
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 13 March 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Lillian Ladele Case

Mr D Simpson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the implications for the application of (i) section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; (ii) all other UK equality legislation; and (iii) EU Directives, of the ruling by the Central London Employment Tribunal in the case of Lillian Ladele.

(AQW 1675/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): Section 75(1) of the NI Act 1998 imposes a general statutory duty on all public authorities (as defined under section 75(3)). This duty requires a public authority to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of all its functions. The Executive has previously stated its commitment to observing this statutory duty. Further detailed enforcement duties also arise under Schedule 9 of the Act, which is given effect by Section 75(4). Various remedies are available to any citizen or group asserting any failure to comply with either the general statutory duty in Section 75(1) or the detailed enforcement duties in Schedule 9.

It is important to note that the Lillian Ladele case has since been successfully appealed at the Employment Appeal Tribunal. Since it is a case outside this jurisdiction it will have persuasive but not binding authority here. It is an example of the way in which the Courts balance competing interests (in this case between someone who had a conscientious objection to officiating at civil partnerships between couples of the same sex on the one hand and the rights of those couples to enter into a civil partnership on the other).

A Court in Northern Ireland may or may not adopt the same approach in corresponding circumstances. Under domestic and European legislation each case would be decided in the light of the particular issues and facts involved.

Training for Women Network

Ms J McCann asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the reasons for the delay in the Peace III application submitted by the Training for Women Network which was approved by the Special European Union Programmes Body in August 2008.

(AQW 3678/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Following the approval from SEUPB it was necessary to ensure the project complied with government accounting requirements. This has been completed and Departmental approval of the Training for Women Network was given just before Christmas. A formal Letter of Offer was issued to Training for Women Network on 22 December 2008 by the Special European Union Programmes Body.

Child Poverty

Mr S Gardiner asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many children deemed as living in child poverty are residing in; (i) homes with a single parent; (ii) homes with two parents but only one parent working; and (iii) homes with two unemployed parents.

(AQW 4989/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: There are three measurements of poverty – relative, absolute and mixed.

Relative income poverty describes families living below 60% of the median wage. It is estimated that the number of children in relative income poverty living in:

- (i) lone parent families is around 40,900
- (ii) couple families with only one parent working is around 12,400
- (iii) couple families with both not in work is around 16,500

The remainder of those children in poverty live in families with both parents working; this number is estimated to be around 21,100.

These figures have been sourced from the Households Below Average Income, NI, 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07.

Because of the small numbers in the survey for this analysis it has been necessary to combine the three years of data.

Ministerial Subcommittee on Poverty and Social Exclusion

Mr T Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister when will the first meeting of the Ministerial Subcommittee on poverty and social exclusion take place; and what will the agenda be.

(AQW 5127/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We propose to hold the first meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion on 26 March 2009. An agenda for this first meeting is still to be agreed.

The Executive Sub-Committee will be responsible for agreeing the priorities and key Executive actions for tackling poverty and social inclusion here and also agreeing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms associated with the 'Lifetime Opportunities' Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Once the Executive Sub-Committee has met, we would intend to convene a first meeting of the re-established Ministerially-led Poverty and Social Inclusion Stakeholder Forum.

Cost of Trips and Ministerial Visits

Mr A Attwood asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total (i) travel; and (ii) accommodation costs incurred by its Department on trips and ministerial visits since May 2007, broken down by (a) Ministers; and (b) senior officials.

(AQW 5301/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out the costs incurred by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to official travel by staff and Ministers in pursuance of Departmental business objectives since 8 May 2007. These costs fall into two financial years and include mileage allowances, accommodation costs, subsistence and all other associated costs of travel.

It is not possible to split staff travel, accommodation and subsistence costs by seniority or grade of staff. The figures provided relate to all grades of staff in OFMDFM.

Category of spend	2007-08 (£'s)		2008-09 (£'s)	
	Ministers	Officials	Ministers	Officials
Accommodation	5,924	137,872	6,779	38,555
Subsistence	6,783	69,262	0	10,565
Travel – air, road, rail, sea and subsistence	39,551	302,821	47,966	239,130
Grand Total		562,213		342,995

Advertising Expenditure

Mr S Gardiner asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much has been spent on advertisements placed in regional and local newspapers, broken down by each newspaper, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5476/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Table A provides the classified advertising expenditure, broken down by individual newspaper, of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for financial years 05/06, 06/07, 07/08 and this year to date.

The Department did not carry out campaign advertising during this period.

TABLE A

Newspaper Group	Title	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 Year to Date
Alpha Newspaper Group	Ballymena Guardian	£166.26	-	-	-
	Coleraine Chronicle	£332.50	-	-	-
	East Antrim Gazette	£152.69	-	-	-
	Northern Constitution	£332.52	-	-	-
	Strabane Weekly News	£117.05	-	-	-
	The Leader	£166.26	-	-	-
	The Outlook	£305.68	-	-	-
	Tyrone Constitution	£234.10	-	£95.26	-
	Tyrone Courier	£152.68	-	-	-
	Ulster Gazette	£152.68	-	-	-
Alpha Newspaper Group Total		£2,112.42	£0.00	£95.26	£0.00
Independent News and Media	Belfast Telegraph	£19,918.78	£19,933.57	£14,656.04	£7,600.66
	Community Telegraph	£599.54	-	-	-
Independent News and Media Group Total		£20,518.32	£19,933.57	£14,656.04	£7,600.66
Johnston Publishing	Ballymena Times	£195.10	-	-	-
	Belfast News	£329.12	-	-	£2,015.00
	Coleraine Times	£203.58	-	-	-
	Derry Journal	£186.61	£1,548.94	£1,153.27	-
	Dromore Leader	£373.22	-	-	-
	Lisburn Star	-	£180.60	-	-
	Londonderry Sentinel	-	£1,177.12	£1,219.09	-
	Lurgan Mail	£190.00	-	-	-
	Mid Ulster Mail	£519.12	-	-	-
	News Letter	£11,365.98	£11,836.06	£5,446.60	£2,562.99
	Newtownabbey Times	£195.10	-	-	-
	Portadown Times	£196.79	-	-	-
	Roe Valley Sentinel	£195.09	-	-	-
	Tyrone Times	£315.54	-	-	-
Ulster Star	£222.24	-	-	-	
Johnston Publishing Group Total		£14,487.49	£14,742.72	£7,818.96	£4,577.99

Newspaper Group	Title	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 Year to Date
North West of Ireland Printing and Publishing Company	Fermanagh Herald	£152.68	-	£130.50	-
	Strabane Chronicle	£305.36	-	-	-
	Ulster Herald	£305.36	-	£130.50	-
North West of Ireland Printing and Publishing Company Group Total		£763.40	£0.00	£261.00	£0.00

Advertising expenditure for the Department's Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) is not readily available by individual newspaper.

Table B provides the total advertising expenditure by NDPBs for financial years 05/06, 06/07, 07/08 and 08/09 to date.

TABLE B

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Commissioner for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 7,381.94
Ilex Urban Regeneration Company Limited	Not available	£ 4,940.63	£ 23,909.64	£ 19,844.26
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	Not available	£ 6,831.06	£ 12,913.00	£ 18,980.41
Planning Appeals Commission & Water Appeals Commission	£ 121,236.04	£ 108,638.52	£ 49,898.57	£ 57,288.56
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	£ 55,876.12	£ 69,864.58	£ 56,805.12	£ 45,706.79
Strategic Investment Board	Not available	£ 35,500.00	£ 87,172.89	£ 39,563.01
Total	£ 177,112.16	£ 225,774.79	£ 230,699.22	£ 188,764.97

NI Bureau in Washington

Mr S Gardiner asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the cost of running the NI Bureau in Washington DC, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5478/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Costs for each of the last three complete financial years are:

2005/06	£644,643
2006/07	£616,646
2007/08	£769,960

Cost of Hospitality

Mr S Gardiner asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the cost of hospitality by its Department in (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) in the rest of the UK; and (iii) overseas, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5479/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out the Department's expenditure on hospitality and entertainment for each of the last three financial years 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 to 31 December 2008. It is not possible to split expenditure between (i) Northern Ireland and (ii) in the rest of the UK.

Description	2006/07 (£)	2007/08 (£)	2008/09 (to 31 Dec 08) (£)
Hospitality in NI & UK	41,879	104,621	100,448
Hospitality overseas	36,644	102,000	57,905
Total	78,523	206,621	158,353

Implementation of EU Legislation and Regulation

Mr D Simpson asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to its answer to AQW 3849/09, to outline the manner in which Ministers and officials cooperate with the UK Government regarding the implementation of European Union relevant legislation and regulation. (AQW 5639/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The 2001 Memorandum of Understanding sets out the principles underlying relations between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. Its Concordat on Co-ordination of European Union Policy Issues outlines how Executive Ministers and officials handle co-operation with the UK Government on the implementation and enforcement of European Union obligations, infraction proceedings, and the scrutiny of European legislation.

Junior Ministers also attend JMC (Europe) which meets on a periodic basis. The JMC(E) is chaired by the Foreign Secretary and all other relevant Ministers from the devolved administrations are invited to attend.

Officials also have regular contact with UK representatives in Brussels on all matters of relevance.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Mr E Poots asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much was spent in 2006/07 and 2007/08 on legal fees by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, and how much was spent on the judicial review on the ban on spanking, and on appealing the original decision. (AQW 5663/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland has advised that the amounts paid in legal fees and the judicial review on the defence of reasonable parental punishment in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 were as follows:

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Legal Fees (excluding Reasonable Parental Punishment)	£8,172.50	£39,963.18	
Judicial Review on Reasonable Parental Punishment costs	£31,164.18	£12,951.37	
The appeal on the original decision costs			£37,213.6

The appeal ruling stated that the Commissioner has to pay costs. The respondent is not yet able to provide a schedule of costs for the appeal hearing.

US Immigration

Mr S Hamilton asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if it will consider initiating discussions with the UK Government and the US administration about developing arrangements to allow passengers to pre-clear US Immigration at Belfast International Airport. (AQW 5688/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Due to the low volume of direct flights between Belfast International Airport and the United States we have no plans to initiate discussions with the UK Government and the US administration about arrangements for pre-clearance of US Immigration.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr G Savage asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide a breakdown of external travel costs for the Strategic Investment Board for each of the last five years, including (i) destination; (ii) length of stay; (iii) reason for trip; (iv) cost of flights; (v) cost of hotels; and (vi) any other expenses.

(AQW 5743/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out the Strategic Investment Board's expenditure on travel costs for each of the last five years. It is not possible to split expenditure between external and internal travel, nor is it possible to extract the details of individual trips.

	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009 10 mths to Jan 09
Flights	101,094.63	34,848.48	78,196.68	39,954.12	26,146.71
Hotels	83,312.05	41,775.55	27,136.01	19,375.07	10,103.63
Subsistence	32,838.29	19,599.90	9,768.67	2,283.48	1,720.72
Mileage	6,482.92	15,049.19	17,090.56	13,763.00	15,060.00
Taxis	26,408.64	31,271.67	26,242.17	6,708.89	9,508.59
Parking	4,208.53	2,652.19	4,032.45	2,585.05	2,375.15
Public Transport	2,012.78	8,436.86	6,394.87	4,531.11	3,971.69
	256,357.84	153,633.84	168,861.41	89,200.72	68,886.49

SIB will travel abroad occasionally in order to meet bidders and funders; to participate in conferences and seminars and for research purposes.

Until 2007, SIB relied heavily on seconded staff and the figures before then include the cost of travel and accommodation arrangements for such staff.

SIB does not own or operate official cars.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr G Savage asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide a breakdown of internal travel costs for the Strategic Investment Board including (i) cost of running official cars; (ii) mileage expenses; and (iii) hotels, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5744/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out the Strategic Investment Board's expenditure on travel costs for each of the last five years. It is not possible to split expenditure between external and internal travel, nor is it possible to extract the details of individual trips.

	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009 10 mths to Jan 09
Flights	101,094.63	34,848.48	78,196.68	39,954.12	26,146.71
Hotels	83,312.05	41,775.55	27,136.01	19,375.07	10,103.63
Subsistence	32,838.29	19,599.90	9,768.67	2,283.48	1,720.72
Mileage	6,482.92	15,049.19	17,090.56	13,763.00	15,060.00
Taxis	26,408.64	31,271.67	26,242.17	6,708.89	9,508.59
Parking	4,208.53	2,652.19	4,032.45	2,585.05	2,375.15
Public Transport	2,012.78	8,436.86	6,394.87	4,531.11	3,971.69
	256,357.84	153,633.84	168,861.41	89,200.72	68,886.49

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Until 2007, SIB relied heavily on seconded staff and the figures before then include the cost of travel and accommodation arrangements for such staff.

SIB does not own or operate official cars.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr G Savage asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much the Strategic Investment Board has spent on salaries in each of the last five years. (AQW 5745/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out the Strategic Investment Boards's expenditure on salaries for each of the last five years.

	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009 10 mths to Jan 09
Salaries	697,483	965,890	1,064,075	1,476,177	1,460,436

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr P Butler asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on its discussions with Gordon Brown about extending the UK Government's savings protection scheme to the Presbyterian Mutual Society. (AQW 5761/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: On 25 February 2009 we met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Also at the meeting were the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the Secretaries of State for each of the devolved administrations. While the primary intention was to have a discussion about the general economic downturn we did take the opportunity to strongly register our concerns about the handling of the Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS) case. We impressed upon the Prime Minister the need to help ordinary depositors who had been disadvantaged by the circumstances and current approach to PMS. We emphasised our central concern that there should be a fair and equitable treatment of PMS depositors.

The Prime Minister, and indeed Secretary of State Sean Woodward, were clearly aware of the PMS case and we agreed that a separate meeting dedicated specifically to this issue was warranted. This will be arranged in the near future.

Trade Unions

Mr D McKay asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what meetings it has had with trade unions in the past 6 months. (AQW 5767/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: On 14th October 2008, as part of a series of meetings about the economic downturn, we met with a group of trade unionists comprising the following: -

- Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- Ulster Teachers Union
- UNISON
- UNITE
- Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers
- UCATT - Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians

The topics discussed included the state of the local economy including the effects of the recession, the cost of living and the construction industry. The views of trade unions, along with other groups consulted by us, were taken into account as part of the Executive's consideration of measures to help deal with the economic downturn.

On 4 November 2008 and 5 February 2009 we met representatives of Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The topics discussed include future relationships with the Executive, the use of Public Private Partnerships and the economy.

To date individual unions have not requested separate meetings with us.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr T Lunn asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to report on progress on the publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy. (AQO 2106/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We are continuing to develop and refine the programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. Improving relationships between and within communities in Northern Ireland and building a shared and better future remains a top priority for this Department and the Executive.

