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# OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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## CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions	
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	[p3]
Agriculture and Rural Development	[p3]
Culture, Arts and Leisure	[p6]
Education	[p6]
Employment and Learning	[p13]
Enterprise, Trade and Investment	[p14]
Environment	[p14]
Finance and Personnel	[p15]
Regional Development	[p15]
Social Development	[p20]

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Wilson, Brian (North Down)  
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# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 12 September 2008

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### Sustainable Development Commission

**Mr Ford** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of an appointment of a Northern Ireland representative to the Sustainable Development Commission.

(AQW 137/09)

**The First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):** We view the appointment of a NI Commissioner within the Sustainable Development Commission as an important part of our plans to progress the sustainable development agenda both within government and in the wider public domain. We have been in discussions with Departmental officials, and members of the Sustainable Development Commission, with regard to the recruitment of a new Commissioner, and we have taken advice on the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (OCPANI) associated processes. We are currently considering ways in which we can most effectively take this matter forward in support of our long-term plans and priorities for sustainable development.

### AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

#### Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings Programme

**Mr Bresland** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in the implementation of measure 1.3 of the

Rural Development Programme - Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings. (AQW 38/09)

**The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew):** Farm Modernisation is well advanced - a draft list of eligible items of plant, machinery and equipment, that may attract financial support under the FMP, has been prepared and can be viewed on my Department's website.

The Farm Modernisation, Focus Farms, Benchmarking, Farm Family Options and Supply Chain Development measures of Axis 1 of the NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 will be delivered by a single external Delivery Agent. This has caused a delay in the opening of some of the Axis 1 measures but a single contact point will ultimately lead to a more streamlined process for farmers wishing to avail of the various opportunities presented under Axis 1. The tender to appoint the Single Delivery Agent was issued for advertisement in the EU journal on 22 August 2008 and they should be appointed in November 2008.

In relation to the Short Rotation Coppice Scheme element of the measure, since the commencement of the programme, just over 300 hectares of Short Rotation Coppice have been planted and claimed for.

#### Red Meat Taskforce Working Groups

**Mr Bresland** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made by the Red Meat Taskforce working groups; and when a report will be published. (AQW 39/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** There are two Red Meat Taskforce Working Groups: -

1. Calf Housing Capital Grant Working Group;
2. Wider Considerations Working Group.

The Calf Housing Capital Grant working group was established to consider the possibility of a capital grant scheme to erect specialist calf rearing units to mirror the existing system established by Blade Farming in the South West of England. This system was recommended by the authors of the Taskforce report. A sub-group visited Blade in February 2008 to assess its application to the industry in the North. At present the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) and the NI Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA) are developing a business plan to establish the NI Calf Company (NICCO).

The Wider Considerations Working Group was established to explore any 'wider considerations' which may receive Government support since the Task Force report stated that 'there was no economic

case for long-term Government financial support to subsidise suckler-beef or hill sheep production.

The following 'wider considerations have been identified:-

#### 1. Environmental wider consideration

- Consideration of increasing the use of grass / clover on beef and sheep farming systems in the North. Arising out of this consideration was the development of a Grass/Clover Initiative which includes the delivery of 10 Knowledge and Technology Transfer events across the North during the summer of 2008. These events were attended by over 500 farmers.
- Work within this area has also considered the review of the Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances (LFACA) Scheme and the new NI Countryside Management Scheme where options are now available for individuals or groups of farmers to focus on special environmental measures.

#### 2. Socio-economic consideration

- The Working Group has taken evidence from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), to consider the socio-economic factors of beef / sheep production and has concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to justify Government support.

### Eradication of Scrapie in the Sheep Flock

**Mr Bresland** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in the eradication of scrapie in the sheep flock. (AQW 40/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** Considerable progress has been made in the eradication of scrapie from the North's sheep flock through both the NI Scrapie Plan's Ram Genotyping Scheme and the Compulsory Scrapie Flocks Scheme. Results from the Ram Genotyping Scheme show a very positive shift in the genotype profile of participating flocks towards scrapie resistance. The Compulsory Scrapie Flocks Scheme introduced in 2005 puts a two year management programme in place in flocks with a confirmed case of scrapie. Since its introduction 6 flocks have participated in the scheme and no reoccurring cases of scrapie have been identified in any of these flocks. To date this year there has only been one confirmed case of scrapie in the North.

### Farmers Affected by Floods

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans there are to help

those farmers that incurred losses due to recent flood damage. (AQW 59/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** I have great sympathy for farmers who have suffered losses as a result of the flooding. However, it has proven difficult to estimate the scale of the damage. Accordingly, I have asked my officials to carry out assessments in areas we know to have been flooded, and in particular where potatoes and cereal crops are grown. This assessment is well underway and I intend to make the results available to my Executive colleagues, so that we can jointly consider the way forward, at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, I would encourage farmers whose homes have been flooded to avail of the emergency assistance from the Executive, and to register any crop damage or other losses by contacting DARD on 028 663 43172.

### New Entrants' Scheme

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications have been received under the New Entrants' scheme. (AQW 60/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** There have been 431 applications received for the New Entrants' Scheme.

### Cross-Compliance Regulations on the Loss of Hedgerows

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the impact of the cross-compliance regulations on the loss of hedgerows. (AQW 65/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** It is a requirement of Cross Compliance (CC) that field boundaries are not removed without prior written permission from DARD. This includes hedgerows.

Written applications for field boundary removal derogations are considered by DARD, Countryside Management Branch.

A Cross Compliance derogation for removal is only issued if DARD consider the field boundary to be of poor quality or the field size to be less than 0.4ha. This is subject to the farm business having a valid reason for field boundary removal and the field boundary removal having minimal effect on the landscape.

Often field boundary removal derogations are issued subject to the planting of an equivalent or greater length of hedgerow to agri-environment scheme standards.

Since January 2005, DARD have refused Cross Compliance derogations for the removal of 279 field boundaries representing a total length of 24,841 metres.

In addition CC field boundary removal derogations were issued for 6379m of hedge removal subject to conditional planting of an equivalent or greater length of hedgerow.

Prior to "Cross Compliance" and its predecessor "Good Farming Practice" the NI Countryside Survey indicated a net loss of 5489km of hedgerow between 1991 and 1998.

This survey defines a hedgerow as "a line of shrubs covering more than 25% of the length of the boundary". The majority of field boundaries which are approved by DARD for removal would not meet this standard.

Up to the end of 2007, 31 Cross-Compliance breaches have been identified in respect of GAEC 5. This includes field boundary removal without permission.

### Hedgerow

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the total length of hedgerow planted as a result of the Department's grants since 1st April 2003; and (ii) the total length of hedgerow lost as a result of field boundary removal issued by Countryside Management Branch since 1st April 2003. (AQW 66/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** Since 1 April 2003:

- (i) DARD's Agri-environment Scheme participants have committed to 1717 km of hedgerow restoration.
- (ii) The total length of hedgerow lost as a result of field boundary removal Cross Compliance derogations issued by Countryside Management Branch is 35km.

### The Felling of Trees

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1374/08, what progress has been made on the introduction of regulations to regulate the felling of trees. (AQW 68/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** On 19 June 2008, the Executive Committee agreed that a new Forestry Bill could be drafted to replace the Forestry Act (NI) 1953. The Forestry Bill will contain a provision to regulate the felling and regeneration of woodlands, and it is

expected that formal, detailed instructions will be issued to the Office of the Legal Counsel shortly.

It is anticipated that the Bill will be ready for introduction to the Assembly in March/April 2009, most likely after the Easter recess.

