company contracted by Roads Service to provide parking enforcement and car park management services. NSL carries out regular enforcement at these locations during their routine daily patrols, and additional resources are often deployed at these locations in an effort to address the ongoing parking contraventions.

Roads Service officials have advised that to date this year, NSL's Traffic Attendants have moved on in excess of 1000 vehicles at these locations. These have been mainly taxis, parked in contravention of restrictions. However, only a small number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) have been issued against taxis, as the drivers are often in their vehicle, or nearby, and when approached by a Traffic Attendant, they drive away before a Penalty Charge Notice can be issued.

In relation to health and safety, Roads Service takes all road safety issues into account when considering the provision of new public hire taxi-ranks.

Door-to-Door Service

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development when tenders will be invited for the provision of the Door-to-Door service; and if the current service provider is not successful in retaining the contract, whether existing staff will be transferred to the new provider where possible.

(AQW 6680/10)

Minister for Regional Development: This matter is currently subject to legal proceedings and I regret that I am unable to provide a detailed response in relation to the points raised. I can say, however, that I am fully committed to the Door-to-Door scheme and that the Department will ensure that the staff currently providing services will receive the protection afforded to them by legislation.

Residents Parking Scheme in the Lower Malone and Lower Lisburn Road Areas

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the potential implementation of the residents parking scheme in the Lower Malone and Lower Lisburn Road areas.

(AQW 6697/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has recently held discussions with the local residents' association regarding the implementation of a Residents' Parking Scheme in Malone Avenue, Eglantine Avenue, Wellington Park, Wellesley Avenue and linking streets.

Although there has been some slippage in the original draft programme for the development of a scheme in this area, I can confirm that consultants have now been engaged to develop an initial scheme outline for further consultation. It is hoped that the initial scheme outline will be available by the end of June 2010.

Larne to Belfast Railway Service

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reliability of the Larne to Belfast railway service's departure and arrival times in each of the last 24 months.

(AQW 6712/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have provided the following information about the punctuality of the Larne to Belfast railway service's arrival times in the last 24 months and the reliability of the service.

Month	Punctuality (percentage of trains arriving no more than 5 minutes late)	Reliability (percentage of trains running as planned)
April 08	96.83	99.50
May 08	95.41	99.10
June 08	96.98	99.88
July 08	96.73	99.70
Aug 08	96.33	99.71

Month	Punctuality (percentage of trains arriving no more than 5 minutes late)	Reliability (percentage of trains running as planned)
Sept 08	96.53	99.88
Oct 08	93.33	99.50
Nov 08	92.11	99.33
Dec 08	91.79	98.76
Jan 09	96.83	99.18
Feb 09	95.89	99.56
March 09	96.74	99.42
April 09	98.14	99.94
May 09	96.86	99.55
June 09	97.91	99.78
July 09	96.72	99.22
Aug 09	97.44	99.78
Sept 09	97.33	99.60
Oct 09	91.61*	99.83
Nov 09	87.39*	99.11
Dec 09	92.09*	99.87
Jan 10	96.73	99.94
Feb 10	94.94	99.70
March 10	97.00	99.42
Average	95.47	99.47

* Autumn leaf fall and prevailing weather conditions caused low adhesion and reduced performance and this also contributed to lower performances in October and December 2009.

The Translink Passenger's Charter sets a punctuality target of 95% of trains on the Larne line arriving no more than 10 minutes late. This target was achieved on average over the 24 month analysis.

The Translink Passenger's Charter sets a reliability target of 99.2% of trains on the Larne line to run as planned. This target was achieved on average over the 24 month analysis.

In line with the Passenger's Charter, the above information excludes services which are late due to reasons outside the control of NI Railways, for example extreme weather conditions.

Translink have indicated that NI Railways measures the arrival times of all services at their destination and not at their departure point. However, if a train arrives at its destination on time, that is normally a good indication that its departure and intermediate stations are reasonably close to being on time.

Maintenance and Improvement of the Minor Roads Network

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how much was spent on maintenance and improvement of the minor roads network in (i) the Larne Borough Council area; (ii) the Carrickfergus Borough Council area; and (iii) the Newtownabbey Borough Council area, in each of the last three years. **(AQW 6713/10)**

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not maintain specific details of its expenditure on the minor roads network. However, it does maintain details of actual total expenditure on Operation and Maintenance activities and Capital works during the preceding financial year in each Council area.