We believe that our work at Ministerial level in OFMDFM as well as throughout the Department at all levels, has demonstrated our commitment to building cohesive, inclusive communities.

The fact that we have been delivering substantial additional funding secured in the Executive's budget is just one of our achievements. We have increased funding by a third for the period 2008-2011, from £21 million in the previous CSR period to almost £30 million in the current one. That means that vital work on the ground and with both existing and new communities is better resourced than ever. We also want to ensure that these resources are used in an effective way therefore we have been assessing existing programmes and considering new approaches to ensure tangible outcomes from our funding and actions.

We have increased funding to minority ethnic groups by two-thirds.

Funding for youth and interface workers has been increased by a quarter.

Statistics show that the work that we fund and resource is delivering real and meaningful outcomes. A 12% drop in racist hate crime between 2006/07 and 2007/08. Likewise, a reduction in sectarian motivated crimes from 1,217 in 2006/07 to 1,056 in 2007/08. Three out of five young people in 2007 reported that relationships between Protestants and Catholics were getting better.

But, we are not complacent. We are leading and driving change in our society – and we are leading and driving change in our work through the Department and the Executive to deliver a shared and better future for all our people.

Racial Attack in South Belfast

Mr A Maskey asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of the recent racial attack in South Belfast; and what action it is taking to promote racial equality in this area. (AQO 2122/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: We unreservedly condone the recent attack on the Bangladeshi student, Sazzadur Rahman, on the evening of Friday 6 February in the Donegall Road area of South Belfast.

Foreign students, like migrant workers, are a valuable resource both to our society and for our economy. We understand that local community representatives and the PSNI's Minority Liaison Officer have been in contact with Mr Rahman to offer him advice and support.

We note the latest figures provided by the PSNI which indicate that there has been a reduction in racist crime and racist incidents in the South Belfast area. Over the period 1 April 2008 – 1 November 2008, there were 81 racist incidents and 61 racist crimes, compared to 117 racist incidents and 79 racist crimes over the same period the previous year. This reflects some of the very positive work which has been carried out by Government, the PSNI and community workers in the area.

We will continue to support preventative measures and capacity building of many local community groups, including those within the South Belfast area, through our Minority Ethnic Development Fund. To this end, and as part of our ongoing work to combat racism and to promote good relations, we recently launched our Minority Ethnic Development Fund for the incoming financial year.

The £1 million we have allocated this year represents a substantial increase on the previous annual spend prior to the restoration of devolution. This is clear evidence of our commitment to good relations and good race relations. Whilst we clearly cannot prevent all racial incidents and crimes, we are determined to do what we can to both prevent them occurring and to support those who are victims.

Sexual Orientation Issues

Dr S Farry asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration will be given to sexual orientation issues in the forthcoming strategy for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. (AQO 2124/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Programme of Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) is currently being considered and we plan to present our proposals in the near future. However, at present the development of the CSI policy remains work in progress. Once published we will undertake a full consultation process on our proposals.

We are committed to challenging all intolerance. OFMDFM is currently refreshing a draft Sexual Orientation Equality Strategy and a supporting Cross-Departmental Action Plan for presentation to Ministers for consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and the Executive by early summer 2009.

Reports and Consultation Documents

Mr D McKay asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if it will ensure that MLAs have the choice of receiving reports and consultation documents in either electronic or hard copy form. (AQW 6003/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: When they receive notification that a publication is being issued, each MLA has the option of accessing the publication on the relevant Departmental website or requesting a hard copy. Departments will facilitate MLAs' preferred method of receipt.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5618/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): DARD is committed to reducing the amount of paper usage and increasing electronic communication. E-mail systems were introduced into DARD in the early 90s and all non-industrial staff have e-mail access. Extensive use is made of this channel, both internally and over the internet to customers. For example over the last 30 day period, DARD staff sent an average of 15,500 e-mails per day and received 34,000 per day. An e-mail policy is in place and staff are encouraged not to print unless necessary.

DARD, in common with other Departments, introduced the TRIM electronic records management system in 2007/08. Since its implementation, 1.4 million documents have been stored electronically in DARD rather than in paper files.

Other measures introduced which cut down on paper include:

- DARD eNewsletter e-mailed to 4,000 farmers each month.
- Promotion of electronic services with 26% of cattle birth registrations and 100% of cattle eartag authorisations now taking place on-line.
- A policy of ensuring information and publications are available through the DARD web presence resulting in over 400,000 page views and 97,000 publication downloads in the month of January 2009.
- Extensive use of the intranet to keep staff up to date.

Rivers Agency

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures have been put in place by Rivers Agency to mitigate the impact of flooding on residents living in close proximity to the Sixmilewater River, Antrim. (AQW 5627/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Having witnessed at first hand the effects of flooding I fully understand your concerns and can assure you that the Rivers Agency is doing all that it can to reduce the risk of flooding from the Sixmilewater River at Antrim. To this end general maintenance works at a number of locations along the river have already been undertaken. In addition my staff are continuing to provide flood emergency response as required. The Agency is also undertaking detailed investigations to identify how best to manage the risk of flooding at Antrim.

NI Cut Flower Growers Association

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussion her Department has had with the Northern Ireland Cut Flower Growers Association to promote its industry. (AQW 5628/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has worked very closely with all cut flower and foliage businesses in the North to help develop the sector over the last ten years. DARD through CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, has taken a lead role in the development of cut flower and foliage technology and its transfer to businesses. In addition growers have been provided with significant training in both technical and marketing issues. The sector has grown from 12 businesses with a farm gate value of just over £200,000 in 2004 to 30 businesses worth approximately £850,000 in 2008.

My staff have organised regular meetings through the Cut Flower and Foliage Development Group to help increase co-operation and collaboration between local growers. The creation of a NI Cut Flower Growers Association was proposed by a local grower at one of these meetings. My staff supported this initiative, encouraging local growers to form a representative group and elect their own chairperson. However Growers have not felt confident enough to do this as yet.

A considerable amount of emphasis has been placed on the promotion and marketing of locally grown flowers and foliage by my Department.

Supply Chain Development Branch staff together with Crops and Horticulture Development Branch staff have worked very closely with growers to help them improve their supply chains and promote and market their products. This has been achieved through the implementation of Supply Chain Awareness Programme and the Supply Chain Development Programme, and facilitation of communication and collaboration with wholesalers, grower/packers, florists, retail multiples buyers and a Dutch agent.

During 2008 my Department worked with growers to implement an extensive promotional campaign aimed at florists, wholesalers and the general public. A summary of initiatives is within the Background Note. Ongoing promotional activities are planned for 2009 in conjunction with local growers.

NI Cut Flower Growers Association

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what grant assistance is available to cut flower growers for processing and marketing. (AQW 5629/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Financial assistance may be available to cut flower growers involved in the processing and marketing of cut flowers through a number of schemes under the Rural Development Programme.

The Processing & Marketing Grant Scheme provides capital support for capital investment to erect new buildings, refurbish old buildings and buy new equipment. This scheme is not available to projects relating to normal farm-based production and storage activity.

The Market Development Grant Scheme provides financial support for businesses to improve the marketing of their produce.

The Supply Chain Development Programme will facilitate co-operation and collaboration in supply chains between producers and processors.

The Processing & Marketing Grant and Marketing Development Grant Schemes are delivered directly by DARD and are currently open for applications. The Supply Chain Development Programme is due to open for applications later this year.

Departmental staff have met with most of the cut flower growers to discuss and promote these schemes.

Ten Day Payment Target

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much of the total amount due to suppliers has been paid within the ten day payment target. (AQW 5640/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department for the months of December 2008 and January 2009 has paid £27,147,000 from a total amount of £30,809,000 within the ten day payment target.

Department Funding to Groups in Lagan Valley

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the amount; and (ii) the nature of funding that her Department has provided to groups in the Lagan Valley constituency, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5810/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department awarded £837,176.09 to groups in the Lagan Valley constituency through letters of offer issued in 2006. Funding was distributed throughout 2007 and 2008. There were no relevant letters of offer in either 2007 or 2008.

The recipients and nature of the awards made are detailed in the attached table. The figure rises to £971,034.54 taking into account awards to individuals and businesses.

GROUPS IN THE LAGAN VALLEY CONSTITUENCY FUNDED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

Operational Programme Name	Measure Description	Project Title	Organisation Name	Letter of Offer Accepted on	Grant Award (£)
Building Sustainable Prosperity	4.6 Basic Services for the Rural Economy and Population	Harry Ferguson Memorial Garden and Information Centre	Harry Ferguson Celebration Committee	19-12-06	50,000.00
		Rural Lisburn Regeneration Programme	Lisburn LEADER Ltd.	21-12-06	593,604.90
Peace II Extension	1.11 Rural Reconciliation and Regeneration	Forward with Brookemount	Brookemount Cultural and Education Society	20-07-06	43,571.19
		Maghaberry Village Centre	Maghaberry Community Association	12-12-06	150,000.00
Total					837,176.09

Forest Service

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 1834/09, how it aligns with Forest Service's commitment to retain its UK Woodland Assurance Standard certification. (AQW 5817/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My answer to AQW 1834/09 aligns very closely with the Forest Service's commitment to retain its UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) certification.

Restoration of planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS) is a requirement of the Standard, which was published in 2000. Forest Service received its first certificate in respect of UKWAS in May 2000, having initiated a survey to determine the location of planted ancient woodland sites under its stewardship.

The Forest Service was found to be fully compliant with the PAWS restoration requirement within the standard following the completion of survey work in early 2001 and development of a restoration strategy.

This position has been maintained and carried forward to the current certification period of 2005 to 2010, in respect of which independent audits to assess conformance with the UKWAS PAWS restoration requirement have been conducted on four occasions.

Conformance with this requirement is an important aspect of the Forest Service's commitment to retain its UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) certification. This will be subject to further audits going forward, including a full re-assessment in 2010.

Maintenance of Forest Parks

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what budget is available for the maintenance of forest parks; and when Castlewellan Forest Park complex was last painted. (AQW 5913/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: A budget of £120,000 has been made available, in the current financial year, for the maintenance and refurbishment of buildings in the Forest Service estate. Castlewellan Forest Park complex was last painted 7 years ago.

Public Accountability Training

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what was the cost of Public Accountability Training of all those on the Statutory Joint Committee of the Local Action Group; and what is the planned cost for any future training of members of other tiers. (AQW 5915/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The provision of Public Accountability training has yet to be completed for all members of the seven Joint Council Committees acting as local action group Administrative and Lead Financial Actors, who will collectively be administering in excess £100m on behalf of my Department. At present £2,939.10 has been paid in respect of training and the balance for providing training, including 1 'wash up' course for those who were either unable or failed to attend their agreed course, will be in the region of £4770.

Phytophthora Ramorum Disease

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plan her Department has to deal with the threat to plants and trees of the pathogens (i) phytophthora ramorum; and (ii) phytophthora kernoviae, as 19 historical National Trust gardens in other parts of the UK were affected by phytophthora in December 2008. (AQW 6052/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My inspectors carry out annual surveys for Phytophthora ramorum and Phytophthora kernoviae. To date, only Phytophthora ramorum has been found here.

The Plant Health (Phytophthora ramorum) Order (NI) 2005 prohibits the introduction and spread of P.ramorum. My Inspectors have the powers to take necessary steps to ensure that the infection is controlled. In order to prevent the disease from becoming established, measures to contain and eradicate infection are taken on premises where it is found. These include the issue of statutory destruction notices for infected plant material, and prohibitions on movement of plants in the immediate vicinity of the infection.

Phytophthora Ramorum Disease

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many incidences of (i) phytophthora ramorum; and (ii) phytophthora kernoviae diseases have been recorded in each year, since legislation was introduced by the Forestry Commission in 2002. (AQW 6053/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Annual surveys for Phytophthora ramorum / Phytophthora kernoviae are carried out by my inspectors at nurseries and garden centres, green sites, and forestry sites in the north of Ireland. The first finding of P.ramorum was confirmed in early 2003. P. kernoviae has not been found here. The results of the surveys are as follows:

NUMBER OF OUTBREAK SITES (P.RAMORUM)

Year	Nurseries / Garden Centres	Green Sites*	Forestry Sites
02/03	5	Nil	Nil

Year	Nurseries / Garden Centres	Green Sites*	Forestry Sites
03/04	6	Nil	Nil
04/05	2	Nil	Nil
05/06	3	Nil	Nil
06/07	2	2	Nil
07/08	5	4	Nil
Total	23	6	Nil

* Green sites include public and private gardens, estates, public parks, and similar open areas that include established plantings.

Bereavement – Farming Families

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she has taken to advise farmers on how to handle their business affairs in the circumstances of family bereavement. (AQO 2256/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I fully understand that a family bereavement is a very difficult time and dealing with the transfer of business ownership would not be a priority in these circumstances. As part of the ongoing dialogue with industry stakeholders, the NI Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA) highlighted the delay many farm businesses experience in receiving DARD payments following the death of the Head of Business. Since my Department cannot make any payments to a farm business until the legal process clarifies who is entitled to receive such payments, I acted on this feedback and commissioned officials to prepare an advisory leaflet to help farmers become more aware of the issue and resolve these difficulties. The leaflet, 'Succession Planning for Farmers' was published in April 2008 and highlights the importance of making legal arrangements for the future ownership of the farm businesses. Following a press launch, the leaflet was made available to farmers through DARD offices and on the DARD website. In addition copies were provided to both NIAPA and UFU.

Forests – East Antrim

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to market the forests in the East Antrim area for outdoor pursuits. (AQO 2257/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Our forests offer great potential for the development of recreation and public access opportunities for local people and visitors alike. Forest Service woodland in the East Antrim and adjacent areas continues to be used extensively for informal public recreation as well as for more specific events. Existing facilities are marketed through a wide variety of media including the Forest Service web site, the WalkNI site sponsored by the Tourist Board, at information kiosks located at Forest Parks, through leaflets and tourist road signs.

We recognise that the demand for recreational use of forests is changing and that the expectations of today's visitors have changed. In response to this, Forest Service has recently consulted on a draft strategy to develop the recreational and social use of our forests. The strategy, which will be published after Easter, recognises that Forest Service cannot achieve this development on its own and emphasises that partnership working with others, both commercial and with other public bodies, will enable much more to be done. For example, Forest Service are already working with NI Environment Agency in relation to the renewal of the Ulster Way in order to establish a well promoted, sustainable long distance quality walking route, long sections of which pass through scenically attractive forests. In East Antrim, this has also involved formal arrangements with Larne Borough Council in order to facilitate a section of the Ulster Way through Ballyboley Forest.