### Tagging of Sheep

**Mr P J Bradley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what her policy is in relation to the tagging of sheep. (AQW 69/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** My policy in relation to the tagging of sheep is clearly set out in The Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) Order (Northern Ireland) 2005, as amended. The legislation covers all aspects of tagging from the Natal Tag, Movement Tags, Lost Tags, Total Replacement Tags and Export Tags.

All the legislative requirements, together with a short information booklet on the Sheep and Goat Identification and Movement System, are available on the DARD website at [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

The tagging system which my Department introduced in 2005 is a single tag applied on the holding of birth, with subsequent movement tags. The arrangements are broadly in line with the system currently in operation in the South, which facilitates our valuable cross border trade in sheep.

With regard to the electronic tagging of sheep, it is an EU requirement under EU Regulation 21/2004, as amended, that all sheep must be electronically tagged from 31 December 2009.

### Badger Culls

**Mr Shannon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many occasions her Department has ordered a badger cull due to tuberculosis, in each of the last 3 years, broken down by parliamentary constituency. (AQW 111/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** My Department has ordered no badger culls due to bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in the last 3 years. The culling of badgers does not play a role in the existing TB control programme, which is based on measures to limit cattle-to-cattle transmission of the disease.

### Animal Welfare Consultation Exercise

**Dr Farry** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why individual consultation responses to the 2006 Animal Welfare consultation

exercise were withheld under Freedom of Information legislation. (AQW 118/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** The individual responses to the 2006 Animal Welfare consultation exercise were withheld under the Freedom of Information legislation because the Department deemed that this information is exempt from publication under Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because it relates to the formulation or development of Government policy.

The decision to withhold the information requested was upheld by the Department's Appeals Officer.

Those persons who have asked for the information to be released have been assured both verbally by me at a meeting on 19 May 2008, and by my officials in writing on 24 June 2008, that a summary of the responses will be published when I have fully considered the issues raised by respondents to the 2006 consultation exercise, and I have formulated my policy taking into account the comments received.

### Chicken Waste Incinerator in Glenavy

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the proposed application for a chicken waste incinerator in Glenavy meets the requirements for an article 31 public inquiry into the proposal; and if she will support such an inquiry. (AQW 148/09)

**Ms M Gildernew:** I am not in a position to comment on Planning legislation as that is the remit of the Department of the Environment. In relation to the proposed chicken waste incinerator in Glenavy, I would support a public inquiry and am eager that the views of farmers, local residents and all those potentially affected by this development are taken into consideration.

## CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

### Financial Support for Local Deaf Athletes

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what financial support his Department will provide to local deaf athletes preparing for the 2009 Taipei Deaflympic Games. (AQW 62/09)

**The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell):** Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. To date SNI has received no enquiries in relation to the 2009 Deaflympic Games.

## EDUCATION

### Donaghadee High School

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many year 8 pupils have enrolled in Donaghadee High School for this term. (AQW 6/09)

**The Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane):** Tá naonúr daltaí rollaithe i mbliain 8 i Donaghadee High School don téarma seo.

Nine pupils have enrolled in year 8 in Donaghadee High School for this term.

### Year 8 Pupils in North Down

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many year 8 pupils have yet to find a school place in the North Down constituency. (AQW 7/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlann an Oirdheiscirt don Roinn go bhfuil beirt daltaí a bhfuil seoltaí acu i mBeannchar fós ag iarraidh áit scoile a fháil i dtoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh. Níl ganntanas áiteanna ann áfach, i scoileanna taobh istigh d'achar réasúnach taistil óna mbailte.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board have advised the Department that two pupils with Bangor addresses have yet to find a school place in the North Down constituency. However there is no shortage of places in schools within a reasonable travelling distance of their homes.

### Admission to Bangor Academy

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of Education where the children who failed to gain admission to Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College have now been placed. (AQW 31/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá curtha in iúl ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlann an Oirdheiscirt don Roinn nach raibh áit scoile ag 18 páiste ag deireadh na bpróiseas iontrála i mí Bealtaine 2008, a chuir Bangor Academy mar thosaíocht ar a bhFoirmeacha Aistrithe. Tá beirt de na páistí seo gan áit scoile go fóill, agus d'éirigh le cúigear acu áit a fháil i Bangor Academy ina dhiaidh sin de réir mar a tháinig áiteanna chun cinn, agus tugadh áit scoile don chuid eile dóibh de réir mar a bhí áiteanna ann nó de réir mar a tháinig áiteanna chun cinn i:

The South-Eastern Education and Library Board have advised the Department that 18 children were unplaced at the end of the admissions processes

in May 2008 who had expressed a preference on their Transfer Forms for Bangor Academy. Two of these children remain unplaced, 5 children were subsequently able to obtain a placement in Bangor Academy as places became available and the remainder were placed as places were or became available in:

Movilla High School	3
Priory Integrated College	2
Donaghadee High School	4
St Columbanus' College	1
Bangor Grammar	1

### Autism Training Strategy

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Education (i) what measures have been put in place to develop an Autism Training Strategy; (ii) what external agencies have been engaged to provide training; (iii) what is the assessment of the quality of external training agencies involved; and (iv) is the role of external validation and accreditation valued by her Department. (AQW 90/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Following publication of the Task Group Report on Autism in 2002, the Department funded the establishment of an Inter-Board Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Group to promote consistency and commonality of practice across the 5 Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

The Group's comprehensive 5 year action plan includes the following targets emanating from the Autism Training Strategy:-

- to clarify collaborative training arrangements between ASD services, voluntary and other statutory agencies and promote commonality of good practice; and
- to develop a 5 Board menu of training for parents involving voluntary and statutory agencies.

Core training in line with the strategy is now available in all ELBs, provided by each ELB's ASD Support Service. ELBs ASD Support Services also deliver, on request, more specialised training tailored to the needs of individual schools and groups. Much of the training is provided on a 1 to 1 basis and tailored to the needs of the individual child and the staff working with that child.

Teachers have also accessed online training provided by the Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP).

For the most part ELB's own specialist staff provide any necessary training. External agencies are, however, also engaged by ELBs primarily to

provide higher level, more specialised training. The external agencies who have been engaged by the ELBs include:-

- Autism NI;
- Pyramid Consulting;
- National Autistic Society (NAS);
- Queen's University Belfast;
- University of Birmingham;
- Trinity College Dublin;
- University College London;
- Middletown Centre for Autism;
- Social Care/ Social Services Trusts.

Most of the external training accessed is sourced from or accredited by recognised and reputable providers. The training is assessed post attendance within the ELB in terms of the quality of the training and the effectiveness of the training in impacting long-term on the provision of services. The Inter-Board ASD Group also provides a forum to evaluate quality of training. Where an ELB has arranged a course for a large number of participants, evaluative questionnaires may be used. External organisations may also ask participants to complete evaluative questionnaires and will, if requested, share this evaluative data with the ELBs.

Is bealach é an bailíochtú agus an creidiúnú seachtrach, mar mhodh rialaithe cáilíochta, lena chinntiú go soláthraítear oiliúint ar archaighdeán, a gcuireann daoine aonair agus eagraíochtaí luach uirthi. Aithníonn an Roinn tairbhí an bhailíochtaithe agus an chreidiúnaithe seachtraigh mar an dea-chleachtas a chinntíonn luach ar airgead agus éifeachtacht maidir le seirbhísí a fheabhsú agus cuspóirí a baint amach. Tá Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin ag dul i gcomhairle faoi láthair le heagraíochtaí seachtracha maidir le cúrsaí oiliúna a fhorbairt a dtabharfaidh ollscoileanna creidiúnú dóibh.