Roads Service total expenditure on operation and maintenance, includes Structural Maintenance, Routine Maintenance, Traffic Maintenance, Winter Maintenance, Street Lighting Maintenance, and Car Parking Maintenance.

Its total expenditure on Capital works includes spend on Major Capital Schemes, Minor Capital Schemes, Street Lighting Renewal and Other Capital activities. The figures provided in the following table refer to Minor Capital Schemes, as these works would predominately be on the minor road network.

The following table also includes details of expenditure on Operation and Maintenance in the Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey Council areas, during the last three years.

District Council	Operation and Maintenance Expenditure			Minor Capital Scheme Expenditure		
	06-07	07-08	08-09	06-07	07-08	08-09
Larne	£2,754,000	£2,546,000	£2,238,000	£124,000	£806,000	£810,000
Carrickfergus	£1,764,000	£1,971,000	£1,642,000	£898,000	£54,000	£248,000
Newtownabbey	£3,189,000	£4,576,000	£3,388,000	£710,000	£354,000	£492,000
Totals	£7,707,000	£9,093,000	£7,268,000	£1,732,000	£1,214,000	£1,550,000

Road Repairs

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department spent on road repairs in (i) the West Belfast constituency; and (ii) the Strangford constituency, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6730/10)

Minister for Regional Development: As indicated in my answer to the Member's recent question AQW 6448/10, my Department's Roads Service does not hold the information you request on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Roads Service does, however, hold details of its operation and maintenance spend by council area. The table below details the amounts spent in the relevant council areas during the last three years. It is important to note that not all of the areas covered by these councils fall entirely within the boundaries of the West Belfast and Strangford constituencies.

District Council	Operation and Maintenance Spend		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Belfast	£13,730,000	£16,990,000	£13,976,000
Lisburn	£5,695,000	£4,948,000	£7,704,000
Castlereagh	£3,029,000	£3,552,000	£3,429,000

District Council	Operation and Maintenance Spend		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Ards	£3,468,000	£5,014,000	£3,394,000
Down	£4,503,000	£4,262,000	£5,813,000

Damage to Vehicles as a Result of Potholes

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the number of claims received for damage to vehicles as a result of potholes in each of the last 6 months; (ii) the number of unsuccessful claims; and (iii) the amount paid out in successful claims and the reasons given in each successful case.

(AQW 6798/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The information on my Department's Central Claims Unit pothole vehicle damage claims work and output is set out in the table below. The figures for unsuccessful claims notifications and successful claims settled include claims received before December 2009. Reasons are not normally provided where claims are settled because Central Claims Unit has objectively assessed the evidence and determined Roads Service to have no defence. Explanations are provided to unsuccessful claimants why their claims have not been successful.

VEHICLE DAMAGE – POTHOLE CLAIM DETAILS

MONTH	New Claims Received	Unsuccessful Claims Notifications	Successful Claims Settled	Compensation Paid £
December 09	103	31	46	9,127.21
January 2010	169	33	49	9,220.31
February 2010	498	36	79	12,223.79
March 2010	492	49	103	14,517.05
April 2010	286	72	250	32,470.75
May 2010	77	40	116	16,846.05
TOTAL	1,625	261	643	94,405.16

Metro and Ulster Bus Fleet

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the average age of buses in the Metro and Ulster bus fleet; and (ii) how many (a) buses more than 18 years old; and (b) Goldline coaches more than 12 years old were in service in March 2010.

(AQW 6844/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The average age of buses in the Metro bus fleet was 6.8 years with no buses more than 18 years old in service in March 2010.

The average age of buses in the Ulsterbus fleet was 6.4 years old with 37 buses more than 18 years old and 4 Goldline coaches more than 12 years old in service in March 2010.

New Trains Purchased Under Objective 3 of Public Service Agreement 13

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new trains have been purchased under objective 3 of Public Service Agreement 13 of the Programme for Government.
(AQW 6845/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The contract to purchase 20 new trains has been signed and the PSA Objective 3 'To Support Translink to procure 20 additional new trains with the first trains being introduced to service in 2011' is on track to be achieved. Translink have advised that the first train is scheduled to be in passenger service in the latter half of 2011 with all units in passenger service by mid-2012.