Environment: Funding for Farmers

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding is paid to farmers to enhance the environment. (AQO 2258/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Agri-environment Schemes under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) are the main mechanism for enhancing the environment. Under the 2007 – 13 RDP some £219 million has been allocated to these Schemes.

Dioxin Scare: Exceptional Support Measure/State Aid Applications

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the pork dioxin scare, to provide an update on the Exceptional Support Measure and State Aid applications. (AQO 2260/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: An application for an Exceptional Support Measure (ESM) was submitted, via Defra, to the Commission on 17 February. The purpose of the Exceptional Support Measure is to seek European Community authorisation and possible co-financing support for action to protect public health and provide the basis for the stabilisation and recovery of our beef and pigmeat markets.

The application is currently being progressed through official channels and we are in regular communication with Commission officials. We understand there are no substantive problems and it is anticipated that a favourable decision will be made in the near future. It is hoped to commence the Cull and Disposal of eligible cattle and meat product once EC approval is obtained.

Once the full decision of the ESM has been established we can apply for State Aid approval of any additional support measures for affected producers and processors.

Inheritance Tax on Conacre Land

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact that changes in inheritance tax on conacre land will have on farming and rural communities. (AQO 2261/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As you will be aware, this issue arises from a ruling in April 2008 on Inheritance Tax liability by the Special Commissioners and relates to a specific case where a farm with significant development potential was let entirely in conacre for a number of years prior to the death of the owner. An appeal recently launched through the Court of Appeal against this ruling has been unsuccessful. Further appeal may be possible. If the ruling continues to be upheld then the issue will be for farms who let land in conacre rather than active farm businesses. Moreover, it appears to relate only to conacre land with development potential rather than all conacre land. Consequently, the impact would seem to apply only in very specific circumstances.

Naturally, I would be extremely concerned at any decision which might threaten the viability of active family farm businesses which characterise our agricultural industry and lie at the heart of rural communities. I will continue to monitor developments with respect to this ruling.

EU Health Check

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what recommendations she has put forward in relation to voluntary and compulsory modulation to the EU Health Check. (AQO 2262/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I had two main objectives on modulation in relation to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Health Check. I wanted to see no increase in the total (EU + voluntary) modulation rates applied to our farmers as a result of the CAP Health Check when compared with previously announced rates. The substitution of voluntary modulation with EU compulsory modulation would also help align our total modulation rates closer to those in other EU Member States. Secondly, I wanted to ensure that this substitution would not disrupt our Rural Development Programme, which was a very real risk.

I am pleased to report that both these objectives were achieved. The total modulation rate applied to direct payments in the North of Ireland in the period 2009–2012 will remain unchanged from those previously announced and there will be no need to recast our Rural Development Programme.

Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what input her Department has had into the consultation on the future of the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (AQO 2264/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The new Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 2006, and in February 2008, at the request of NIEA, the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust set up the Binevenagh AONB Forum.

The Forum is tasked with the production of a co-ordinated strategy for the AONB. Countryside Management Branch is represented at the Forum.

Wind Turbines

Mrs C McGill asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her efforts to resolve issues in relation to wind turbines. (AQO 2265/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I am pleased to say that a provisional negotiated settlement was reached with the 11 Powerbreeze owners last month. All 11 owners have indicated that they will accept an ex-gratia payment from the Department, subject to a detailed written offer, and the details of this are currently being finalised. Part of this is receiving confirmation from owners in writing that they will accept the terms and conditions of the offer-this is awaited. However once received, I expect that the offer will be processed quickly and the money will be in the applicants' bank accounts at the end of the month. Given the protracted difficulties with this particular part of the Wind Energy for Rural Businesses Scheme I am pleased that a resolution has been found that I believe is fair and reasonable. The lessons learnt from our experience with this Scheme will inform our processes for future such schemes and programmes.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Economic Downturn

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) what the impact of the economic downturn has been on the delivery of his current policies and practices; and (ii) what changes to existing policies and practices have been made in relation to his Department's responsibilities to address the effects of the economic downturn. (AQW 5404/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The Department has no quantitative evidence of the impact of the economic downturn on the culture, arts and leisure sectors but it is likely that the reduction in disposable income will impact negatively on general confidence in the sector. Further clarity on the impact will be available when the Arts Council of Northern Ireland General Population Survey results are published later in 2009.

While no changes have been made to existing policies and practices in direct response to addressing the effects of the economic downturn, my Department, through its arms length bodies, and subject to available resources, continues to promote and develop the culture, arts and leisure sectors, conscious of the important contribution that this sector can make to economic development, for example:

- the Arts Council is currently undertaking a multi-million pound arts infrastructure programme which will lead to the construction of new arts facilities of world class standards. This will make a significant contribution to Northern Ireland's cultural tourism; attracting visitors and investment to Northern Ireland;
- in addition the Arts Council is administering the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (£5m) over the next three years. The programme aims to deliver support to 140 Northern Ireland creative businesses over the period to March 2011; and
- initiatives undertaken by NI Screen continue to attract significant investment in the local economy through Film and Television. This has helped develop the Northern Ireland skills base and support local industry.

Finally, DCAL, through its arms length bodies, will continue to do all it can to ensure the delivery of its capital programme, within the shortest possible timeframe. Work is currently progressing or planned in the near future on a number of key projects with a combined project cost of over £90m.

GAA

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list all the invitations he has received to attend GAA events, functions and games. (AQW 5451/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since becoming Minister I have received one invitation to a GAA event. This event was the TG4 All Ireland Ladies Championship Finals in Croke Park in September 2008. I did however attend the official opening of St Brigid's GAC playing grounds on Saturday 13 September 2008 but the original invitation was addressed to my predecessor Edwin Poots MLA.

Departmental Staff

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many employees in his Department travel from Derry/Londonderry to Belfast for work. (AQW 5523/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: There are no employees in my Department who travel from Londonderry to Belfast for work.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the total capital grants awarded to each of the local councils in relation to providing new sports and recreation facilities, over the past 5 years. (AQW 5571/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), as part of its remit to develop the recreational potential of inland waterways administers an annual grant-aided Water Recreation Programme for which a total annual budget of up to £120k is available. This Programme is aimed at provision, in partnership, of new/improved water-based access/facilities, such as riverside paths and canoe trails for free public use. Over the past 5 years my Department has grant-aided 5 local council projects with total capital funding of £86,292 k for new water recreation facilities.

Under Measure 1.2a of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure awarded capital grant of £191,708 towards one successful Council project to provide new angling and water recreation facilities.

The attached table details the capital funding awarded to each Council over the past 5 years from 2004 to date on new water recreation facilities.

Council	Water Recreation Development Programme				European Programme Funding
	2004/5 £	2005/6 £	2007/8 £	2008/9 £	2005/6 £
Antrim			11,292		
Ballymena				20,000	
Craigavon		10,000		25,000	
City Council of Londonderry					191,708
Lisburn	20,000				
Total:	£20,000	£10,000	£11,292	£ 45,000	£191,708

In addition to this, the Department of Social Development (DSD) through its Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group, provides capital grants for the development of new sports and recreation facilities. The following table details the capital funding awarded by DSD to each Council over the past 5 years from 2004 to date:

Council	Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group				
	2004/5 £	2005/6 £	2006/7 £	2007/8 £	2008/9 £
Armagh		308,845			
Ballymena		15,000	150,000		
Belfast			605,000	289,000	309,655
Coleraine					905,592
Craigavon					858,568
Down	59,000		304,435		233,187
Dungannon			95,960		150,000
Lisburn				252,605	46,208
City Council of Londonderry	74,000	64,000		459,500	101,500
Newry			260,266		
North Down		47,920			

Sports and Recreation Facilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the total capital grants awarded to each of the local councils for the refurbishment/modernisation/improvement of existing sports and leisure facilities, over the past 5 years. (AQW 5572/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), as part of its remit to develop the recreational potential of inland waterways administers an annual grant-aided Water Recreation Programme for which a total annual budget of up to £120k is available. This Programme is aimed at provision, in partnership, of new/improved water recreation facilities such as riverside paths and canoe trails, for free public use. Over the past 5 years my Department has grant-aided 10 local council projects with total funding of £177,132k for improving water recreation facilities.

Separately, under Measure 1.2a of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure awarded grant of £326,630 towards 3 successful Council projects to develop existing (ie improving) angling and water recreation facilities.

The attached table details the capital funding awarded to each Council over the past 5 years from 2003/4 on improving water recreation facilities.

Council	Water Recreation Development Programme					European Programme Funding	
	2003/4 £	2005/6 £	2006/7 £	2007/8 £	2008/9 £	2004/5 £	2005/6 £
Ballymena			20,000				215,906
Ballymena					4,795		
Craigavon							91,824
Cookstown	40,000			11,350			
City Council of Londonderry				25,000			
Dungannon			25,000				

Council	Water Recreation Development Programme					European Programme Funding	
	2003/4 £	2005/6 £	2006/7 £	2007/8 £	2008/9 £	2004/5 £	2005/6 £
Fermanagh				20,000			
Larne				20,000			
Lisburn		10,687					
Londonderry							
Strabane						18,900	
Total:	£40,000	£10,687	£45,000	£76,350	£4,795	£18,900	£307,730

Sport Northern Ireland, which is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding, made one award of £38,627 from its Building Sport programme to Fermanagh District Council in 2006/07.

In addition to this, the Department of Social Development (DSD) through its Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group, provides capital grants for the development of new sports and recreation facilities. The following table details the capital funding awarded by DSD to each Council over the past 5 years from 2004 to date:

Council	Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group				
	2004/5 £	2005/6 £	2006/7 £	2007/8 £	2008/9 £
Ballymena			614,398		16,000
Belfast				355,635	
Coleraine		31,402			
Dungannon				80,000	
City Council of Londonderry		33,000	113,000	89,000	325,000
Newry			153,847	31,790	25,657
Omagh				38,800	6,727
Strabane		135,500	111,500	65,000	

Ulster-Scots Projects

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many Ulster-Scots projects his Department has funded in the Lagan Valley constituency, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5609/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency does not presently hold the requested information on a constituency basis. The Agency is currently reviewing its systems and procedures and as part of that I have asked the Agency to start capturing the information in this format from 1 April 2009.

The Agency can however provide detailed information pertaining to specific Ulster-Scots projects or events upon request.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has funded Ulster-Scots projects in the Lagan Valley Constituency over the past three years as detailed in the table below:-

2005/2006	£69,413.00
2006/2007	£70,010.00
2007/2008	£13,701.00

Orange Culture

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what work he has undertaken to promote the Orange culture, and what funding has been provided. (AQW 5610/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Between 2005 and 2008 my department allocated approximately £30k annual funding for an Education Officer post and associated project costs in the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland (GOLI). The figure increased to £39k in 2008/09.

The objective of the funding was to help GOLI to develop confidence within its own community through increasing knowledge of the heritage and values of the Order and to foster greater awareness and understanding of Orange culture within the wider community.

Recently-funded projects include a Williamite Trail exhibition and map, and a 'Famous Orangemen' exhibition.

The Community Festivals Fund was established by DCAL in 2006 and the delivery of the fund was devolved to District Councils with effect from 1st April 2008. One of its aims of the fund is to enable community organisations to celebrate their cultural identity. In the three years of operation the Fund has awarded almost £67,500 to 17 festivals organised directly by the Orange Order.

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5619/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department, in accordance with its Waste Management Strategy, issues internal and external communication electronically where this is possible.

Furthermore, e-mail policy for the Northern Ireland Civil Service is currently under review by the Department of Finance and Personnel and will actively discourage staff from printing unnecessarily.

Guidance on the distribution of departmental publications and consultation documents, published in November 2008, states that there is a requirement to provide hard copies of documents to certain recipients including political representatives, parliamentary contacts and Legal Deposit and other libraries. The Guidance does, however, point out that organisations can, if they wish, choose not to receive hard copies of publications.

Language Strategy

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what regard he will pay to the possible politicisation of Irish when bringing forward a paper to the Executive on a language strategy. (AQW 5637/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: This Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages represents an opportunity to depoliticise the language issue in Northern Ireland.

I am keen that the Strategy will create the opportunity for an even handed approach to the indigenous or regional minority languages in Northern Ireland that will reduce and eliminate the disparity in funding between Irish and Ulster Scots.

Language Strategy

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consideration he will give to the possible underfunding of Ulster-Scots when bringing forward a paper to the Executive on a language strategy. (AQW 5638/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am committed to addressing the disparity in funding between Irish and Ulster-Scots.

Through the implementation of the Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages it is my intention to ensure that the development of one language must be considered within the context of an equitable approach to the other.

GAA

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to provide a list of (i) GAA clubs; (ii) GAA grounds; (iii) GAA competitions; and (iv) GAA trophies, that are named after members of Irish Republican terrorist organisations or those convicted of terrorist activity. (AQW 5671/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure does not retain information on GAA clubs, grounds, competitions or trophies that are named after members of Irish Republican terrorist organisations or those convicted of terrorist activity. However, following a number of representations, I wrote to the GAA expressing my concern about this serious matter. I have also made clear that one of my major priorities as Sports Minister is to promote sport as a vehicle for improving community relations and community cohesion in Northern Ireland and that I fully expect all sports governing bodies, including the GAA, to do all they can to support these objectives. Linkages to terrorism, in whatever form, are not acceptable in society.

Orange Order Based Projects

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many Orange Order based projects his Department has funded in the Lagan Valley constituency, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5813/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In the last three years my Department has funded 1 Orange Order based project in the Lagan Valley constituency.

The event was the Orangefest 2006 organised by Maghergall LOL. Funding for the event was provided from the Community Festivals Fund.

Glenavy River

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline his Department's involvement in the restocking of the Glenavy River with fish. (AQW 5853/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: DCAL received an application for a section 14 fish movement application from Glenavy Conservation and District Angling Club on 5 January 2009. The Department received confirmation from Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) that water quality assessments carried out confirmed that the water quality would sustain and support fish life.

Based on this information my officials granted approval for 500 1lb brown trout and 2,000 brown trout fry to be transported from Mairs Fish Farm in Crumlin to the Glenavy River for restocking purposes.

Sport NI

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if the Minister is aware that the delay in Sport NI informing sporting bodies if they have received funding means some staff will have to be put on redundancy notice until funding is secured. (AQW 5960/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) has received 19 business cases from sports governing bodies seeking funding for the period 2009-2013. I am fully aware of the urgency in assessing these and providing decisions to the sports bodies. My officials are working closely with SNI to expedite the matter. Approvals, if appropriate, will issue at the earliest juncture to ensure that no staff within governing bodies are made subject to redundancy notices.