External validation and accreditation, as a quality control measure, provides a means of ensuring the delivery of high quality training which is valued by individuals and organisations. The benefits of external validation and accreditation is well recognised by the Department as best practice in ensuring value for money and effectiveness in improving services and meeting objectives. Indeed Middletown Centre for Autism is currently liaising with external organisations in developing training courses which will be accredited at university level.

### Bangor Grammar School

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils enrolled in year 8 of Bangor Grammar School live outside the North Down constituency.

(AQW 97/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá curtha in iúl ag na scoileanna don Roinn go bhfuil 8 ndalta i Bangor Grammar School, 57 dalta i Bangor Academy agus 20 dalta i St Columbanus' College atá rollaithe i mbliain 8 a bhfuil cónaí orthu taobh amuigh de thoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh.

The Department has been advised by the schools that 8 pupils in Bangor Grammar School, 57 pupils in Bangor Academy and 20 pupils in St Columbanus' College who are enrolled in year 8 live outside the North Down constituency.

### Bangor Academy

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils enrolled in year 8 of Bangor Academy live outside the North Down constituency. (AQW 98/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá curtha in iúl ag na scoileanna don Roinn go bhfuil 8 ndalta i Bangor Grammar School, 57 dalta i Bangor Academy agus 20 dalta i St Columbanus' College atá rollaithe i mbliain 8 a bhfuil cónaí orthu taobh amuigh de thoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh.

The Department has been advised by the schools that 8 pupils in Bangor Grammar School, 57 pupils in Bangor Academy and 20 pupils in St Columbanus' College who are enrolled in year 8 live outside the North Down constituency.

### St Columbanus College

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils enrolled in year 8 of St Columbanus College live outside the North Down constituency. (AQW 99/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá curtha in iúl ag na scoileanna don Roinn go bhfuil 8 ndalta i Bangor Grammar School, 57 dalta i Bangor Academy agus 20 dalta i St Columbanus' College atá rollaithe i mbliain 8 a bhfuil cónaí orthu taobh amuigh de thoghcheantar Dhún Thuaidh.

The Department has been advised by the schools that 8 pupils in Bangor Grammar School, 57 pupils in Bangor Academy and 20 pupils in St Columbanus' College who are enrolled in year 8 live outside the North Down constituency.

### British Association for Early Childhood Education

**Mr Shannon** asked the Minister of Education what steps she is taking to (i) address the concerns of the

British Association for Early Childhood Education; and (ii) provide early education opportunities. (AQW 108/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** The British Association for Early Childhood Education wrote to me to express their views on the Early Years 0 – 6 Strategy which is currently being formulated by my Department. Officials taking forward this work have also met with the Association. I have invited the Association to participate in the formal consultation process on the draft Strategy scheduled to take place later in the year.

Cuirtear deiseanna luathoideachais ar fáil i réimse suíomh lena n-áirítear, Sure start, naíonraí, creiseanna, grúpaí máthar agus linbh, suímh feighlíochta agus an Clár Leathnaithe Oideachais Réamhscoile.

Early education opportunities are provided in a range of settings including, Sure start, playgroups, crèches, mother and toddler groups, childminding settings and the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme.

### Needs of Young Carers in Schools

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education what improvements are needed in schools to achieve a better understanding of the needs of young carers. (AQW 131/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Carers, including young carers, have been the subject of inter-Departmental attention in recent years. As part of the action plan, the Departments of Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety have issued a DVD for schools which raises awareness of the issues confronting pupils while coping with a caring role. The DVD has been used in training and awareness seminars for school principals and other staff.

More recently, the Department has been working in partnership with all key statutory and voluntary and community sector stakeholders and interested parties to develop a 'Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme'.

The agreed Programme will focus on the post primary sector and be expected to address how a pupil's emotional health and wellbeing is promoted by the school, what support systems are available to support a pupil under stress and what support is available to a school in the event of a crisis. Although the initial focus is on post-primary schools, it is hoped that the outcomes can be adapted through time for the primary and special sectors. It is expected that the resulting programme will have more general application in developing and supporting pastoral care systems in schools.

The Programme will contribute to the building of resilient emotional health and well being of pupils. It is intended to be a vehicle for providing the “glue” to implement individual policies/services for support and curriculum activities such as counselling, pastoral care systems, suicide prevention, anti-bullying, the discipline process and the healthy schools initiative in a consistent and coherent way.

Faoi láthair, tá an Roinn ag leasú na treorach do scoileanna maidir le tréadchúram chun dáta, ina saináithnítear roinnt cúiseanna struis do pháistí lena n-áirítear cúiseanna struis do chúramóirí óga mar aon le heolas a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí.

The Department is currently updating its pastoral care guidance for schools, in which a number of

stressors on children including those of young carers are identified along with signposting information for teachers.

### North Antrim Post-Primary School Numbers

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education to list the number of pupils that attended each post-primary school in North Antrim in each of the last five years. (AQW 147/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá an t-eolas a iarradh mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos.

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

#### ENROLMENT FIGURES FOR POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY – 2003/04 – 2007/08

DENI Ref	School Name	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
3210124	Ballycastle High School	363	353	344	336	337
3210133	Ballymoney High School	717	714	717	719	705
3210172	Cullybackey High School	703	703	697	673	687
3210208	Dunclug College	639	650	632	626	617
3210222	Dunluce School	481	493	488	489	476
3210233	Ballee Community High School	462	421	375	335	329
3230019	St Aloysius High School	146	126	114	94	67
3230075	Our Lady of Lourdes High School	257	238	227	202	202
3230084	St Patrick's College	412	406	411	421	415
3230227	Cross and Passion College	680	681	711	732	736
3260289	Slemish College	676	690	705	718	736
3410297	Cambridge House Grammar School	1,073	1,057	1,063	1,062	1,057
3420010	St Louis Gs	961	960	955	947	955
3420011	Ballymena Academy	1,191	1,204	1,204	1,193	1,187
3420012	Dalriada School	842	847	849	847	854
3230142	St Mary's College	275	0	0	0	0

Source: school census.

### North Antrim Primary Schools

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education to list the (i) controlled; and (ii) maintained, primary schools in the North Antrim constituency; and to detail which of these schools teach any level of Irish. (AQW 155/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Tá liosta de na bunscoileanna rialaithe agus faoi chothabháil i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thuaidh le feiceáil thíos. Cé go dtugann cuid mhór bunscoileanna in Aontroim Thuaidh agus ar fud an tuaiscirt deis dá ndaltaí Gaeilge a fhoghlaim chomh maith le roinnt teangacha eile, is iad na

scoileanna féin a dhéanann an cinneadh leis seo a dhéanamh agus ní choinníonn mo Roinn an t-eolas sin.

A list of controlled and maintained primary schools in the NA constituency is provided below. While many primary schools in North Antrim and across the north offer their pupils an opportunity to learn Irish, and indeed many other languages, the decision to do this is one for individual schools and information is not held by my Department. We do, however, collect details of those schools that are participating in my primary languages programme, which provides peripatetic support for primary schools that wish to deliver

certain languages, including Irish. The schools that have signed up to teach and learn Irish to date through this programme in the North Antrim constituency are Barnish PS, St Mary's Gortaclea, and St Patrick's Loughguile.

**PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY 2007/08.**

Longstone Primary School	Controlled
Carrowreagh Primary School	Controlled
Garryduff Primary School	Controlled
Buick Memorial Primary School	Controlled
Dunseverick Primary School	Controlled
Kirkinriola Primary School	Controlled
Harryville Primary School	Controlled
Lislagan Primary School	Controlled
Gracehill Primary School	Controlled
Landhead Primary School	Controlled
Eden Primary School	Controlled
Straidbilly Primary School	Controlled
Moorfields Primary School	Controlled
Carnaghts Primary School	Controlled
The Diamond Primary School	Controlled
Clough Primary School	Controlled
Kells & Connor Primary School	Controlled
The Wm Pinkerton Memorial Primary School	Controlled
Ballymoney Primary School	Controlled
Bushmills Primary School	Controlled
Ballymena Primary School	Controlled
Kilmoyle Primary School	Controlled
Fourtowns Primary School	Controlled
Knockahollet Primary School	Controlled
Broughshane Primary School	Controlled
Ballykeel Primary School	Controlled
Camphill Primary School	Controlled
Leaney Primary School	Controlled
Armoy Primary School	Controlled
Dunclug Primary School	Controlled
Rasharkin Primary School	Controlled
Carniny Primary School	Controlled
Ballee Primary School	Controlled
Cloughmills Primary School	Controlled
Portglenone Primary School	Controlled

Hazelbank Primary School	Controlled
Balnamore Primary School	Controlled
Bushvalley Primary School	Controlled
Millquarter Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Rathlin	Catholic Maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Portglenone	Catholic Maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Glenravel	Catholic Maintained
Glenann Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Olcan's Primary School, Armoy	Catholic Maintained
Barnish Primary School	Catholic Maintained
Braid Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Patrick's Primary School, Aughtercloney	Catholic Maintained
St Brigid's Primary School, Clogh Mills	Catholic Maintained
St Mary's Primary School, Glenariff	Catholic Maintained
St Anne's Primary School	Catholic Maintained
Glenravel Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Patrick's Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Brigid's Primary School, Larne	Catholic Maintained
St Joseph's Primary School, Ahoghill	Catholic Maintained
St Patrick's Primary School, Glenariff	Catholic Maintained
St Patrick's Primary School, Ballymoney	Catholic Maintained
St Joseph's Primary School, Dunloy	Catholic Maintained
St Ciaran's Primary School, Glendun	Catholic Maintained
St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Colmille's Primary School	Catholic Maintained
St Brigid's Primary School	Catholic Maintained
Bunscoil An Chastil	Other Maintained

**Source:** school census

## Second Languages in Primary Schools

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what percentage of primary schools in the (i) maintained sector; and (ii) controlled sector, teach a second language; and what plans she has to increase these figures. (AQW 157/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** My department does not hold the statistical information sought, as modern foreign languages are not compulsory at primary level.

Cuireann foghlaim teanga ag aois luath le sult agus le scileanna teanga na bpáistí, agus beidh mé ag déanamh macnamh ar sholáthar teanga i mbunscoileanna i gcomhthéacs chur chuige straitéisigh i leith teangacha ag gach leibhéal. Tá

réimse dea-chleachtas i mbunscoileanna agus thug mé isteach Clár Teangacha Bunscoile sa scoilbhliain 2007/08.

Learning a language from an early age benefits pupils' enjoyment and language skills, and I will be considering primary language provision in the context of a strategic approach to languages at all levels. There is a range of good practice in primary schools and I introduced the Primary Languages Programme in the 2007/08 school year. This provides peripatetic support for primary schools wishing to deliver Spanish and Irish, and is expanding, including looking at support for newcomer languages. To date 284 primary schools have been allocated tutors. Taken together, the strategic approach, existing good practice, and programme expansion will allow us to build provision and support more primary schools in teaching a second language.

### Bangor Academy

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many surplus year 9 places there are in Bangor Academy. (AQW 183/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Sa scoilbhliain 2008/09 tá líon faofa iontrála de 242 agus líon faofa rollaithe de 1420 ag Bangor Academy. Cuireadh in iúl don Roinn ar 9 Meán Fómhair 2008 go bhfuil a líon iomlán údaraithe daltaí glactha isteach ag an scoil i mBliain 8, ach go bhfuil spás aici go fóill le 50 dalta a ghlacadh isteach i mbliainghrúpaí eile.

For 2008/09 Bangor Academy has an approved admissions number of 242 and an approved enrolment number of 1420. The position notified to the Department on 9 September 2008 is that the school has admitted its full authorised complement of Year 8 pupils, but still has room to admit up to 50 pupils within other year groups. It is not possible to specify a number of surplus places for Years 9-12 because there is no set upper limit in relation to individual year groups, other than Year 8 which is capped by the admissions number. All post-primary schools have discretion to adjust numbers across year groups above Year 8 provided they remain within their overall approved enrolment number, and adhere to Departmental guidance on class sizes in practical subjects.

### Teaching Unions

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Education what contact, including correspondence and meetings, she has had with teaching unions, since taking office in May 2007. (AQW 190/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Since taking up office in May 2007 I have met the teacher unions on 9 occasions and have attended 7 teacher Union Conferences.

All correspondence received in my office is recorded under the individual's name rather than the organisation they are associated with and therefore it is not possible to identify the exact number of correspondence in such a short timescale.

Fuair mé 18 cás comhfhreagrais ó Cheardchumann na Múinteoirí ar tugadh aghaidh orthu i gcomhar a chéile.

I have received 18 correspondence cases which were addressed collectively from the Teacher Unions.

### Bangor Academy

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many surplus year 10 places there are in Bangor Academy. (AQW 191/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Sa scoilbhliain 2008/09 tá líon faofa iontrála de 242 agus líon faofa rollaithe de 1420 ag Bangor Academy. Cuireadh in iúl don Roinn ar 9 Meán Fómhair 2008 go bhfuil a líon iomlán údaraithe daltaí glactha isteach ag an scoil i mBliain 8, ach go bhfuil spás aici go fóill le 50 dalta a ghlacadh isteach i mbliainghrúpaí eile.

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### Bangor Academy

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many surplus year 11 places there are in Bangor Academy. (AQW 192/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Sa scoilbhliain 2008/09 tá líon faofa iontrála de 242 agus líon faofa rollaithe de 1420 ag Bangor Academy. Cuireadh in iúl don Roinn ar 9 Meán Fómhair 2008 go bhfuil a líon iomlán údaraithe daltaí glactha isteach ag an scoil i mBliain 8, ach go

bhfuil spás aici go fóill le 50 dalta a ghlacadh isteach i mbliainghrúpaí eile.

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### Bangor Academy

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many surplus year 12 places there are in Bangor Academy. (AQW 193/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Sa scoilbhliain 2008/09 tá líon faofa iontrála de 242 agus líon faofa rollaithe de 1420 ag Bangor Academy. Cuireadh in iúl don Roinn ar 9 Meán Fómhair 2008 go bhfuil a líon iomlán údaraithe daltaí glactha isteach ag an scoil i mBliain 8, ach go bhfuil spás aici go fóill le 50 dalta a ghlacadh isteach i mbliainghrúpaí eile.

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### Bangor Grammar School

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education how many surplus places there are for each year in Bangor Grammar. (AQW 194/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Sa scoilbhliain 2008/09 tá líon faofa iontrála de 125 agus líon faofa rollaithe de 910 ag Bangor Grammar School. Cuireadh in iúl don Roinn

ar 10 Meán Fómhair 2008 go bhfuil a líon iomlán údaraithe daltaí glactha isteach ag an scoil i mBliain 8, ach go bhfuil spás aici go fóill le 41 dalta a ghlacadh isteach i mbliainghrúpaí eile.

For 2008/09 Bangor Grammar School has an approved admissions number of 125 and an approved enrolment number of 910. The position notified to the Department on 10 September 2008 is that the school has admitted its full authorised complement of Year 8 pupils, but still has room to admit up to 41 pupils within other year groups. It is not possible to specify a number of surplus places for Years 9-12 because there is no set upper limit in relation to individual year groups, other than Year 8 which is capped by the admissions number. All post-primary schools have discretion to adjust numbers across year groups above Year 8 provided they remain within their overall approved enrolment number, and adhere to Departmental guidance on class sizes in practical subjects.