A8 Dual Carriageway

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A8 major road scheme from Larne to Belfast.
(AQO 1260/10)

Minister for Regional Development: On 5 August 2009, I announced the selection of the Preferred Route for the 14 kilometre section of the A8 Belfast to Larne dual carriageway, between Coleman's Corner roundabout and Ballyrickard Road.

During January 2010, Roads Service appointed a contractor to contribute to the development of the Preferred Route design and in due course to construct the scheme. This allows the project team the opportunity to consider construction issues at an early stage of the project.

A second series of one to one meetings, between the designers and those landowners directly affected by the scheme, has just been completed. Another round of these meetings will take place in the coming months to consider detailed access arrangements and accommodation works.

An emerging specimen design exhibition will be held in August or September 2010. Following this, I anticipate that the necessary Draft Statutory Orders and Environmental Statement will be published by early 2011, and it is anticipated that a Public Inquiry will take place later that year.

Road Maintenance

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money has been allocated to road maintenance in each divisional area, for the current financial year.
(AQO 1262/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that allocations to its Divisions have yet to be finalised for the current financial year. However, I can confirm that, based on the provisional budget figures, the initial Structural Maintenance allocations per Division are likely to be:

Northern Division	£14,000,000
Southern Division	£18,000,000
Eastern Division	£15,000,000
Western Division	£19,000,000

It is not anticipated that final allocations will vary considerably from these figures.

In distributing the resources available for road maintenance, allocations are made to the four Roads Service Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators tailored to each maintenance activity, that is, resurfacing, patching, gully emptying, grass cutting etc. Divisions use these indicators when apportioning allocations across Council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds across the whole of the North.

A5 Western Transport Corridor

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timescale for the preparation of an environmental assessment of the A5 Western Transport Corridor; and when it is expected to be published.

(AQO 1263/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the environmental assessment for the proposed A5 Western Transport Corridor is currently ongoing, and will be published as the Environmental Statement this autumn.

Details of all environmental issues and proposed mitigation measures will be included in the Statement, which I anticipate will be the subject of a public inquiry in 2011.

Road Surfaces

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures or checks are in place to ensure that road surfaces are reinstated to the required standard after utility road openings.

(AQO 1265/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it carries out a programme of random sample based inspections to ensure that road surfaces have been reinstated to the required standards. For example, all major works undertaken by utility companies are inspected, 10% of road openings by utility companies are inspected while work is in progress, 10% are inspected in the period up to six months after permanent reinstatement, and a further 10% of openings are inspected in the three-month period preceding the end of the two-year warranty period. Additional inspections are also carried out during routine road condition inspections and in response to third party reports of road defects. Roads Service also takes random core samples from a smaller number of completed reinstatements, to ensure that they meet the required standards in terms of depth, the number of layers and the type of material used.

Where a utility company fails to reinstate a road opening to the specified standard, Roads Service has powers to require the utility company to carry out remedial works, and to inspect those remedial works while in progress and on completion, at the utility company's expense.

In addition, where more than 10% of a utility company's reinstatements are found, through sample inspections, to be defective, current procedures allow Roads Service to require that utility to prepare and implement an agreed improvement plan. Roads Service has advised that there were two improvement plans implemented in each of the last three years.

Ultimately, the Street Works (NI) Order 1995 includes provision for prosecution of a utility company, which may lead to a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale (£5,000). My Department has reserved this sanction for cases where public safety has been compromised. Two prosecutions were taken in 2006/07 on offences including failure to reinstate to the specified standards, and two further prosecutions were taken in 2008/09.

A26 Dual Carriageway

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the dualling of the A26.

(AQO 1266/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is progressing plans for the provision of a seven kilometre stretch of dual carriageway on the A26, between Glarryford and the A44 Drones Road. This is one of the major projects included in the ten year Investment Delivery Plan for Roads.

The route is currently being taken through the final stage of the scheme assessment process. This will culminate in the publication of an Environmental Statement and Draft Orders, which is scheduled to occur in mid 2011.