Elite Facilities Programme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, since the Elite Facilities Programme for gymnastics in Lisburn will not go ahead to stage 2 of the process, if he will consider funding stage one. (AQW 5961/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Funding will only be considered for those applicants chosen as preferred bidders, following Sport NI's assessment at Stage Two of the Elite Facilities Programme competition.

Only those applications which met the criteria for selection at Stage One of the competition were approved to proceed to Stage Two.

2012 Olympic Games: Events in Northern Ireland

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what London 2012 Olympic Games events are planned for Northern Ireland. (AQO 2267/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Northern Ireland will not host any London Olympic Games events in 2012. Except for football, the London Organising Committee were required to submit a compact venues portfolio which demonstrated that all other sporting events would take place as close to the Olympic Park as possible.

The International Olympic Committee requires football to be staged around the country in existing stadia. Northern Ireland was referred to in the bid book as being considered for staging football subject to completion of a new stadium.

Sports Stadia

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions his Department has had with the three sporting codes in relation to the future international standard sports stadia. (AQO 2273/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Now that I have advised Executive colleagues of my views on the Maze stadium proposal I want to maintain the momentum and find a cost-effective, sustainable and equitable way of assisting football, rugby and gaelic games develop solutions to their stadia needs.

With this in mind I took an early opportunity to hold meetings with the Governing Bodies of football, rugby and gaelic games last month in order to explore options on future stadium provision. I explained to the Governing Bodies that I wanted them to return to me with a limited number of options for consideration. The Governing Bodies have undertaken to do this in the very near future.

PRONI: Acquisition of Records

Rev Dr R Coulter asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, following the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) going on-line, to outline the policy and methods used by PRONI in the acquisition of new historical records. (AQO 2274/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland launched its electronic catalogue on the internet at the start of February 2009. It contains over 1 million catalogue entries and makes available the contents of PRONI's catalogues to a worldwide audience. Although the PRONI catalogue has gone on-line, the office continues to acquire historical records. A new PRONI Acquisition policy had recently been drafted. It sets out PRONI's legislative remit as the repository for selected official records from across the Northern Ireland public sector and privately-owned records relating to Northern Ireland. This wide remit is to ensure the selection of records for permanent preservation that reflect the history of Northern Ireland and its people. This includes records of political, economic, social, religious, educational, sports and cultural affairs at government, community and individual level.

Official records from across the NI public sector are selected using good records management practice to ensure that records of historical and research value are transferred to PRONI. Private records originate from a wide variety of sources – businesses, clubs, societies and charitable organisations, churches and faith groups, solicitors, landed estates, and private individuals whose contributions have impacted on life in Northern Ireland and beyond. The contents of such records are extremely varied and therefore PRONI officials must assess each potential deposit before it is accepted into the archives.

Irish Language Strategy

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the formulation of the Irish Language Strategy and to outline which Irish Language groups he has met in the last month in relation to this strategy. (AQO 2275/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I intend to present an initial scoping paper to the Executive Committee in the near future on my approach to the drafting of a Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages.

When completed the strategy will protect, enhance and develop the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture and the Irish language and ensure that both languages are treated fairly with equal respect and recognition.

I have not met with any Irish language groups in the last month however my officials and I have engaged with Foras na Gaeilge, Pobal and a delegation of the Irish Guild of the Church of Ireland in recent months on the Strategy and Irish language issues.

Loyal Orders: Cultural Contribution

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the cultural contribution made by the Loyal Orders. (AQO 2276/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I recognise the important role and contribution that the Loyal Orders provide to Northern Ireland society and to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

As I am sure the Member is aware, the Loyal Orders raise substantive funds for both local and national charities, and carry out important work in improving community relations.

The continuation and promotion of our cultural heritage, through the work of the Loyal Orders, is reflected in, for example:

- Twelfth of July celebrations, organised by the Orange Order, is recognised as one of the most significant cultural events in Northern Ireland, in terms of participants and audience;
- the significant efforts made by the Orange Order to promote the Twelfth of July celebrations as an inclusive family-friendly festival and as an opportunity to attract cultural tourism; and
- the role played by the Apprentice Boys of Derry in the development of the Maiden City Festival in Londonderry, which is a highly successful celebration of our cultural heritage and a major tourist attraction to the City.

Furthermore, my Department funds an Education Officer post in the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. The role of the post holder is to raise awareness of the heritage and values of the Order in the wider community. The Officer has given presentations to Good Relations Officers in local Councils, to schools in the Catholic Maintained sector and to new recruits to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, in order to help foster greater understanding of Orange Culture.

Gregory Campbell MP MLA

Efficiency Savings: DCAL

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what efficiencies his Department has made in the current financial year. (AQO 2277/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, my Department has a target to deliver cash releasing efficiencies of £3.6m in this financial year. It planned to achieve this by reducing various budgets within the Department and the Department is currently living within these.

£400k of the total savings relate to Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland. Since this body has now moved into the Land and Property Services Agency, these savings will be delivered through that agency.

Irish Language Functions: Ministerial Attendance

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to attend Irish Language functions. (AQO 2278/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I will consider any invitations to such events in accordance with my diary commitments.

Lyric Theatre: Progress Report

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a progress report on the Lyric Theatre site. (AQO 2279/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Lyric is one of a small number of the Department's strategic arts infrastructure projects. My officials have worked closely with the Lyric Theatre, Central Procurement Directorate, the Arts Council, and with other funders to progress this important project.

Detailed work on the design and costs of the new building has recently been completed and a Letter of Intent to the Contractor, Gilbert Ash, has been issued. Some further issues such as ensuring the necessary insurance requirements are in place are now being finalised.

I have announced just this morning that the Contractor will start work on site today, 9th March. I believe that the new Theatre will provide a much valued facility for audiences and artists alike and will make a significant contribution to our cultural offering.

My officials will continue to work closely with the Lyric Theatre to ensure this project is taken forward in a timely and cost effective manner.

2012 Olympic Games: Benefits for Northern Ireland

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the benefits for Northern Ireland arising from the 2012 Olympic Games in London. (AQO 2280/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has created a strategy for maximising the benefits to Northern Ireland from the London 2012 Olympics and DCAL has responsibility for co-ordination. The strategy identifies benefits associated with the following themes: sport; culture; tourism; business; education; volunteering; and skills development. The anticipated benefits are: increased participation in sport, culture and volunteering especially among young people; increased economic activity through businesses winning 2012 contracts; increase in visitors through sports and cultural tourism.

Sporting Facilities: Upgrade

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when he will make an announcement on the upgrading of existing facilities for all the main sporting codes, within the timescale of the 2012 Olympic Games. (AQO 2281/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport NI is currently managing a range of funding programmes that aim in a cost effective manner to address the needs of all the main sporting codes, not just at representative and inter-county levels but to also address the deficit in facilities at the wider sub-regional level. As I have already indicated, in deferring major stadium expenditure, I will instead bring forward a number of other high priority Sports capital programmes, using at least part of the funding allocated to the stadium over the next 2 years, to support Sport more generally, including Football, Rugby and the GAA. All of this has the potential to provide upgraded facilities which could feature by 2012.

Creative Youth Partnerships

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the level of support available from his Department to Creative Youth Partnerships. (AQO 2282/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Creative Youth Partnerships is a valuable programme, which seeks to promote the participation of children and young people in artistic and creative activities and contribute to the professional development and employment opportunities of artists.

In the 2008/09 financial year, DCAL has provided Creative Youth Partnerships with £250k funding while the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has contributed a further £50k.

The Creative Youth Partnerships Steering Group has produced a business plan to mainstream the initiative and this is currently being considered by my officials in conjunction with colleagues in the Arts Council and the Department of Education. This is taking place in the context of the major structural changes occurring in the education sector including the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority. This process will inform decisions around the future funding of Creative Youth Partnerships. My officials are working with the Arts Council and Department of Education to consider possible funding for 2009/2010.

Irish Language Broadcast Fund

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the success and value of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund. (AQO 2283/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: In 2004 the Government announced the establishment of an Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) with a £12m allocation over a four year period from 2005/06 to 2008/09.

An interim evaluation of the ILBF, completed by Deloitte MCS Ltd in August 2007, found that the targets set for the ILBF in terms of production, broadcasting and training had been met.

A Post Project Evaluation is planned to take place after 31 March 2009 and I will be better able to assess value when that work is complete.

In the interests of parity, I am currently investigating the possibility of a similar fund for Ulster-Scots.

Gregory Campbell MP MLA

Salmon Stock: Preservation

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has held any consultations with the Minister of the Environment in relation to the preservation of salmon stocks. (AQO 2284/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: There is ongoing liaison between officials from the two Departments on a range of salmon conservation issues in the context of the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) convention.

Sports Funding

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, following his announcement on the proposed stadium at the Maze site, to outline how available funding will be divided between the three main sporting codes. (AQO 2285/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I have asked the Governing Bodies of the football, rugby and gaelic games to identify a short list of stadium development options. In the interim I intend to defer major stadium expenditure and instead bring forward a number of other high priority capital projects using some of the funding allocated to the stadium over the next two years.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Post Primary Transfer

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education what the risks are for the schools who are proposing to set their own entrance examinations in Magherafelt and Ballymena; and what costs would they have to incur.

(AQW 5448/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Sa treoir ar Aistriú 2010 a foilsíodh de bhun an ráitis a thug mé don Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009, déantar cur síos ar phríomhbhreithnithe áirithe do scoileanna dá leithéid mar mhaithe leis an bhaol atá ann go mbeidh mífheidhmiú ann i dtaca leis an phróiseas aistrithe iar-bhunscoile a íoslaghdú.

The Transfer 2010 guidance published on foot of my 2 February 2009 statement to the Assembly describes certain key considerations for such schools in the interests of minimising the risk of dysfunction to the process of post-primary transfer.

- They should be very mindful of the need for a robust assessment mechanism capable of providing for sound ability-based admissions decisions;
- They should be aware that it would be their responsibility to ensure that parents have access to all the information they need in relation to any test;
- They should understand the critical importance of a special circumstances procedure to cater for claims that certain circumstances may have adversely impacted on a child's performance on the day a test was conducted;
- They should assume that they will need to make fair and robust decisions in respect of applicants who have not been able to sit a test or who can not be assessed fairly by such a test. In other words, they should consider a procedure akin to the special provisions procedure which existed in support of the Transfer Test.
- They should consider that the Department made the Transfer Test available in Irish in recognition that primary education is also delivered in Irish.

These issues are only illustrative of areas where schools may be challenged. The general point is that if there are weaknesses of this nature in the manner in which a school provides, administers and supports a test, then these weaknesses carry significant risks. They may incur financial liabilities through successful judicial challenge and fundamentally undermine a school's admissions decisions. These risks provide one of the reasons why the guidance does not recommend that schools attempt to use academic criteria.

If all schools adhere to the recommendations contained in the guidance, there will be no risk of dysfunctional processes, and we will lay the foundations of a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence.

Post Primary Transfer

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education to list the post-primary schools who have indicated that they will not go against her guidelines; and what percentage they make up of the post-primary sector. (AQW 5450/09)

Minister of Education: I would expect the vast majority of post-primary schools to adhere to the recommendations in the Transfer 2010 guidance, however, individual schools are not required to formally notify me of their intentions.

Sa ráiteas ar Aistriú 2010 a thug mé don Tionól ar 2 Feabhra 2009 d'iarr mé go ndéanfadh gach iar-bhunscoil breithniú cúramach ar an Treoir ó mo Roinn ar Aistriú 2010 agus d'iarr mé orthu cloí leis na moltaí a dhéantar inti.

In my 2 February 2009 statement to the Assembly on Transfer 2010 I asked that all post-primary schools consider my Department's Transfer 2010 guidance carefully and adhere to its recommendations. If that request is listened to and acted upon Transfer 2010 will become one of the key building blocks of reform resulting in a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence that treats all of our children equally

School Meals

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education how schools will ensure that applicants entitled to free school meals will gain admission at the same rate as all other applicants, under her recommendations for post-primary education. (AQW 5452/09)

Minister of Education: The Transfer 2010 guidance recommends that, in relation to free school meals, all post-primary schools list as their first criterion for admission a commitment to admit children who are entitled to free school meals in numbers which reflect the proportion of first preference applications received from such children.

Tá súil agam go gcloífidh gach scoil leis na moltaí seo mar mhaithe le córas a chruthú atá bunaithe ar cheartas sóisialta, ar chomhionannas agus ar shármhaitheas.

I hope that all schools will adhere to these recommendations in the interests of creating a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence.

Bangor Academy

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail the implications of the collapse of Hocheiff Ireland for Bangor Academy. (AQW 5651/09)

Minister of Education: Níl eolas ar bith ag an Roinn maidir le teip Hochtief (Ireland) Ltd. De réir dealraimh, ní bhaineann an conradh maidir le soláthar áiseanna agus seirbhísí chuig Bangor Academy le Hochtief (Ireland) Ltd.

The Department is not aware of a collapse of Hochtief (Ireland) Ltd. In any case the contract for the provision of facilities and services at Bangor Academy is not with Hochtief (Ireland) Ltd.

Educational Underachievement in Lagan Valley

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to address the issue of educational underachievement among children in the Lagan Valley constituency. (AQW 5718/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mé ag cinntiú, trí chlár leasúcháin na Roinne, go bhfuil fócas soiléir ar chaighdeán san oideachas; ag dul i ngleic leis an bhac ar an fhoghlaim a bhíonn ag barraíocht daoine óga agus ag íslíú na bearna ghnóthachtála.

Through the Department's reform programme, I am ensuring that there is a clear focus on standards in education; on tackling the barriers to learning that too many of our young people face; and on closing the achievement gap. I want to ensure that all schools and pupils, including those within the Lagan Valley constituency, receive the support and challenge necessary to raise standards.

The revised curriculum being introduced in all grant-aided schools is designed to support young people in acquiring not just the knowledge they need to succeed and do well in life and at work but also the skills they need to apply that knowledge. It will be supported with new assessment arrangements and by a new school improvement strategy, which is currently being finalised and is designed to ensure that every school maintains a clear focus on improvement.

There will also be a clear focus on improving attainment in literacy and numeracy through the revised literacy and numeracy strategy.

In my 2 February 2009 statement to the Assembly on Transfer 2010 I asked that all post-primary schools consider my Department's Transfer 2010 guidance carefully and adhere to its recommendations. If that request is listened to and acted upon Transfer 2010 will become one of the key building blocks of reform resulting in a system based upon social justice, equality and excellence that treats all of our children equally.