### Secondary Level Students

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Education if secondary level students in Northern Ireland were the most successful in GCSE and 'A' level results in the United Kingdom. (AQW 263/09)

**Ms C Ruane:** Baineann na sonraí is deireanaí do leibhéal na ndaltaí i dtuaisceart na hÉireann leis an bhliain acadúil 2006/07.

The latest pupil level data for the north of Ireland relates to the 2006/07 academic year.

	North of Ireland	England	Wales
Percentage of pupils in the final year of an A level course achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent) at grades A-E	98	96	94
Percentage of year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C	64	62	54

Source: Summary of Annual Examination Results (SAER)

Data for Scotland have not been included, due to differences in the education system between Scotland and the other regions.

The latest data at entries level for the north of Ireland relates to the 2007/08 academic year.

The table opposite shows overall performance in all GCSE entries in England, Wales and the north of Ireland.

	North of Ireland	England	Wales
%A*	9	7	6
%A*-A	26	21	19
%A*-C	75	66	65
%A*-G	98	98	98
<b>Total entries</b>	<b>192,360</b>	<b>5,166,628</b>	<b>310,089</b>

Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

The table below shows overall performance in all A level entries in England, Wales and the north of Ireland.

	North of Ireland	England	Wales
%A	35	26	24
%A-B	64	50	51
%A-C	84	73	76
%A-E	98	97	98
<b>Total entries</b>	<b>30,020</b>	<b>760,881</b>	<b>36,836</b>

Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

## EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

### Expansion of the University of Ulster Magee Campus

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress has been made in the expansion of the University of Ulster Magee Campus. (AQW 58/09)

**The Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey):** I am advised by the University that expansion of a broad range of activity at the Magee Campus continues to be a key priority. Having secured £20m to establish the Intelligent Systems Research Centre, the University is in the process of securing premises to house the Centre and allow for the planned expansion in this area which concentrates on research and doctoral level education.

Additionally, following successful accreditation by the Law Society, the University is this year introducing postgraduate professional legal education for those wishing to qualify as solicitors. This is the first time ever that such training has been provided outside of Belfast and the University advises that it has recruited successfully to the initiative, both in terms of additional staff and the first student intake. This complements the work of the University's undergraduate teaching in law at the Magee Campus.

Within the current physical estate the University advises that there are limited opportunities for future development and it continues to be involved in discussions about the site currently occupied by the Foyle and Londonderry College. The University is also working in active partnership with the Northern Ireland Science Park to expand high technology company start-up and technology transfer activity, and is a central partner in the Academic Business and Clinical facility at Altnagelvin Hospital. Research, doctoral study, and technology transfer are important parts of a strong University's overall portfolio of activities and considerable progress is being made in expanding this aspect of the University's work at the Magee Campus.

### Essential Skills Courses

**Mr Shannon** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to enhance the figure of 12,000 adults completing courses to improve reading, writing and maths skills. (AQW 83/09)

**Sir Reg Empey:** Since the launch of the Strategy in 2002, there have been 85,000 enrolments on Essential Skills courses with over 39,000 qualifications achieved. The Department has set a challenging PSA target to support 42,000 adult learners to achieve an Essential Skills qualification by March 2011, including 4,000 learners in the new Essential Skill of ICT.

The focus of the Strategy over the next three years will be to target the most disadvantaged people and to secure greater employer engagement. This will be achieved through working closely with Further Education colleges and their extensive network of outcentres, to reach those adults most in need in local communities. In the workplace, there will be increased collaboration with Sector Skills Councils and support for Union Learning Fund projects to help raise the skills levels of the current workforce.

A new promotional campaign has just been launched which encourages adults to 'get the know how' and presents Essential Skills as the way to get more out of life, either at home or at work.

### Training for Success Programme

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many 16-18 year olds from the Village area of South Belfast have completed the Training for Success programme delivered by A4E. (AQW 89/09)

**Sir Reg Empey:** The first recruitment for Training for Success began on 3rd September 2007, and is in general designed to be a 52 week provision. As such, the Department is only now beginning to

receive details of the first cohort of participants who have completed. The provision is also operated on a continuous basis, meaning that participants can enrol at any stage during the year. Consequently, not all participants would have begun the provision in September 2007, and will therefore not have reached the completion stage.

At present, A4E has ten participants on the programme, four of whom are aged between 16 and 18 and still undertaking the Skills for Work (Level 1) provision with A4E. None has completed.

### Stranmillis and St Mary's Student Numbers

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students were enrolled in (i) Stranmillis University College; and (ii) St Mary's University College, in each of the last 3 years.

(AQW 128/09)

**Sir Reg Empey:** The number of students enrolled in (i) Stranmillis University College; and (ii) St Mary's University College, in each of the last 3 years are shown in the table below:

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Stranmillis	1,460	1,350	1,325
St Mary's	1,135	1,120	1,130

**Source:** Higher Education Statistics Agency

**Notes:** Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. The latest available data are for 2006/07.

## ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

### Renewable Energy Heating Systems

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to introduce grants for renewable energy heating systems for new and existing homes.

(AQW 30/09)

**The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):** Any future support for a household renewable energy grant scheme will need to take into account changing market conditions, value for money and the effect on competitiveness. The Reconnect programme, which ended on 31 March 2008, is currently being evaluated and this is scheduled to be completed by November 2008.

Government continues to support renewable energy micro-generation through:

- the reduction in the standard VAT rate to 5%;
- grants from the UK wide Low Carbon Building Programme; and
- the availability of Renewable Obligation Certificates.

Current Building Regulations (November 2006) set standards that reduce energy usage in new buildings, subject to these regulations, by up to 40% on previous standards, with a corresponding 40% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

The Minister for Finance & Personnel, Nigel Dodds, has endorsed a further amendment of the building regulations to further reduce carbon emissions from buildings to which the regulations apply by an additional 25% by 2010, rising to 44% by 2013.

### Chicken Waste Incinerator in Glenavy

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the substantial investment requested to develop a chicken waste incinerator in Glenavy, if the application proposed meets the requirements for an article 31 public inquiry into the proposal; and if she will support such an inquiry.

(AQW 150/09)

**Mrs A Foster:** An application for planning permission in respect of this project was submitted on the 4th of June 2008. The determination as to whether this application meets the requirements for an article 31 public enquiry is the responsibility of the Planning Service of the Department of the Environment.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Breach of a Tree Preservation Order

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the breach of a Tree Preservation Order in the Shandon Park area of Belfast in July 2008; and what action his Department is taking in relation to this.

(AQW 33/09)

**The Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson):** A possible breach of a TPO on protected trees on a site at 135 Shandon Park was reported to my Department on 10 July 2008. Following several visits to the site, my Planning officials have determined that the removal of four protected trees, as well as works to other trees protected by the Order does constitute a breach of the TPO. An enforcement investigation is therefore ongoing. While replacement planting proposals are currently under consideration,

my Department is also seeking legal advice on the potential for a prosecution in this case.

### **Breach of a Tree Preservation Order**

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the recent breaches of Tree Preservation Orders, what measures he proposes to strengthen the legislation. (AQW 35/09)

**Mr S Wilson:** The Planning (Amendment) (NI) Order 2003 introduced new legislative changes which provide my Department with greater powers to protect trees including the power to make a provisional Tree Preservation Order (TPO) with immediate effect, enhanced enforcement powers to require replacement of trees removed without consent and higher fines for breaches of TPOs. In particular, trees within a Conservation Area are now afforded the same protection as if a TPO was in place. In this regard, I have no proposals to introduce any further legislative measures at present.