It is anticipated that construction work will commence in the latter part of the Investment Delivery Plan (2008-2018) period, dependent on the satisfactory completion of the Statutory Procedures, the economic appraisal and the availability of the necessary finance.

Procurement

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy on public procurement and what measures he is taking to support the local construction industry.

(AQO 1267/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In May 2002, the Executive agreed to a revised public procurement policy and the policy was launched in the Assembly on 27 May 2002, by the then Minister of Finance and Personnel.

A Procurement Board, chaired by the Minister of Finance and Personnel, was then established and given responsibility for the development, dissemination and co-ordination of public procurement policy and practice for the North's public sector. A new Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) was established within the Department of Finance and Personnel to develop policy and support the Procurement Board's role in all aspects of public procurement policy.

In addition to the CPD, there are a number of centres with specialist procurement expertise, across the public sector. The Executive considered that added value could be derived from these Centres of Expertise, both in developing operable policies and providing a more integrated procurement service to public bodies in general.

Public procurement is the process of the acquisition, usually by means of a contractual arrangement after public competition, of goods, services, works and other supplies by the public service. The administration of public procurement, by my Department, is governed by the principles of Accountability, Competitive Supply, Consistency, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Fair-dealing, Integration, Integrity, Informed Decision-Making, Legality, Responsiveness and Transparency.

My Department follows the guidance prepared by CPD and the Equality Commission on Sustainable Development and Equality of Opportunity in Public Sector Procurement. Roads Service has proposals for implementing critical community impact and social objectives, such as increasing access to public sector procurement opportunities for small and medium enterprises, encouraging the economically inactive back into the workplace and encouraging training and skills development through apprenticeships. For major works schemes, Roads Service will follow the CPD guidelines that state that: 'Main contracts to include a requirement that the lead contractor recruits one long-term unemployed person, either directly or through the supply chain, for each £5 million of project value. These contracts also require the Lead Contractor to recruit one apprentice, either directly or through the supply chain, for each £2 million of project value.'

The process of procurement is a means to an end and achievement of that end through best value for money will only come about with the co-operation and innovation of suppliers. My Department is therefore developing partnerships with its suppliers to promote best procurement practice to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

In response to the economic downturn, the Minister for Finance and Personnel announced the formation of a Construction Industry Forum NI (CIFNI) Procurement Task Group in the Assembly in December 2008. One of its first tasks was to produce a Procurement Task Group Report which was presented to the Procurement Board in May 2009. The Report included 7 principles, to be applied to future Government construction procurement, as well as some 25 associated actions. Whilst some of these actions could be introduced with immediate effect, the full implementation of others required further detailed development work. A number of CIFNI Working Groups were established to agree specific proposals, including those designed to benefit small and medium sized enterprises and the local construction industry.

Belfast Rapid Transit System

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the next stages in the process to deliver the Belfast Rapid Transit System, following the public consultation.

(AQO 1268/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Following the public consultation on the policy proposals for Rapid Transit my Department has issued a Consultation Report and is currently progressing the required legislation with a view to introducing it to the Assembly in June 2010.

My Department hopes to be in a position to appoint consultants to assist with the preparation of an Outline Business Case for Belfast Rapid Transit later this year.

Rapid Transit Division are currently preparing layout drawings for the various route alignment options and these will, as part of the Outline Business Case process, form part of a public awareness exercise early in 2011.

A5: Environmental Issues

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development if he intends to discuss the environmental issues surrounding the proposed A5 road with the Minister of the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development.

(AQO 1269/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service and its A5 project consultants, Mouchel, have had, and will continue to have, discussions with officials from the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Both these Departments will also be formally consulted when the A5 Western Transport Corridor Environmental Statement is published this autumn. I do not intend to personally speak directly with the respective Ministers.

Department for Social Development

Benefit Fraud

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development the cost to her Department of benefit fraud over the last three years.

(AQW 6695/10)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The most recently published information regarding the cost of benefit fraud is set out in the table below. Progress continues to be made and the detection and prevention of fraud remains a high priority for the Department.