Within our post-primary schools, the move towards an Entitlement Framework, which ensures that every young person has access to a much broader and better balanced range of courses and is supported with appropriate careers education, will help young people to succeed and gain qualifications in areas that interest them.

Additionally, action is being taken to address some of the barriers to learning that young people face – whether through disadvantage, through disability or because of other factors. A new policy for supporting Newcomer Children is currently being finalised and work is continuing to support the needs of children with disabilities, children from the Travelling Community and other young people who are at risk of underachievement.

The Extended Schools programme is also making a significant contribution to reducing differentials and improving the quality of life for children and young people particularly from disadvantaged areas. During the current financial year 19 schools within the Lagan Valley constituency have benefitted from almost £334k of

Extended Schools funding which allows for the provision of a wide range of activities and services outside of the traditional school day.

Christ the Redeemer PS is also included in the £2m South Eastern Education and Library Board's Integrated Development Fund programme which seeks to raise educational achievement by initiating a number of new services and seeks to work in more integrated ways by building new and improved relationships between agencies, schools, parents, pupils, professionals and the local community.

School Pupils in North Down

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education how many pupils in (i) primary; and (ii) secondary schools in the North Down constituency, have a first language other than English. (AQW 5833/09)

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

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PUPILS WHO ARE RECORDED AS HAVING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) WHO ARE ATTENDING PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY – 2008/09

School type	Total No. of EAL pupils
Primary	99
Post primary	24
Total	123

Source: Annual school census.

Notes:

1. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes
2. A child with English as an additional language is defined as one for whom English is not their first language and who has significant difficulty with the English language and requires assistance.

Links Between Schools and Companies

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Education what programme is in place to develop stronger links between primary and secondary schools and companies. (AQW 5865/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sé tábhachtach go mbíonn an deis ag daltaí ar gach leibhéal bheith ag plé le cúrsaí gnó agus leis an saol oibre, agus cuireann an curaclam athbheithithe, agus á rollú amach i ngach scoil dheontaschúnta, an deis seo ar fáil dóibh.

It is important that pupils at all levels have an opportunity to engage with business and with the world of work, and the revised curriculum, which is being rolled out across all grant-aided schools, now provides real opportunity for this to happen. From the earliest stages, children are now introduced to the world of work and given opportunities to learn about different careers and to begin to develop the skills they will need to do well in life and in work. In post-primary schools, Learning for Life and Work is a core statutory component of the revised curriculum and pupils have the opportunity to explore work in the local and global economy; to develop career decision-making skills; and to focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship.

It is also important though that pupils' experiences are broadened and, each year, the Department provides funding to a number of business education organisations who do excellent work in developing links between schools and businesses and in facilitating opportunities, for example, for both pupils and teachers to participate in work placements. We are committed to working through our business education partners and through business representative organisations to make sure that those opportunities are extended, particularly for young people who are at most risk of educational underachievement. I have met, for example, with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the IOD and the CBI to explore how best we can make sure that the connections between school and work are enhanced.

Additionally, my Department and the Department for Employment and Learning have begun the process of implementing the recently published Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance strategy, designed to

support pupils in making career choices and decisions about their futures. The strategy will ensure that business-related issues such as employability and work related learning remain central themes.

Children with Autism

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Education what summer schemes are available for children with Autism. (AQW 5870/09)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne go socraítear scéimeanna samraidh faoi láthair, cé nach bhfuil dhualgas reachtúil orthu soláthar speisialta scoileanna samhraidh a dhéanamh, do dhaltai a fhreastlaíonn ar scoileanna speisialta, agus páisti a bhfuil uathachas acu san áireamh, agus gur minic a shocraítear iad i gcomhpháirtíocht le comhairlí áitiúla agus le hiontabhais sláinte agus seirbhísí sóisialta.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards that while Boards do not have a statutory duty to make specialist summer school provision they do currently arrange summer schemes, often in partnership with local councils and health and social services trusts, for pupils in special schools which includes those with Autism. In addition the Southern and Western Education and Library Boards have been working with MENCAP and Autism NI to submit a bid to the Big Lottery Fund to provide summer schemes for children with Autism. The outcome of this bid is currently awaited.

Guidance Notes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education how much money was spent on guidance notes in Irish sent to parents of year six pupils, since 1 January 2009. (AQW 5876/09)

Minister of Education: Ba é costas aistriúchán Gaeilge na litreach agus an ábhair treorach a d'eisigh mé i mí Feabhra 2009 chuig tuismitheoirí gach páiste i Rang 6 maidir le hAistriú 2010 ná £545.15.

The cost of translating into Irish the letter and guidance material I issued in February 2009 to the parents of all P6 children on the issue of Transfer 2010 was £545.15.

Catholic Certificate of Education

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education if she has discussed the removal of the Catholic Certificate of Education with the Department for Employment and Learning (AQW 5877/09)

Minister of Education: Ní raibh plé agam go fóill leis an Roinn Fostaíochta agus Foghlama faoin teastas i staidéar ar reiligiún.

I have not yet discussed the certificate in religious studies with the Department for Employment and Learning.

However, the Department for Employment and Learning will be consulted during the review of current and future recruitment opportunities in the Teaching sector.

The Review will be completed by January 2010.

Special Needs Pupils

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education how many places will be available for special needs pupils in the next term in the North Down area. (AQW 5878/09)

Minister of Education: The special educational needs (SEN) framework does not include a system to set aside or make available specific SEN places for children in mainstream schools. Children with a statement of SEN and for whom a school is named in the Statement by an Education and Library Board (ELB) will be accepted by that school outside of the current enrolment figure. SEN children who do not have a statement will be enrolled in schools in the normal manner and their needs assessed and met in line with the current SEN framework.

Bíonn freagracht dhíreach ar ELBanna as páistí a chur i scoileanna speisialta agus déanfaidh siad é seo de réir riachtanas an pháiste, de réir mianta na dtuismitheoirí agus de réir na cóiríochta atá ar fáil sa scoil speisialta ag an am sin.

ELBs have direct responsibility for placing children in special schools and will do so in accordance with the needs of the child, the wishes of the parents and the accommodation available at that time in the special school.

Newcomer Pupils

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how much money was allocated to schools for each 'newcomer' pupil, per school year, and how this allocation is reviewed, monitored and evaluated. (AQW 5905/09)

Minister of Education: Shonraigh daonáireamh Mheán Fómhair 2008 go raibh 6,995 dalta nua, a bhfuil Béarla mar theanga breise acu. Is meadú 23% é seo ar fhiigiúirí na bliana roimhe.

The October 2008 census indicated that there were 6,995 newcomer pupils, who have English as an additional language. This is an increase of 23% on the previous year's figures.

The Common Funding Formula (CFF) is used to allocate funding direct to schools. Schools receive an additional 0.5 of the basic Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) cash value (£983.08 in 2008/09) for each full-time newcomer pupil designated in the school census as having English as an additional language. During 2008/09 a total of £5.5million was allocated to schools via CFF.

Under Local Management of Schools arrangements, it is for the Principal and Board of Governors of each school to determine how their budgets are spent and to plan their use of resources to maximum effect, in accordance with their assessment of the needs and priorities of the school. Whilst, there is evidence from schools showing that they use their CFF funds in a variety of ways for the benefit of newcomer children, the Department has established a working group that will develop guidelines for Principals and Boards of Governors. These guidelines will detail good practice, specifically outlining how they should use their EAL CFF money to achieve the optimum support to newcomer children in schools. It is anticipated that these guidelines will be issued to all schools by the end of 2009.

Whilst funding to schools is vital, the support the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) provides to schools is also relevant. This regional service was established on 1 April 2007 and is operated by the five Education and Library Boards to support those schools with newcomer pupils who have EAL. In 2008/09 it received £1,015,000.

I have also taken action to ensure that Roma children, who face the double barriers of language and discrimination as a historically nomadic group, receive a fair and equal education. Additional funding is being provided to schools based on the current reported number of Roma children.

The funding provided to IDS has allowed a number of EAL support services to be established. These include diversity coordinators, a multi-lingual website, interpreting and translation services and a toolkit for primary school teachers in Ireland.

My Department requested the Education and Training Inspectorate to conduct a survey of the support schools and the IDS are providing. The survey was completed at the end of 2008 and the report will be published soon.

It is planned to launch the policy 'Every School a Good School - Supporting Newcomer Pupils', in April 2009. The aim of this policy is to ensure that schools and Education and Library Boards are in a position to welcome newcomer pupils into their school communities. In particular, that they are able to support them in their acquisition of the language of instruction, whether it is English or Irish, to enable them to access the school curriculum and partake in every aspect of school life.

Review of the Building Handbook

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education when the review of the Building Handbook will be completed and published. (AQW 5906/09)

Minister of Education: Críochnaíodh athbhreithniú ar Lamhleabhar um Thógáil Foirgnimh Bunscoile le déanaí agus foilseofar an leagan athcheartaithe ar ball beag.

The review of the Primary School Building Handbook has recently been completed and the revised version will be published in the near future.

Byron Review on Education

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Byron Review on education. (AQW 5908/09)

Minister of Education: Tá sé mar rún ag moltaí Athbhreithniú Byron paistí a choinneáil slán sábháilte sa domhan digiteach agus dá réir sin, téann siad thar na sainchúraimí a bhaineann go sonrach leis an earnáil oideachais.

The Byron Review recommendations have as their intention to keep children safer in a digital world and as such extend beyond areas specific to the education sector.

The oversight of implementation of the recommendations here rests with the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People's Safeguarding Sub Group which is chaired by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS).

The Department of Education is working closely with DHSSPS, and other Departments, to achieve improvement in the current arrangements around internet safety.

Proposals for any changes here in respect of e-safety within schools, the curriculum and capacity building with the school workforce will be referenced to both the north/south and English, Scottish and Welsh context.

The 'Better Education' Working Group is one of four which are to be established to deal with the full range of Byron Report recommendations and the Department expects to have membership.

Lagan College

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Education for an update on the current works at Lagan College and to provide a timetable for the completion of this project. (AQW 5923/09)

Minister of Education: Is cuid de chnuas-thionscadal i gComhpháirtíocht Phríobháideach Phoiblí (PPP) é Lagan College in éineacht le Tor Bank Special School, Dún Dónaill.

Lagan College is in a Public Private Partnerships (PPP) clustered project along with Tor Bank Special School, Dundonald. The PPP project is to extend and refurbish Lagan College and to provide a new school for Tor Bank Special School. There are remaining issues to be resolved before a preferred bidder can be appointed for this building project. The Department is working closely with those involved to allow the procurement process to move ahead.

You will be aware that I have reservations on the use of PFI/PPP as a procurement method. No new PPP/PFI projects have been announced by the Department since 2004.

Killard House Special Needs Unit

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education what plans the South Eastern Education and Library Board has to move Killard House special needs unit to the Donaghadee High School site. (AQW 5931/09)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios dom ag an SEELB go bhfuil siad ag fiosrú úsáidí eile don fhoirgneamh ag Donaghadee High School, agus gurb é athlonnú an aonaid ag Killard House a d'fhéadfadh a bheith i gceist mar úsáid amháin.

The SEELB has advised that it has been investigating alternative uses for the building at Donaghadee High School, one of which may be relocation of the unit at Killard House. A series of meetings are being held to gauge the opinion of various stakeholders, but no decision has yet been made.

School Facilities in Strangford

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to upgrade school facilities in the Strangford constituency in 2009/10. (AQW 5992/09)

Minister of Education: Tá dhá thionscadal i dtoghcheantar Loch Cuan atá cuimsithe i gClár Mór Oibreacha Chaipitil na Roinne .

There are two projects in the Strangford constituency included in my Department's Major Capital Works Programme. Planning of these is being taken forward and construction work is expected to start on site in the 2009/10 financial year. These are:-

Glastry College, Ballyhalbert – New School Building on an Extended Site.

Total Estimated Value - £12.5m

St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff – New School Building on Existing Site. Total Estimated Value - £5.4m

A number of potential minor works schemes have also been identified to improve facilities at the following schools. They may be progressed next year subject to resources being available.

School	Works description
St Finians Primary School, Newtownards	Toilet refurbishment Alterations to car park
St Patrick's Primary School, Ballygalget	Toilet refurbishment
St Mary's Primary School, Kircubbin	Upgrade of windows
St Columba's College, Portaferry	Refurbishment of Home Economics to include lift
Glenbrook Nursery	Indoor communal area, parents room, windows & kitchen
Abbey Primary	Lift installation
Derryboye Primary	Car park, including lease of land
Moneyrea Primary	Provision of new classroom and lobby extension
Kircubbin Integrated Primary	Provision of new Assembly Hall and classroom
Movilla High	Refurbishment of Home Economics rooms
Longstone Special	Refurbishment of 1 Home Economics room

Composite Classes

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 5184/09, (i) to name; (ii) to list all the classes; and (iii) to provide the number of pupils in primary schools where composite classes have been in existence in the Southern Education and Library Board, over the past five years. (AQW 5993/09)

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

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

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5620/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): My Department actively promotes a range of measures to reduce the amount of paper documentation and increase the use of electronic communication as part of a green policy initiative which was introduced in March 2005.

Staff across the Department have been instructed to use e-mail wherever possible for both internal and external communications. This initiative has been adopted to reduce the amount of paper documentation produced and applies to general correspondence, consultation documents, reports, leaflets etc.

External customers are also encouraged to communicate with the Department through electronic means.

In addition and as part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service-wide Records NI Reform Project, the department uses an electronic document record management system called "TRIM". Since the implementation of TRIM, official records are held electronically and it is no longer necessary in most cases to create a paper record for preservation purposes, or store them in a registered file. Electronic records held on TRIM can be sent as an attachment via the e-mail system.

Student Guidance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what systems are in place to ensure that students are advised of potential growth employment markets and are guided into the appropriate further education or university courses to maximise their employment opportunities. (AQW 5705/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Careers Service has a key part to play in supporting the decision making process through the provision of effective guidance and up to date labour market information. The approach to the delivery of careers guidance is impartial and client centred and explores the skills, interests, experience and achievement of the individual together with labour market information relating to current and future opportunities and requirements.

All DEL's Careers Advisers are professionally qualified in the delivery of information, advice and guidance. Their knowledge and experience on potential growth employment markets is enhanced through attendance at Professional Development days. Close liaison with the Sector Skills Councils ensures access to accurate, up-to-date labour market information which enable clients make effective career decisions to maximise their future employment opportunities. Advisers also carry out individual research and regular employer visits.

Students are advised of potential growth employment markets through guidance interventions, departmental publications, careers conventions, exhibitions and media and marketing campaigns.