## **FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

### **Emergency Incident Line**

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel will the Executive take action to set-up a sufficiently manned single emergency telephone number to deal with localised emergencies such as flooding. (AQW 52/09)

**The Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds):** The Programme for Government contains a December 2008 target for implementation of a single number to improve access to selected government services and this programme of work includes the provision of an incident line to deal with local emergencies. The initial focus for the incident line is to deal with calls in relation to flooding.

My department is working closely with the flooding agencies and our commercial partner to establish this facility. Subject to successful testing, the aim is to have the incident line service for flooding in place by the end of October 2008 which is in advance of the December target.

This communications facility will improve the way in which members of the public can make contact about flooding and will help the Government's flood agencies in organising their response.

### **Peace III Funding**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if Peace III funding can be used to fund community workers' salaries. (AQW 55/09)

**Mr N Dodds:** Salaries are deemed eligible for posts where they contribute to the provision of services that relate to the implementation of an operation and where that operation contributes to the overall Programme's aims and objectives.

Therefore PEACE III funds can be used to fund community workers' salaries.

### **Tax Exemption for Residents of Rathlin Island**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is his assessment of the benefit to the economy of Rathlin Island if tax exemption for residents is introduced for residents. (AQW 146/09)

**Mr N Dodds:** I have not made an assessment of this specific issue since the Executive has no responsibility for taxation policy.

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Portadown Golf Club Drainage Works**

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development what drainage works, including drain cleaning, has taken place within the vicinity of Portadown Golf Club. (AQW 1/09)

**The Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):** With regard to AQW 1/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that all of the road gullies in the vicinity of the golf club on the Gilford Road, Portadown, were cleaned and flushed on 10 December 2007.

During the particularly severe weather conditions, on Saturday 16 August 2008, this location was inspected by Roads Service staff. There was no flooding on the road at that time. However, there was widespread flooding of lands within the Bann river basin adjacent to the road.

There had been road flooding at this location, on a previous occasion, which was caused by debris obstructing a grid cover on a culvert crossing the road. This resulted in the stream overflowing onto the road. The grid was cleared by the Rivers Agency at that time.

The road gullies on the Gilford Road in the vicinity of the golf club were inspected on Tuesday 2 September 2008 and are clear and functioning.

I have been advised by NI Water that it has a gravity sewer and foul pumping main in the vicinity of Portadown Golf Club. During last year NI Water has cleared seven blockages in the sewers at the Gilford Road, Portadown. NI Water has also undertaken regular scheduled maintenance to ensure that the infrastructure continues to operate effectively and to reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding.

In relation to AQW 2/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that road gullies in the towns of Banbridge, Portadown and Lurgan and the villages of Waringstown and Donaghcloney are on Roads Service's schedule for twice yearly cleaning. This includes clearing any blockages.

Within the Craigavon Borough Council area, a contractor is employed continuously throughout the year for the sole purpose of cleaning road gullies.

I have been advised by NI Water that regular scheduled maintenance is undertaken on the sewerage infrastructure, to ensure that it operates effectively and to reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding. When a sewer blockage does occur, NI Water aims to clear the public sewer within 24 hours of a report being received. As records of the number of sewer blockages cleared do not provide a breakdown specifically for the Banbridge, Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney areas, it is not possible to provide the information requested.

In regard to AQW 3/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that Maintenance works in the Banbridge area are undertaken from Corbet Depot, where there is a gully emptier which can also be used to pump out water. Maintenance work in Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney are undertaken by Roads Service's staff based at Carn Depot in Craigavon. Carn Depot currently has a three inch pump that is fully operational and a gully emptier which can be used to pump water.

Roads Service would not have any routine need for pumps, given the nature of works that it carries out day-to-day. However, it has contract arrangements for the hire of plant and would draw on these when necessary.

I have been advised by NI Water that it operates a number of wastewater pumping stations in the Banbridge, Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney areas and all of these facilities operated normally during the recent heavy rainfall. NI Water does not own large mobile pumping equipment suitable for dealing with flood water. Its sewerage maintenance contractors have access to pumping equipment and tankers, but these are considered more effective for removing wastewater from the sewerage system.

## Drainage Works

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development when drains have been (i) checked; (ii) cleaned; and (iii) unblocked, in the (a) Banbridge; (b) Portadown; (c) Lurgan; (d) Waringstown; and (e) Donaghcloney areas, in the last 12 months.

(AQW 2/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** With regard to AQW 1/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that all of the road gullies in the vicinity of the golf club on the Gilford Road, Portadown, were cleaned and flushed on 10 December 2007.

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### Water Pumps

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many water pumps (i) are owned by Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water; and (ii) are currently in working order, in the (a) Banbridge; (b) Portadown; (c) Lurgan; (d) Waringstown; and (e) Donaghcloney areas. (AQW 3/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** With regard to AQW 1/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that all of the road gullies in the vicinity of the golf club on the Gilford Road, Portadown, were cleaned and flushed on 10 December 2007.

During the particularly severe weather conditions, on Saturday 16 August 2008, this location was inspected by Roads Service staff. There was no flooding on the road at that time. However, there was widespread flooding of lands within the Bann river basin adjacent to the road.

There had been road flooding at this location, on a previous occasion, which was caused by debris obstructing a grid cover on a culvert crossing the road. This resulted in the stream overflowing onto the road. The grid was cleared by the Rivers Agency at that time.

The road gullies on the Gilford Road in the vicinity of the golf club were inspected on Tuesday 2 September 2008 and are clear and functioning.

I have been advised by NI Water that it has a gravity sewer and foul pumping main in the vicinity of Portadown Golf Club. During last year NI Water has cleared seven blockages in the sewers at the Gilford Road, Portadown. NI Water has also undertaken regular scheduled maintenance to ensure that the infrastructure continues to operate effectively and to reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding.

In relation to AQW 2/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that road gullies in the towns of Banbridge, Portadown and Lurgan and the villages of Waringstown and Donaghcloney are on Roads Service's schedule for twice yearly cleaning. This includes clearing any blockages.

Within the Craigavon Borough Council area, a contractor is employed continuously throughout the year for the sole purpose of cleaning road gullies.

I have been advised by NI Water that regular scheduled maintenance is undertaken on the sewerage infrastructure, to ensure that it operates effectively and to reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding. When a sewer blockage does occur, NI Water aims to clear the public sewer within 24 hours of a report being received. As records of the number of sewer blockages cleared do not provide a breakdown specifically for the Banbridge, Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney areas, it is not possible to provide the information requested.

In regard to AQW 3/09, my Department's Roads Service has advised that Maintenance works in the Banbridge area are undertaken from Corbet Depot, where there is a gully emptier which can also be used to pump out water. Maintenance work in Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney are undertaken by Roads Service's staff based at Carn Depot in Craigavon. Carn Depot currently has a three inch pump that is fully operational and a gully emptier which can be used to pump water.

Roads Service would not have any routine need for pumps, given the nature of works that it carries out day-to-day. However, it has contract arrangements for the hire of plant and would draw on these when necessary.

I have been advised by NI Water that it operates a number of wastewater pumping stations in the Banbridge, Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney areas and all of these facilities operated normally during the recent heavy rainfall. NI Water does not own large mobile pumping equipment suitable for dealing with flood water. Its sewerage maintenance contractors have access to pumping equipment and tankers, but these are considered more

effective for removing wastewater from the sewerage system.

### North Down Flooding

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development in what areas in the North Down constituency flooding was reported during the recent heavy rain. (AQW 5/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that during the heavy rainfall experienced on the 16 and 17 August 2008, flooding was reported in the North Down area at Woodlands in Holywood, Bridge Road in Helen's Bay, and in Bangor at Dixon Park, Brunswick Road/Osborne Drive, Rathmore Ave, Maxwell Road and Princetown Road/Glenbank.