Year	2006			2007			2008		
	Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Benefit Fraud %	Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Benefit Fraud %	Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Benefit Fraud %
SSA	3501	18.1	0.5	3630	12.3	0.3	3789	12.6	0.3
Housing	438.9	3.3	0.8	442.3	2.9	0.6	467.9	3.0	0.6

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 21 May 2010

(AQW 6353/10)

Until December 2003, District Councils in Northern Ireland were the regulating authority for landfill facilities and in many instances were also the controlling operators of the landfill sites. NIEA therefore did not have the statutory power or responsibility to request landfill data from Councils prior to this date.

The Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) was introduced in April 2005 and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is the designated Monitoring Authority and maintains a landfill allowances register. District Councils are required to report on municipal waste each quarter including tonnage figures of municipal waste collected, municipal waste sent to landfill and tonnage of municipal waste sent to waste facilities.

Data returns are made using the WasteDataFlow (WDF) UK-wide online database which has been in place since 2005. Councils electronically submit their statistical waste information to NIEA.

Data submissions from the Councils for the initial implementation year 2005/06 are incomplete. Additionally, Councils have not yet returned data for the fourth quarter of 2009/10. Consequently, the Agency only holds municipal waste data for the last 3.75 years.

The attached spreadsheet provides a detailed breakdown of the tonnage of municipal waste landfilled for the 3 Waste Groups, arc21, NWRWVG and SWaMP 2008 and for each District Council area for 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 (April –Dec only). The total tonnage of municipal waste landfilled in Northern Ireland was 786,951 tonnes, 749,449 tonnes, 694,904 tonnes and 512,604 tonnes respectively.

The Agency is not required and does not hold waste data for the total volume of landfill generated in each local council. This would include an extensive range of other waste streams as listed in the European Waste Catalogue (EWC).

Waste Management Group	District Council	Municipal Waste Landfilled 2006/07 (tonnes)	Municipal Waste Landfilled 2007/08 (tonnes)	Municipal waste landfilled 2008/09 (tonnes)	Municipal waste landfilled 2009/10 (Apr - Dec only) (tonnes)
	arc21	Antrim Borough Council	19,414	20,005	18,811
Ards Borough Council		36,745	36,355	31,552	21,513
Ballymena Borough Council		28,136	26,618	22,890	17,268
Belfast City Council		139,040	130,052	123,581	92,379
Carrickfergus Borough Council		19,473	16,533	16,284	11,734
Castlereagh Borough Council		21,524	20,767	19,678	14,632
Down District Council		25,666	28,035	31,727	19,939
Larne Borough Council		15,459	14,685	13,666	10,299
Lisburn City Council		50,544	45,820	42,355	29,792
Newtownabbey Borough Council		40,707	38,875	32,778	23,445
North Down Borough Council		37,941	36,009	31,068	21,444
arc21		434,649	413,754	384,390	276,173
NWRWVG		Ballymoney Borough Council	12,373	11,388	10,426
	Coleraine Borough Council	34,042	30,722	25,087	23,163
	Derry City Council	46,752	43,971	41,781	35,895
	Limavady Borough Council	13,171	13,283	11,821	9,576
	Magherafelt District Council	16,400	15,816	14,480	10,384
	Moyle District Council	8,418	7,607	6,976	6,137
	Strabane District Council	18,093	18,141	16,286	11,227
	NWRWVG	149,249	140,928	126,857	104,157

Waste Management Group	District Council	Municipal Waste Landfilled 2006/07 (tonnes)	Municipal Waste Landfilled 2007/08 (tonnes)	Municipal waste landfilled 2008/09 (tonnes)	Municipal waste landfilled 2009/10 (Apr - Dec only) (tonnes)
	SWaMP2008	Armagh City & District Council	18,990	18,167	18,464
Banbridge District Council		14,646	14,886	14,230	10,652
Cookstown District Council		15,073	13,877	12,749	9,263
Craigavon Borough Council		40,253	37,439	35,193	25,373
Dungannon & South Tyrone BC		23,872	23,314	21,657	15,912
Fermanagh District Council		30,419	30,711	27,484	18,459
Newry & Mourne District Council		39,513	38,321	36,852	27,455
Omagh District Council		20,287	18,048	17,027	12,076
SWaMP2008		203,053	194,763	183,656	132,275
Northern Ireland					
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