Stranmillis College

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what investment there has been to upgrade the facilities at Stranmillis College in the last ten years. (AQW 5716/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: There has been a significant investment to upgrade the facilities at Stranmillis University College over the past ten years. In total since 1999/00 to the present, £12.1m of investment has taken place at the College. £11m of this has come from my Department and the College has contributed the remaining £1.1m.

The majority of this investment has been incurred on the Orchard project (£6.3m), Halls Heating Decentralisation (£2.1m) and in various works to comply with disability legislation (£1.5m). These three areas have accounted for £10m of the investment and the balance has been expended on a number of smaller projects.

Catholic Certificate of Education

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he has met or written to the Minister of Education about the Catholic Certificate of Education. (AQW 5717/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I can confirm that I have not met or written to the Minister of Education about the Catholic Certificate of Education.

Individual Learner Programme

Dr W McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress has been made to introduce an individual learner programme for young people entering further education. (AQW 5754/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: A project is currently under way to pilot an Individual Learner Programme for 16 to 19 year olds entering further education colleges from September 2009. The pilot will include the guidance processes used by colleges, and how these can be supported by technology. Ultimately, the

aim is to provide 16 to 19 year olds entering an FE college with a personalised programme of learning that would enable his/her career aspirations to be met in the most effective way.

Further Education Colleges

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to give an update on the pay agreement of the National Joint Council (NJC) for non-teaching staff in further education colleges. (AQW 5987/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In October 2008, a National Joint Council (NJC) pay increase of 2.45% to non-teaching staff in Further Education (FE) Colleges was agreed. This increase is effective from April 2008. Additionally, following an arbitration award at national level in March 2009, a further 0.3% on top of the 2.45% is expected to be paid to non-teaching staff from April 2008. The implementation of this pay increase is subject to an approval process in accordance with the public sector pay policy adopted by the Executive. The terms under which the pay agreement will be applied, and its associated business case, are currently being prepared by FE College employers in consultation with my Department. That work should be completed within the next two weeks. The proposals, when finalised, will be submitted to the Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) for approval. The increase will be paid once that approval process has been completed.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Executive Led Trade Missions

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the level of investment and the number of new jobs created and filled in the last twelve months as a direct result of Executive led trade missions to the United States of America. (AQW 5570/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): In the last twelve months, there was one Executive led trade mission to the United States of America organised by Invest NI. The primary objective of the trade mission was to develop trade and export opportunities for Northern Ireland companies. In October 2008, I led 15 companies to Boston and Silicon Valley. As part of the follow-up to the USNI Conference, I attended a number of meetings with client contacts. However, to-date there have been no foreign direct investments or new jobs created in Northern Ireland as a direct result of this visit.

Electricity Grid Network

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration has been given to strengthening the electricity grid network to allow for the exploitation of wave energy potential off the Antrim coast. (AQW 5731/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In light of conclusions from the Grid Study completed in late 2007, the Department has engaged with Northern Ireland Electricity as grid owner, and the Utility Regulator, to consider where, and how, the electricity grid in Northern Ireland could be strengthened to accept a much higher proportion of renewable power generation.

While it is likely that most of any additional renewable generation will be from on-shore wind, any grid development proposals will include consideration of the potential for ocean energy, including wave and tidal stream, and offshore wind.

The Department is already considering the environmental implications of the development of marine renewables and off-shore wind energy through a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Waste Management

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what funding and support is available to encourage businesses to manage waste and become more energy efficient. (AQW 5801/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI funds three external delivery organisations to provide resource efficiency support to businesses in Northern Ireland and agrees the work programme of each of these organisations (The Carbon Trust, Envirowise and the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme) to ensure locally focused delivery of these national resource efficiency programmes. Financial support of these programmes amounts to £5.9 million in 2008/2009.

Best practice solutions to waste management and sustainable energy including energy efficiency can be provided by the delivery organisations through site visits and follow-up reports, dedicated help lines, free literature, technical seminars and training. An interest free loan is also available for sustainable energy projects that meet particular carbon saving and cost criteria.

In addition Invest NI's Sustainable Development Team delivers a further support programme dedicated to providing sustainable development consultancy support. Site visits, advice and information on sustainable energy solutions are also available from in-house experts where this is appropriate.

Invest NI's nibusinessinfo.co.uk website provides guidance and signposting in the resource efficiency arena.

LEDU Staff

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what protection will be given to former LEDU staff if the company to which their pensions are transferred ceases to trade. (AQW 5885/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Trustees of the LEDU Retirement and Death Benefits Plan are under an obligation to act in the best interests of all the members of the Plan. In fulfilling this duty, the Trustees, prior to purchasing any insurance policies, will satisfy themselves as to the financial strength of the insurance company.

In the event that the Plan is wound up, the Plan would cease to exist and the Trustees and DETI, as the former Principal Employer under the Plan, would be discharged from their duties. As all members' benefits would have been transferred to an insurance company, the insurance company would become responsible for the payment of members' benefits. Should problems occur in the future with the insurance company, members would only have recourse to the insurance company.

All insurance companies are, however, governed and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and are required to maintain, at all times, statutory reserves that are sufficient to enable them to honour their guaranteed liabilities. In addition a compensation fund, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, exists to provide compensation to insurance company policyholders where an insurance company becomes insolvent and their liabilities are not bought over by another company. This compensation is subject to a 90% limit.

LEDU Staff

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she will consider delaying the decision to transfer the LEDU pension fund to an insurance company. (AQW 5886/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The decision to wind up the LEDU Retirement and Death Benefits Plan rests with the Trustees of the Plan and was communicated to members on 6 October 2008.

Wind up of any pension scheme tends to be a rather lengthy process and the timing of the transfer of the fund to the preferred insurance company will be discussed at a full meeting of the Trustees. The Trustees will take expert advice into account and only after due diligence will the transfer of funds take place.

Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if Northern Ireland Electricity intends to re-open funding for the 'Insulation Measures only' schemes, in the Antrim Borough Council area. (AQW 5946/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: NIE Energy has confirmed that they do not currently intend to re-open funding for their 'Individual Measures- Insulation' scheme, however they do plan, through the Energy Efficiency Levy Programme, to run several energy saving schemes once again from April 2009. One

of the potential schemes, available to vulnerable householders and similar to the 'Individual Measures only' scheme, will pay for household insulation to be installed in privately owned or rented homes. Another scheme will give cashback to privately owned or rented (non-vulnerable) householders when they install insulation. Specific eligibility criteria for these schemes have yet to be confirmed.

All proposed Energy Efficiency Programme schemes are currently under review and will be subject to approval by the Energy Saving Trust and the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

Invest NI

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the area of Invest NI land that was sold to new and existing clients during the last three years. (AQW 5969/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In the three years from April 2006 to March 2009, Invest NI has sold 208 acres of land to its client companies.

60 clients made first time purchases totalling 182 acres, while 14 clients purchased 26 acres of additional land for expansion projects.

The provision of high-quality serviced sites for industrial development at strategic locations across Northern Ireland is a key goal of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. Invest NI has a target to acquire and/or develop an additional 200 acres of land by 2012.

Serviced sites are provided to client companies with an identifiable and viable development project in locations where there is clear evidence of market failure.

New Businesses

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what advice and help are available for individuals wanting to start up new businesses. (AQW 6015/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI have developed the new Enterprise Development Programmes to replace the current Start a Business Programme.

Starting in April, these programmes will provide continuous support for those at different stages of setting up a business. This includes a range of targeted initiatives to help those at Pre-Start to progress their confidence and business idea. For those at the Start-Up stage, this support offers a range of workshops and seminars, flexible to the needs of the client, as well as tailored one to one mentor support for those with real growth potential.

The focus will be on building the skills and capabilities of the entrepreneur and in ensuring that those businesses capable of making a significant economic impact receive appropriate support. With its enhanced mentoring and follow-on support through the early stages of growth, the new programmes will provide a firmer foundation on which success can be built.

In addition to the programme, applicants will also be referred to other relevant sources of support such as online resources for information and partner organisations such as Advantage, Princes Trust, DARD and local councils.

Invest NI

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the investment made by Invest NI in the North West Action Plan (NWAP) phase 1 and 2. (AQW 6144/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The first phase of the Invest NI's North West Action Plan (NWAP) was successfully implemented during the period April 2003 – March 2006. It was initially developed in response to a series of significant job losses and closures in the textile sector in the North West. It focused largely on addressing capital / infrastructural issues and the total Invest NI investment in the period was £80 million against a target of £60 million.

Whilst Invest NI continued to make significant investments in the North West in the period April 2006 – March 2008, including a number of substantial Foreign Direct Investment projects, there was a change in focus for NWAP Phase II. This was driven by a need to consolidate and facilitate the utilisation of some of the capital

and infrastructural investments under NWAP Phase I in a changing economic environment. A series of specific joint initiatives were developed with the North West Councils aimed at addressing capability weaknesses within SMEs throughout the region. The total investment in these initiatives was almost £300,000 over a two year period, of which Invest NI contributed £100,000.

Invest NI

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much will be invested by Invest NI in North West Action Plan Phase 3. (AQW 6145/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI continues to be committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in the North West and is actively investing in relevant projects in the region in line with its current Corporate Plan.

No decision has yet been made in relation to a formal North West Action Plan Phase 3 and this is due to a number of factors including:

- The desire of the original Council partners (Londonderry, Strabane, Coleraine, Limavady and Magherafelt) to move away from this traditional grouping and begin to develop new partnerships within the context of the new Review of Public Administration Council clusters.
- The significant European funding now available via the Interreg, Rural Development and DETI Competitiveness and Employment Programmes.
- The role of the North West Gateway Initiative in providing a framework for future investment in the wider North West Region.

Invest NI will continue to engage with Councils in the North West to explore the most appropriate mechanism for the delivery of all relevant joint projects and initiatives.

Invest NI

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much was invested in the Virtual Cross Border Business Park by Invest NI and the Irish Development Agency. (AQW 6148/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Virtual Cross Border Business Park is now known as the North West Business Technology Zone (NWB TZ). NWB TZ is a flagship cross-border collaboration between Invest NI and the IDA. It includes high specification property provision in both Letterkenny and Londonderry, improved cross border telecommunications and IT linkages, and a skills development programme all supported by promotional materials to market the Zone to external and internal investors.

The total investment in the NWB TZ is circa £39 million which includes public and private sector contributions. The investment in Northern Ireland is £17.4 million. Invest NI's contributed £6.75 million and IDA's contribution was £8.4 million.

Cross Border Business Park

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there will be another phase of the Cross Border Business Park, and if not, to detail the reasons why this will not take place. (AQW 6149/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: All elements of the Cross Border Business Park, now known as the North West Business Technology (NWB TZ), are now in place and they include the North West Business Complex, the speculative build at Timberquay and the Academic Business and Clinical Research and Innovation Facility (Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre) facility at Altnagelvin hospital.

We are now entering a period of consolidation with regard to the various properties and the priority for the relevant project promoters is to maximise the capacity of their facilities and progress towards the achievement of the key targets and milestones set out in the original proposals.

In addition, there are a number of other public and private sector developments proposed for the City which will have synergy with, and compliment, the activities of the current NWB TZ.

Any future investment will have to be considered in the context of the progress of the current NWBTZ project and any other relevant infrastructure projects being proposed to ensure that there is not oversupply leading to potential displacement, particularly of private sector investment. Therefore, there are no immediate plans for a NWBTZ Phase 2 but the IDA/Invest NI Working Group continues to meet with a view to identifying further initiatives which may be suitable for support as part of the NWBTZ.

Invest NI

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Invest NI has withdrawn (i) a Managing Director; (ii) an International Sales Manager; and (iii) the North West Initiatives Team, from Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 6152/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: At no time has there been an Invest NI Managing Director based in the North West.

A member of Invest NI's International Marketing staff, although based in Belfast, was, for personal reasons, temporarily permitted to work out of the agency's North West Regional Office.

Invest NI has not withdrawn any resources from the North West Initiative team, which is still in place and operating from the North West Regional Office.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

ERINI Report

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the Finance Minister's statement 'That report has no standing whatsoever with the Executive' as recorded in Hansard, Volume 38, no 2 dated Tuesday 17th February 2009, in reference to the ERINI report published February 2009. (AQW 5697/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): I fully concur with the remarks made by the Finance Minister on this matter.

It is my understanding that this ERINI report was commissioned by an Assembly Committee and not the Executive. It certainly has not been circulated to Executive Ministers for consideration.

Planning Applications

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment what action is being taken to speed up the process of smaller scale planning applications. (AQW 5748/09)

Minister of the Environment: Following a successful pilot with Derry District Council and Limavady Borough Council, my Department is now rolling out a streamlined consultation scheme with a further 22 Councils.

Streamlining benefits all stakeholders in the planning process allowing decisions on non-contentious planning to be issued without formal presentation to Council on a monthly basis. Instead a weekly list of streamlined applications received by my Department will be provided to the Council. As a safeguard to the system the Council or Divisional Planning Manager has the right formally to refer an application to the Council for consideration.

The pilot scheme has an immediate impact accelerating the processing of all planning applications in the Derry City Council area by allowing a decision to be reached and issued quickly on non-contentious planning applications particularly those applications relating to small and medium sized business enterprises.

Other measures are taken by my Department to expedite the processing of certain applications such as those on which grant-aid may depend and certain commercial, industrial and social infrastructure proposals with a clear strategic, employment, community or public interest dimension such as social housing applications.

Enforcement Action Notices

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to the answer to AQW4231/09, for details of, and a timescale for, the clearance of outstanding enforcement actions, especially those that have been with his Department for a period of between 18 – 24 months. (AQW 5749/09)

Minister of the Environment: In response, I would like to make 2 points: firstly the number of new cases is of course beyond the control of my Department; and secondly it is difficult to be specific on the anticipated timescales that will be required to resolve outstanding enforcement cases due to their complex nature, some of which may be linked to current planning applications. That said the Department continues to examine current cases on an ongoing basis with a view to prioritising the oldest for action, those between 18-24 months and resolving the more straight forward cases. This is beginning to be effective as witnessed by the number of cases resolved through our enforcement schedules and the halt in the rise of live cases.

Water Pollution Offences

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4007/09, to detail (i) the number and, nature of; and (ii) what action his Department took on alleged pollution incidents by (a) Antrim Borough Council (b) Belfast International Airport (c) Coca Cola (d) DARD Rivers Agency (e) DARD Forestry Service (f) Farran's Construction (g) Lisburn City Council (h) Moy Park Ltd (i) O'Kane Foods (j) Radox Laboratories; and (k) Stoneyford Concrete, in each of the last five years. (AQW 5765/09)

Minister of the Environment: A total of 53 pollutions incidents have been recorded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as attributable to the eleven bodies listed in the question over a five year period from 2003 to 2007. The table appended to this answer lists the 11 named alleged offenders and also summarises the total number of pollution incidents attributed to each, the years in which the incidents occurred, the type/category of the pollution, and the severity category of the incidents. It also indicates where warning letters were issued and where prosecutions were taken.