I have also been advised by Northern Ireland Water that 32 incidents of flooding were reported to them in the North Down area, 22 in the Bangor area, 9 in Holywood and 1 in Donaghadee.

### Public Transport in Glengormley

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Regional Development what proportion of public transport in the Glengormley area can be accessed by people with disabilities; and what plans he has to increase the provision of this type of service. (AQW 28/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** Both Metro and Ulsterbus services operate in the Glengormley area. Of these 98% of Metro buses are fully accessible and 50% of Ulsterbus vehicles are accessible. Translink plans to increase the number of accessible vehicles in line with the targets contained in the Regional Transportation Strategy.

Door-to-Door transport services are also available in the Glengormley area and all the vehicles used to provide these services are fully accessible.

### Water Treatment Facilities Project, Toomebridge

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the land acquisition for the water treatment facilities project on the Raughery Road, Toomebridge. (AQW 29/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the proposed acquisition of land at Roguery Road for a wastewater pumping station is part of a wider project to upgrade wastewater treatment facilities for Toomebridge.

Negotiations with the landowner for acquisition of the land are close to completion. However, acquisition

of the land is dependant on the design requirements of the overall project which are yet to be finalised.

### Westlink Underpass at Broadway Roundabout

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development what surveys have been carried out on the Westlink underpass at Broadway roundabout following the flooding on Saturday 16th August 2008, and by whom; and to detail the results of those investigations and any recommended remedial actions. (AQW 50/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** With regard to AQW 50/09, a number of surveys and inspections were carried out on Broadway Underpass before it was re-opened to traffic on the morning of Tuesday 19 August.

Roads Service has advised that the M1/Westlink contractor, Highway Management Construction (HMC), installed a number of monitoring points to check for movement of the reinforced concrete floor slab of the underpass. HMC has been checking and continues to check the position of these monitoring points at regular intervals and no movement has been identified in the floor slab.

HMC has cleaned and undertaken visual inspections of the road drainage system. They have also undertaken visual inspections of all motorway communications and electrical ducts associated with Broadway Underpass. Specialist electrical sub contractors, GR White, have inspected the underpass lighting system.

HMC has also removed a number of facing blocks from the walls of the underpass which has allowed them to carry out a visual inspection for any trapped water behind the front face of the wall. No trapped water has been found.

Since the flooding, HMC has raised the bank of the Clowney Water on the approach to the culvert at Broadway and has increased its inspection regime of the inlet grill and river level of the Clowney Water.

You may be aware that Roads Service has already appointed an independent consultant, Amey, to carry out a detailed investigation into the circumstances surrounding the flooding of the subject underpass. This investigation will establish the reasons why the underpass flooded and will recommend longer term mitigation measures to prevent this from happening in the future.

With regard to AQW 51/09, in which you requested details of the costs for draining, surveys and repairs to the underpass, I should explain that the responsibility for the works at this stage rests with the Design, Build, Finance and Operate Company. Roads Service has advised that a detailed breakdown of costs is not

presently available. At this stage I can advise that HMC has indicated that the clean up operation to remove water from the Broadway Underpass involved approximately 3000 man hours.

### Westlink Underpass at Broadway Roundabout

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the costs of (i) draining, (ii) surveys and repairs required, following the flooding of the Westlink underpass at the Broadway roundabout on Saturday 16th August 2008. (AQW 51/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** With regard to AQW 50/09, a number of surveys and inspections were carried out on Broadway Underpass before it was re-opened to traffic on the morning of Tuesday 19 August.

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presently available. At this stage I can advise that HMC has indicated that the clean up operation to remove water from the Broadway Underpass involved approximately 3000 man hours.

### Translink Buses

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the figures for hiring buses by Translink to private bodies or individuals, for each of the last three years. (AQW 54/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** I have been informed by Translink that it does not hold separate figures for the hire of buses by private bodies or individuals. The number of occasions when Translink buses were privately hired, in each of the last three years, is as follows:-

Year ending June 2006	14,559
Year ending June 2007	12,890
Year ending June 2008	11,611

### Vandalism on Roads Infrastructure in Craigavon

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps his Department is taking to tackle vandalising of the road infrastructure in the Brownlow area of Craigavon. (AQW 80/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** Following any act of vandalism on roads infrastructure, such as the recent burning of vehicles that occurred in the Brownlow area of Craigavon, my Department's Roads Service will carry out an inspection of the area to determine the extent of any structural damage caused to the road. Where the damage caused is considered to present a hazard to the travelling public, repairs are carried out as soon as possible.

However, the decision on timing for follow-up action is made at a local level, so that it can be best determined when it is safe for Roads Service personnel to carry out the necessary repairs. The reason is that vehicles and staff can often become the targets for vandalism and intimidation.

When the police have been successful in bringing those responsible for vandalism to roads infrastructure to the courts, Roads Service will provide details of any damage, including the cost of repairs, for the court to consider for the purpose of recouping the costs.

### Traffic Calming in Newtownards

**Mr Shannon** asked the Minister for Regional Development for a timescale for the introduction of traffic calming on the Circular Road, Newtownards. (AQW 87/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** An assessment for the provision of traffic calming measures at Circular Road, Newtownards should be complete by the end of September 2008. The results of the assessment will determine whether Circular Road can be considered for inclusion in the 2009/10 traffic calming programme for the Ards Council area. My Department's Roads Service will write to you when the assessment has been completed.

However, I should advise that a further assessment will be required upon completion of the new A20 Newtownards Southern Distributor Road, currently being constructed in association with Castlebawn Development Ltd, as there may be a shift in traffic patterns towards the new road.

### Annaghmore Winter Gritting Schedule

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to include the Moss Road, Annaghmore, in the gritting schedule this winter, given the recent housing developments along the road. (AQW 96/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised me that the Moss Road, Annaghmore had not previously met the criteria for inclusion on the Winter Gritting Schedule.

However, due to the possible increase in traffic on the road, as a result of additional housing development, Roads Service will assess the present traffic levels to ascertain if the road would now meet the necessary criteria.

I have asked that the Southern Division Roads Manager to write to you in due course to advise you of the outcome of this assessment.

### Establishment of a Floods Authority

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department will give urgent consideration to the establishment of a Floods Authority to co-ordinate a cross-agency approach to flood emergencies. (AQW 139/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** Responsibility for the drainage infrastructure is shared between my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) through the 3 main drainage organisations, namely Roads Service, NI Water and

Rivers Agency. DARD Rivers Agency has taken the lead in the formulation of procedures for the liaison and co-ordination of the emergency response of the 3 drainage organisations for localised flooding events. The result of this process has been the production of Best Practice Guidelines and the Flooding Hotspot list.

There are already inter-agency arrangements in place to deal with flooding emergencies, and following the widespread flooding in June 2007 it was recognised that in more severe conditions, where a multi-agency response is required (i.e. more than the 3 main drainage organisations), wider co-ordination is necessary. This co-ordination can best be achieved by councils through the local resilience fora to ensure integration with the regional structures and coordination of a local response. The Belfast Resilience Forum is already established, and others are currently being developed.

### Roads Service Sandbags Numbers

**Mr Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many sandbags Roads Service have in the (i) Banbridge; (ii) Portadown; (iii) Lurgan; (iv) Waringstown; and (v) Donaghcloney areas. (AQW 141/09)

**Mr C Murphy:** Roads Service maintains stock levels of sandbags within its maintenance depots for use during flooding incidents.