Name	Total No Incidents	Year	Category	Explanation of Terms	High severity	Medium severity	Low severity	Warning Letters	Prosecutions	Court Outcomes
Antrim Council	2	2003	Chemical		0	0	1			
		2005	Oil		0	0	1			
Belfast Int Airport	2	2007	Chemical		0	0	2			
Coca Cola	4	2004	Chemical		0	0	2	1		
		2005	Oil		0	0	1			
		2007	Chemical		0	0	1			
Radox	2	2006	Chemical		0	0	1			
		2007	Sewage		0	0	1			
Stoneyford Concrete	2	2003	Non Agric Waste Discharge	Dirty Water from a cement Mixer	0	0	1			
		2007	Other	Concrete Washings into watercourse	0	0	1			
Moy Park	2	2006	Oil		0	0	1	1		

Name	Total No Incidents	Year	Category	Explanation of Terms	High severity	Medium severity	Low severity	Warning Letters	Prosecutions	Court Outcomes
		2006	Other	Dirty Water discharging into watercourse	0	1	0		1	Fine (£6000)
O'Kane Foods	2	2007	Oil		0	0	1			
		2007	Oil		0	0	1			
Lisburn City Council	2	2003	Oil		0	0	1			
		2004	Non Agric Waste Discharge	Dirty Water from a landfill	0	1	0			
Farrans Construction	15	2003	Non Agric Waste Discharge	Run-off, dirty water, from a construction site	0	0	1			
		2004	Other	Cloudy water entering watercourse.	1	1	4		1	Dismissed
		2004	Non Agric Waste Discharge	Cloudy water entering watercourse.	0	0	1			
		2005	Other	Cloudy water entering watercourse.	0	1	4	1		
		2005	Non Agric Waste Discharge	Dirty Water from construction Site	0	1	0		1	Dismissed
		2006	Oil		0		1			
DARD Rivers Agency	18	2003	Other	Suspended solids cement washings	0	1	2			
		2004	Other	Suspended solids, cement washings	0	0	4			
		2005	Other	suspended solids, cement washings	0	2	4			
		2006	Other	suspended solids, cement washings	0	0	3			
		2007	Other	suspended solids, cement washings	0	0	1			
		2007	Oil		0	0	1			

Name	Total No Incidents	Year	Category	Explanation of Terms	High severity	Medium severity	Low severity	Warning Letters	Prosecutions	Court Outcomes
DARD Forestry Service	2	2005	Oil		0	1	0			
		2007	Other	Suspended solids	0	0	1			

Protection of Marine Life

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what his department has done to protect marine life. (AQW 5770/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has designated a number of marine areas for species and habitats of conservation concern under the Habitats and Birds Directives. These areas include Strangford Lough, Murlough Bay and Rathlin Island. Other areas are being considered for designation.

My Department also protects marine life by responding to pollution incidents, monitoring the chemical and biological quality of the aquatic environment and through the regulation of effluent discharges.

Planning Applications

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications have been processed through the streamlined process introduced in January 2009. (AQW 5787/09)

Minister of the Environment: The streamlining of planning applications was introduced by my Department as a pilot project with Derry City Council in December 2007 and was extended to Limavady Borough Council in June 2008. Following the success of the pilot the scheme was extended a further 22 Councils in January 2009. As Planning Service Development Management Statistics are produced on a quarterly basis, figures have not yet been published for the period since January 2009.

However, from 3 December 2007 to 30 September 2009 there were 353 streamlined applications processed and approved in the Derry City Council and Limavady Borough Council areas. Figures for 1st October 2008 to 31st December 2008 will be available from 20th March 2009.

Strategic Projects Unit

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications have been received by the Strategic Projects Unit since its creation and the average time it has taken to reach a determination. (AQW 5795/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Programme for Government refers to a six month target being applied for the processing of large scale development proposals. These are proposals which are considered to have significant economic or social implications for the whole or a substantial part of Northern Ireland. In response to this, the Planning Service created 2 Strategic Project teams at Headquarters in October 2007 specifically to process these types of applications. This also includes facilitating pre-application discussions (PADs).

PADs were formally introduced in December 2007 and the 2 teams are currently dealing with 29 proposals in the pre-application discussion stage.

At the time the teams were formally established, they were required to complete the processing of a number of applications already in the system. Some were longstanding and therefore had lengthy processing times. The teams are currently processing 60 Article 31 cases and a further 36 major applications.

Since the creation of the teams, 6 applications have been processed to a decision or recommendation to the Minister in line with the PfG target with an average timescale of 6.3 months.

Renewable Energy and Waste Management Facilities

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the criteria for installing renewable energy and waste management facilities for businesses in rural and urban areas. (AQW 5800/09)

Minister of the Environment: Proposals for renewable energy and waste management facilities attaching to existing business activities are considered on their individual planning merits. In many cases these works would not require the grant of planning permission. Where planning permission is required, proposals would be judged against the provisions contained in the area plan and in the light of all material planning considerations.

Specifically Planning Service has recently introduced draft Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy which aims to encourage the greater use of small scale renewable energy technologies. Similar planning policy guidance for waste management, Planning Policy Statement 11 Planning and Waste Management, provides a framework for determining waste management proposals.

Wind Turbines

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment if his Department has plans to offer incentives to farmers and landowners, who own or install wind turbines, to help meet the European Union's Renewable Directive Targets for 2020. (AQW 5825/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has no such plans. Whilst my Department provides planning policy guidance on renewables, renewable energy policy in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

NI Environment Agency

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the obligatory 'Right of Entry' process which the NI Environment Agency officials must adhere to prior to entering a holding for inspection purposes. (AQW 5848/09)

Minister of the Environment: Where it forms part of their particular duties, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) staff can be authorised to enter premises when implementing or enforcing legislation that is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment.

The legislation specifies the circumstances in which an authorised officer can enter premises (which may include land, vehicles, vessels and residential premises) in the exercise of their statutory role.

Most legislation specifies that authorised officers must produce evidence of their authorisation on request. Some legislation requires that prior notice should be given to the owner or occupier of the premises concerned.

Driver and Vehicle Agency

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment why the Driver and Vehicle Agency does not send out information about fees with Driving Licence Renewal forms. (AQW 5898/09)

Minister of the Environment: The fees associated with the administration of driver licensing are based on a system of cost-recovery and the fees are reviewed and, where necessary, amended, on a regular basis. If the Driver & Vehicle Agency were to print fees on the application forms or any accompanying leaflet it would mean that the forms or leaflets would have to be reprinted on each fee change. It would also mean batches of application forms/leaflets held elsewhere, such as at post offices, would have to be recalled. In order to avoid these costs and to limit confusion regarding fees at the period of transition from one fee to another, it has been decided to remove reference to specific fees from all DVA driver licensing forms. Up to date information on fees is available on the DVA website or from DVA customer services.

Recycling Packaging

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of the Environment if he would consider making supermarkets more responsible for recycling packaging. (AQW 5899/09)

Minister of the Environment: 60% of Commercial and Industrial Waste is to be recycled by 2020. This non-statutory target is set out in the NI Waste Management Strategy 2006-2020 and applies to NI as a whole.

However, the revised European Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) came into force on 12 December 2008 and is due to be transposed into national law by 12 December 2010. It includes the following statutory recycling target:

- by 2020, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of waste materials such as at least paper, metal, plastic and glass from households and possibly from other origins as far as these waste streams are similar to waste from households, shall be increased to a minimum of overall 50% by weight

The Department is awaiting clarification on whether this target includes waste from commercial premises where it is similar to household waste. If this turns out to be the case the target contained in the Directive will supersede the current non-statutory targets in the NI Waste Management Strategy.

My Department will continue to work with businesses to help them achieve these targets through its work with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and a new Waste Communications Strategy as outlined in my answer to your recent question on reducing the amount of packaging (AQW 5531/09).

Craigavon Area Plan 2010

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment when the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 will be reviewed. (AQW 5940/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department does not propose to review the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 in advance of the new district councils assuming plan making powers under the Review of Public Administration in 2011.

The Department has carried out a review of Housing lands in Craigavon and discussed its findings with Craigavon Borough Council. This review indicates there is sufficient remaining land within the range of settlements across Craigavon Borough (both zoned phase 1 land and committed unzoned land) to provide for almost 10,000 dwellings. This represents sufficient land supply to meet housing need to 2015 and beyond. The Department does not therefore propose to release any phase II land for development in advance of the new district councils assuming plan making powers under the Review of Public Administration in 2011.

Craigavon Area Plan 2010

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment when the land zoned as phase II in the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 will be released for development. (AQW 5941/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department does not propose to review the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 in advance of the new district councils assuming plan making powers under the Review of Public Administration in 2011.

The Department has carried out a review of Housing lands in Craigavon and discussed its findings with Craigavon Borough Council. This review indicates there is sufficient remaining land within the range of settlements across Craigavon Borough (both zoned phase 1 land and committed unzoned land) to provide for almost 10,000 dwellings. This represents sufficient land supply to meet housing need to 2015 and beyond. The Department does not therefore propose to release any phase II land for development in advance of the new district councils assuming plan making powers under the Review of Public Administration in 2011.

River Pollution

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment how many (i) enforcement notices have been issued; and (ii) actions have been taken, by his Department against river pollution, in each of the last 3 years, in the Upper Bann constituency. (AQW 5942/09)

Minister of the Environment: Where water pollution occurs, it is the policy of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to take formal enforcement action if this is warranted by the severity of the pollution and the circumstances which led to it occurring.

The formal enforcement options available to NIEA in water pollution cases include:

- a. the issuing of an enforcement warning letter, or;
- b. the initiation of prosecution proceedings, and / or;
- c. the issuing of a Water Order Notice.

Table A details the number of substantiated pollution incidents and the number of Enforcement Notices issued under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 in each of the last 3 years in the Upper Bann catchment area. Table B details the actions and outcomes to date.

TABLE A – SUBSTANTIATED POLLUTION INCIDENTS AND WATER ORDER ENFORCEMENT NOTICES.

	High Severity	Medium Severity	Low Severity	Enforcement Notices
2006	1	16	35	0
2007	2	4	62	0
2008	4	13	48	2

TABLE B – ACTIONS TAKEN AND OUTCOMES (AT 9 MARCH 2009)

	Cases referred to the Public Prosecution Service	Convictions	Cases Pending	Warning Letters Issued
2006	6	6	0	11
2007	3	2	1	16
2008	3	1	2	6

Planning Policy Statement 2 - Planning and Nature Conservation

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made in updating Planning Policy Statement 2 - Planning and Nature Conservation. (AQW 5962/09)

Minister of the Environment: Significant progress has been made in updating Planning Policy Statement 2 – Planning and Nature Conservation and I anticipate publishing a draft for public consultation in the spring.

River Pollution

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of the Environment if he plans to bring forward legislation about people who illegally dump waste and if he has had any discussions with the PPS to increase fines and deterrents for polluting rivers and the environment. (AQW 6047/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has recently acted to increase the penalties for the illegal deposit of waste on land. The Waste (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 provided powers for the courts to impose more significant custodial sentences and financial penalties for waste offences. The maximum fine in the Magistrates Court was increased from £20,000 to £50,000 and the maximum prison sentence in the Crown Court was increased from 2 years to 5 years. As a further deterrent to such illegal activity, courts were also

granted wider powers to require convicted offenders to pay investigation, enforcement and clean-up costs and to award the Department possession of vehicles used in the commission of illegal waste offences.

In addition, my Department will consult shortly on a range of measures designed to further strengthen the enforcement framework for the illegal deposit of waste on land. Depending upon the outcome of the consultation process, I anticipate that a number of the proposals will be included either in a Waste Bill or in other appropriate primary legislation.

At this point in time I have no plans to make further legislative changes to the fines and deterrents for polluting rivers and the environment. I can also confirm that in previous discussions with PPS, my officials were advised that sentencing is entirely a matter for the courts to judge.

Graduated Drivers Licensing

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment if he intends to have a consultation on Graduated Drivers Licensing, and if so, when this will occur. (AQW 6074/09)

Minister of the Environment: My main priority at present is the issue of drink driving, which is relevant to all drivers including learners and novices, and my Department will shortly be issuing a public consultation on proposals to reduce blood alcohol limits. I also intend to consider the outcome of the recent UK-wide consultation on "Learning to Drive" before deciding on the next steps in relation to driver training, testing and licensing in Northern Ireland. I have decided not to proceed at present with other aspects of graduated driver licensing.

Road Safety Council

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the future plans for road safety committees in the light of his decision to cease funding for the Road Safety Council. (AQW 6118/09)

Minister of the Environment: Following a critical review of its performance, I wrote to the Road Safety Council (RSC) on 9 December 2008 to inform it of my decision to channel funding not into central administration but direct to local committees.

The future of road safety committees, as part of an independent and voluntary movement, is very much in their own hands. It is my intention that front-line road safety activities should continue, and that is why I have asked officials to put in place a new funding model for the period from 1 April 2009. Local committees have been provided with a simple application form, and the Department is waiting to receive their bids for funds for the new financial year.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Workplace 2010 Project

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to list all the companies including consultancy companies, that have been involved in the Workplace 2010 project; and (ii) to detail how much each company has been paid. (AQW 5514/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): Details given in this answer relate to the Workplace 2010 PFI procurement process. In the main they exclude expenditure managed by the Department in relation to capital and operational costs of NICS accommodation outside the PFI procurement.

The workplace 2010 procurement was an extensive procurement project that ran for four years and involved hundreds of suppliers. The table below lists all companies that received over £25k (in total over the 4 years of the procurement process) for primarily procurement related work, however the figures shown may include some other payments that the same companies received in relation to non-procurement activities during the same period.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PARTENAIRE LEGAL CHALLENGE ARE INCLUDED IN THE FIGURES PRESENTED.

Consultancy Consortium *	5,286,630
Lovells LLP ***	2,581,499
Deloitte**	708,865
Hamilton Architects	439,014
Drivers Jonas **	286,600
DEGW **	248,859
Partenaire Limited	225,000
DSG Retail Limited	160,780
Gleeds**	157,311
Future @ Work	114,889
Grafton Recruitment Ltd (for temporary staff)	113,159
Pentagon Solutions	95,649
Osborne King **	75,420
EC Harris LLP	68,587
Dargan Press Ltd The	56,405
A V Browne	43,422
Wallace Douglas	40,419
Partnership UK	33,299
Addleshaw Goddard	32,224
UUTech Ltd	30,000
Charles Bell Ltd	27,384
PA Consulting Group	26,924

* Consultancy Consortium appointed to provide financial, technical and commercial support to the Workplace 2010 PFI procurement process. The Consortium consisted of Deloitte, Drivers Jonas, Gleeds, DEGW and Osborne King.