The Banbridge area is covered by Roads Service's Corbet depot, while Portadown, Lurgan, Waringstown and Donaghcloney are covered by the Craigavon depot at Carn. Each of these depot's retains a stock level of 3000 sandbags, with 1000 filled ready for immediate use. Resources are available to fill and replenish stocks as necessary.

Arrangements also exist with those Agencies that deal with flooding emergencies, to draw on additional stocks when necessary.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Proposed Land Sale at Churchill, Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development why there was no community consultation in relation to the proposed land sale at Churchill, Bangor, by the Housing Executive. (AQW 8/09)

**The Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie):** The Housing Executive continually reviews its sites of undeveloped land to identify their potential future use for social housing. In considering this

particular site, the Housing Executive took the view that it would be unsuitable for social housing and declared it surplus to requirements. Community consultation on this alone would be inappropriate.

However, any potential purchaser would need to ensure that all necessary planning approvals could be obtained for the future development of this site. This would involve consultation where local residents, at that stage, would have the opportunity to comment on any proposals.

### Local Legislation

**Ms Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Social Development what local legislation the Minister intends to bring forward for consideration by the Assembly. (AQW 21/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** The planning of the legislative programme is difficult given the uncertainty around the timing of Executive meetings. Nevertheless, I intend to bring forward legislation relating to Pensions and Housing to the Assembly for consideration in the 2008/09 session. I will also be bringing forward a programme of subordinate legislation. It is not possible to be definitive on the contents of that programme at this point.

### Provision of Social and Affordable Housing

**Ms Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Social Development to provide details of new guidelines that will be used in the procurement process for the provision of social and affordable housing. (AQW 23/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** My Department has just developed a new Procurement Strategy for the provision of social housing. It will be formally launched within the next few weeks.

### Housing Executive Waiting List

**Mr Hamilton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are currently on the Housing Executive waiting list with Saintfield as one of their areas of choice; and what the (i) highest number of points; (ii) lowest number of points; and (iii) the average number of points is, for these applicants. (AQW 25/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** There are currently 111 applicants on the waiting list for social housing who have expressed an interest in Saintfield as one of their areas of choice. The highest number of points gained by

an applicant is 310 and the lowest number of points gained by an applicant is 0.

The average number of points gained, per application expressing a preference for housing within the Saintfield area, is 51.

### Renovation Work at Millburn Estate in Coleraine

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Social Development when renovation work on the retirement dwellings at Millburn Estate in Coleraine will begin. (AQW 47/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** Work to renovate these homes in the Millburn Estate is planned to commence in March 2009. A tender for this scheme will be issued later this month.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people receive Disability Living Allowance. (AQW 53/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** There were 174,367 people receiving Disability Living Allowance in Northern Ireland at the date of extract, 9 August 2008. The figure shown reflects the number of customers where an amount of Disability Living Allowance is in payment.

### Social Housing for the Central Craigavon Area

**Mr Simpson** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline her plans for social housing for the Craigavon Central area of Upper Bann, for each of the next five years. (AQW 77/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** The Draft Social Housing Development Programme for 2008/09 – 2012/13 for the Upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency (which includes the Central Craigavon area) includes 28 schemes with 402 units programmed for completion in the next five years, broken down as follows:-

2008/09	6 schemes	108 units
2009/10	6 schemes	75 units
2010/11	7 schemes	91 units
2011/12	5 schemes	66 units
2012/13	4 schemes	62 units

## **Vandalism and Graffiti in the Central Craigavon Area**

**Mr Simpson** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the work carried out by her Department to tackle (i) vandalism and (ii) graffiti in each of the estates in the central Craigavon area of Upper Bann. (AQW 79/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** The Housing Executive continues to address all forms of blight where it exists within its estates, including vandalism and graffiti, through its maintenance and improvement programmes. In the Brownlow area during the last financial year (in addition to routine maintenance works) a total of £6,296 was spent on vandalism repairs and £884 was spent on graffiti removal.

## **Removal of Derelict Houses in Craigavon**

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the steps her Department has taken to complete the removal of derelict houses in the Craigavon Central area of Upper Bann. (AQW 81/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** Since 1985, 1615 derelict properties have been demolished in the Brownlow area. In October 2004 a major review of the Brownlow strategy was undertaken with a view to re-energising the housing market and removing the blight of vacant or derelict properties. Since then £3.5m has been invested in this area.

## **Community Heating Schemes**

**Ms Anderson** asked the Minister for Social Development if the Fuel Poverty Taskforce will consider the potential benefits of introducing community heating schemes. (AQW 124/09)

**Ms M Ritchie:** The Fuel Poverty Task Force was set up primarily with the aim of producing short term recommendations which could be put in place to help those people in greatest need this winter. Community heating schemes are a longer-term measure and would not be a central consideration in this context.

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## WRITTEN ANSWERS

<b>Agriculture and Rural Development</b>		Peace III Funding	15
Animal Welfare Consultation Exercise	5	Tax Exemption for Residents of Rathlin Island	15
Badger Culls	5	<b>Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister</b>	
Chicken Waste Incinerator in Glenavy	6	Sustainable Development Commission	3
Cross-Compliance Regulations on the Loss of Hedgerows	4	<b>Regional Development</b>	
Eradication of Scrapie in the Sheep Flock	4	Annaghmore Winter Gritting Schedule	20
Farmers Affected by Floods	4	Drainage Works	16
Hedgerow	5	Establishment of a Floods Authority	20
Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings Programme	3	North Down Flooding	18
New Entrants' Scheme	4	Portadown Golf Club Drainage Works	15
Red Meat Taskforce Working Groups	3	Public Transport in Glengormley	18
Tagging of Sheep	5	Roads Service Sandbags Numbers	20
The Felling of Trees	5	Traffic Calming in Newtownards	20
<b>Culture, Arts and Leisure</b>		Translink Buses	19
Financial Support for Local Deaf Athletes	6	Vandalism on Roads Infrastructure in Craigavon	19
<b>Education</b>		Water Pumps	17
Admission to Bangor Academy	6	Water Treatment Facilities Project, Toomebridge	18
Autism Training Strategy	7	Westlink Underpass at Broadway Roundabout	18
Bangor Academy	8	Westlink Underpass at Broadway Roundabout	19
Bangor Academy	11	<b>Social Development</b>	
Bangor Academy	11	Community Heating Schemes	22
Bangor Academy	11	Disability Living Allowance	21
Bangor Academy	12	Housing Executive Waiting List	21
Bangor Grammar School	7	Local Legislation	21
Bangor Grammar School	12	Proposed Land Sale at Churchill, Bangor	20
British Association for Early Childhood Education	8	Provision of Social and Affordable Housing	21
Donaghadee High School	6	Removal of Derelict Houses in Craigavon	22
Needs of Young Carers in Schools	8	Renovation Work at Millburn Estate in Coleraine	21
North Antrim Post-Primary School Numbers	9	Social Housing for the Central Craigavon Area	21
North Antrim Primary Schools	9	Vandalism and Graffiti in the Central Craigavon Area	22
Secondary Level Students	12		
Second Languages in Primary Schools	10		
St Columbanus College	8		
Teaching Unions	11		
Year 8 Pupils in North Down	6		
<b>Employment and Learning</b>			
Essential Skills Courses	13		
Expansion of the University of Ulster Magee Campus	13		
Stranmillis and St Mary's Student Numbers	14		
Training for Success Programme	13		
<b>Enterprise, Trade and Investment</b>			
Chicken Waste Incinerator in Glenavy	14		
Renewable Energy Heating Systems	14		
<b>Environment</b>			
Breach of a Tree Preservation Order	14		
Breach of a Tree Preservation Order	15		
<b>Finance and Personnel</b>			
Emergency Incident Line	15		

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