** Additional payments for work undertaken by these companies outside the terms of the contract with the Consultancy Consortium.

*** Includes payments of £148k to L'Estrange & Brett

Capital Expenditure

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to report on the anticipated (i) net; and (ii) gross capital expenditure for the financial years (a) 2008/09; (b) 2009/10; and (c) 2010/11. (AQW 5539/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The latest available Forecast Outturn information provided by departments suggests that their net capital expenditure will be £1.5 billion in 2008-09, whilst gross capital expenditure is expected to be £1.6 billion.

The Executive's gross and net capital expenditure plans for 2009-10 and 2010-11 are set out in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: GROSS AND NET CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLANS FOR NI DEPARTMENTS.

£ million	2009-10	2010-11
Net	1,393.1	1,412.9
Gross	1,659.6	2,025.3

Source: Budget 2008-2011

Although it is recognised that the downturn in the property market will also have an impact on the level of capital receipts in 2009-10 and 2010-11, the implications as regards gross capital expenditure plans will only become clear as we move into these financial years.

Ratepayers

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many ratepayers there are in each of the local government districts. (AQW 5540/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The information requested is provided in the table below.

RATEPAYERS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICT

District Council Area	Number of Ratepayers
Antrim	17,369
Ards	28,202
Armagh	20,004
Ballymena	22,343
Ballymoney	10,005
Banbridge	16,750
Belfast	93,590
Carrickfergus	14,048
Castlereagh	23,987
Coleraine	23,305
Cookstown	12,138
Craigavon	30,402
Derry	31,524
Down	24,170
Dungannon & South Tyrone	18,245
Fermanagh	22,495
Larne	12,170
Limavady	10,325
Lisburn	37,710
Magherafelt	13,913
Moyle	6,999
Newry & Mourne	31,268
Newtownabbey	30,003
North Down	30,737
Omagh	17,052
Strabane	12,713

Civil Service

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Service staff are employed in the Foyle constituency at each location, broken down by Department. (AQW 5546/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The information is provided in the table attached.

	Foyle Constituency	
Department	Location	Staff
DARD	Crown Buildings Londonderry	29
	Orchard House	173
	Vets Office Foyle Meats Ltd	15
	Vets Office Wm Grant and Co Ltd	5
Total		222
DE	Waterside House	125
Total		125
DEL	Foyle Jobs and Benefits Office	82
	Lisnagelvin Jobs and Benefits Office	35
	Richmond Chambers	4
Total		121
DETI	Crown Buildings Londonderry	4
Total		4
DFP	Orchard House	50
	Waterside House	118
Total		168
DHSSPS	Waterside House	34
Total		34
DOE	Crown Buildings Lisnagelvin	4
	New Buildings Industrial Estate	27
	Orchard House	51
	Woodburn Environment Agency Depot	5
Total		87
DRD	Depot Crescent Road	61
	Orchard House	11
Total		72
DSD	28 Temple Road	180
	Carlisle House	335
	Crown Buildings Lisnagelvin	57
	Crown Buildings Asylum Road	144
	Orchard House	34
Total		750
OFMDFM	Orchard House	3
Total		3
Grand Total		1586

Notes

Data source as at 25 February 2009.

Figures do not include those on career break.

Figures include permanent, casual, industrial and non-industrial staff.

Regional Rates

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) domestic and (ii) non-domestic regional rate rises, in each of the last 10 years. (AQW 5589/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The table attached shows the percentage increase in the domestic and non domestic regional rates for each of the years between 1998/99 and 2008/09.

Year	Increase in domestic regional rate (%)	Increase in non domestic regional rate (%)
1998/99	6.7	2.5
1999/00	8	5.5
2000/01	8	4.6
2001/02	7	3.3
2002/03	7	3.3
2003/04	6	N/A
2004/05	8.8	3.3
2005/06	9	3.3
2006/07	19	3.3
2007/08	6	3.3
2008/09	0	2.7

Lone Pensioners Allowance

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what are the figures; and total value for the take up of lone pensioners allowance, for the current financial year. (AQW 5593/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Land & Property Services has made 17,095 awards of Lone Pensioner Allowance with a total value of £2,671,923 in the current financial year. These figures do not include awards of the allowance made by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) all small and medium sized firms bidding for government contracts as part of a consortium or group of firms; and (ii) all small and medium sized enterprises which have undertaken work as part of a supply chain to larger contractors doing work for the government, in the last 12 months. (AQW 5660/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: This information is not readily available and could only be collected at disproportionate cost.

Drivers on the Stormont Estate

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps have been taken to ensure that drivers do not speed on the grounds of Stormont Estate. (AQW 5673/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The following measures have been taken to discourage speeding in the grounds of the Stormont Estate:

- Signs are in place at each entrance clearly displaying the 30mph speed limit;

- A number of traffic calming ramps have been installed between the Stoney Road entrance and the entrance to Stormont Castle;
- The Stormont Estate Rangers regularly monitor traffic on the estate roads;
- Mobile speed detection and indication units are installed at different locations within the estate to remind drivers of their speed. The Rangers can and have stopped drivers whom they believe are driving in excess of the speed limit to remind them of the speed restrictions.

Regional Rates

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much the planned freeze in the non-domestic regional rate will cost. (AQW 5691/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I announced on 15 December 2008 that non domestic regional rates would be frozen in cash terms at current levels for 2009/2010 instead of increasing by 2.7% as originally intended. This change will cost approximately £7.8m.

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5694/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: DFP have made significant improvements in this area over recent years. Since the late 1990's email has been the normal communications method within DFP and between Departments. The introduction of the IT shared service centre (IT Assist) has seen the ongoing consolidation of the disparate email services that have operated across Departments into a single resilient email service.

An electronic document and records management system (RecordsNI) was introduced in 2007 and became fully operational in 2008. All eleven Departments now use this system and its common file plan to store and view documents, including emails, spreadsheets, and presentations. The use of electronic links to stored documents within the RecordsNI 'TRIM' system has now become the norm across DFP and other Departments and has dramatically decreased the necessity to print documents and emails.

No new paper files have been created within DFP since 12th November 2007 and the electronic record became the official record from this date.

DFP is currently working on an updated ICT policy for the NICS which will highlight sustainability. In addition, a review of printing technologies is underway aimed at increasing access to scanned material and a further reduction in the necessity to print correspondence.

DFP actively encourage staff to print only when necessary; however, there will probably always remain a requirement for documents to be printed for specific meetings.

The email policy for the NICS is currently under review and as part of this staff will be actively discouraged from printing unnecessarily.

European Union Programmes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the likely effect of the clawback in the current European Union programmes. (AQW 5711/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The decommitments or clawback of Northern Ireland EU funding currently being proposed by the European Commission are in respect of the 1994-99 Programmes. Under the public expenditure rules that apply for the 1994-99 period there would be no impact on the current or future EU funding to Northern Ireland Departments. The amounts published by the European Commission late last year remain under discussion and are expected to be significantly reduced.

Paying Approved Invoices

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what monitoring he has in place to ensure that Departments are paying approved invoices within 10 days. (AQW 5796/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Account NI provides monthly statistics on payment performance to the six departments which are currently on the programme and this information is being validated by departments. Other departments, not yet on Account NI, compile their own records. Each department and public body is taking appropriate action to ensure that payments are made promptly and that performance in achieving this is monitored.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was paid by each of the Health and Social Care Trusts to private firms in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) year; and (ii) Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 4262/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): This question is taken as referring to referrals to the Independent Sector for health care services.

The latest figures available are:

In 2006/07, a total of £22.9m was spent to have patients assessed and treated in the independent sector. It would only be possible to provide a further breakdown of this amount at disproportionate cost due to the reorganisation of the Trusts in April 2007.

IN 2007/08, A TOTAL OF APPROX £40M WAS SPENT BROKEN DOWN AS FOLLOWS:

Western Trust	circa £8m;
Southern Trust	circa £3m;
South Eastern Trust	circa £9m;
Northern Trust	circa £2.5m; and
Belfast Trust	circa £17.5m

Final figures for the current year (08/09) are not yet available.

Ambulance Provision

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the ambulance provision in the Moyle area; and what his plans are to modernise and improve the service. (AQW 5496/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) tactically deploys emergency response cover throughout its Northern Division. As a result, an emergency response to the Moyle area may be provided by vehicles based at a number of stations including Coleraine, Ballycastle, Ballymena and Ballymoney.

In October 2008, I announced a major investment in the ambulance service totalling £100m over the next ten years. This includes £17m over the three year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period to allow NIAS to modernise its estate and replace its fleet and equipment on a regular basis. I have also allocated additional revenue funding of £12.1m in the current CSR period

This investment will enable NIAS to improve its responsiveness and to provide modern high quality emergency care to people in Northern Ireland.

Health Service Dentists

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the shortfall in the number of Health Service dentists is; and how it compares with the last two years. (AQW 5508/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of dentists registered to provide Health Service dentistry for the last three years is shown in the table below;

	February 07	February 08	February 09
No. of dentists	835	863	915

There are more dentists per head of population in NI than in England, Wales or Scotland, and I do not consider that there is an issue with the overall number of registered dental practitioners. Unfortunately, however, increasing numbers of dentists in NI have chosen to treat patients privately rather than under the Health Service.

My Department is in negotiations with the British Dental Association over a new contract for dentists, which will ensure that they are paid fairly for the work they do, improve oral health and ease difficulties in accessing Health Service dentistry. A tender exercise to recruit additional dentist is nearing completion. I anticipate that 38 additional dentists will be in post by September of this year, providing Health Service dentistry to over 50,000 patients currently unable to access services.

Health Service Dentists

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which Council areas are in greatest need of Health Service dental services. (AQW 5509/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As I have previously acknowledged, there has been a regrettable decrease in the number of dentists providing Health Service dentistry. This has been particularly prevalent in the WHSSB area and the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council areas have seen a persistent drop in patient registration numbers over recent years.

The Dental Directors of the four Health and Social Services Boards identified areas of need as part of the tender for additional dental services that was instigated by my Department. I anticipate that the additional dentists will be in post starting from September of this year. However, the table below sets out the areas identified by the Dental Directors and the number of additional dentists to be appointed.

Board Area	Location	Number of additional Dentists per Location
Western	Enniskillen	6
	Omagh	2
	Strabane	2
	Londonderry	4
Northern	Carrickfergus	2
	Newtownabbey	4
	Cookstown	2
Eastern	Bangor / Donaghadee	2
	Holywood	2
	Dundonald / Castlereagh	2
	Lisburn / Dunmurry	2
	Carryduff	2
Southern	Banbridge	2
	Dungannon	2
	Newry	2
Total		38

Epilepsy Clinic

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to establish an epilepsy clinic in each of the Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 5541/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is for Health and Social Services Boards, as commissioners of services, to prioritise and allocate resources to meet the needs of their local population, including those with epilepsy. Epilepsy clinics currently held within the Belfast Trust include a regional epilepsy clinic held in the Belfast City Hospital every Tuesday and a regional Epilepsy / Obstetric clinic held in the Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital every other Thursday. There is a seizure clinic in NHSCT once per month and there is an all day epilepsy clinic in the SHSCT on alternate

Wednesdays. The nurse-led epilepsy clinic for the Western Trust area is not presently running, however the Western Board and Trust plan to rectify this situation shortly.

Craigavon Hospital

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the number of times in financial years (i) 2007/08; and (ii) 2008/09 that Craigavon Hospital had to refuse admission to its Maternity Unit. (AQW 5551/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Craigavon Area Hospital which is part of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that it never refused to admit any women to its Maternity Service.

On one occasion in 2007/08 one lady was transferred to Daisy Hill Hospital.

On one occasion in 2008/09 one lady was transferred to Daisy Hill Hospital.

Both transfers were agreed between the mothers and the clinical team.

Nursing Positions

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has discussed with the Executive, the Health and Social Care Trusts' proposals to cut 722 nursing positions. (AQW 5576/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Consultation on key proposals is currently ongoing and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to discuss proposals with the Executive at this time.

Residential Homes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has discussed with the Executive, the Health and Social Care Trusts' proposals to reduce residential homes. (AQW 5577/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Consultation on key proposals is currently ongoing and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to discuss proposals with the Executive at this time.

Ards Minor Injury Unit

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has discussed with the Executive, the proposal to reduce opening hours of the Ards Minor Injury Unit. (AQW 5578/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Consultation on the Ards Minor Injury Unit has recently closed and responses are being considered by the South Eastern HSC Trust. It would not therefore be appropriate for me to discuss this proposal with the Executive at this time.

Efficiency Savings

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has discussed with the Executive any alternative plans for efficiency savings for the Health Service. (AQW 5579/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Consultation on key proposals is currently ongoing and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to discuss the possibility or otherwise of alternative plans with the Executive at this time, since this would presuppose the outcome of consultation on existing proposals.

Ravara House, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many letters of protest his Department has received about the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts' proposed closure of Ravara House, Bangor. (AQW 5580/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As of the of 24 February 2009 my Department has received 4 letters from elected representatives, and 131 letters from members of the public concerning the South Eastern Trust's proposal on Ravara House. In addition, I have responded to 18 Assembly questions on the subject.

Child Respite Care

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why places are not available, when funding is in place, for child respite care, and what he is doing to rectify this matter. (AQW 5585/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Respite is of great importance as it supports people to live in the community for as long as it is safe and appropriate to do so. It comes in a variety of forms and may be provided to meet the user's own needs or the needs of carers and families. However, I am aware that demand currently exceeds supply and more needs to be done. I expect Trusts to look critically at how they meet demand for respite provision in their areas, particularly with a view to introducing creative and innovative approaches.

Under the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Learning Disability Programme of Care has been allocated £33m (£17m recurrent) over the three-year period, while Physical and Sensory Disability has been allocated £10m (£7m recurrent).

Part of the investment in each of these Programmes of Care is to provide new or enhanced respite services for both children and adults.

Childminders

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why there is no funding to train childminders, since there are 60 people on the training waiting list. (AQW 5586/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Social Workers in Early Years Teams deliver training to childminders in conjunction with training provided by the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA), which ensures consistency in terms of delivery. It is the increasing number of applications to be assessed, with consequent need for training which has had an impact on the Early Years Teams capacity to meet demand.

The South Eastern Trust has confirmed that there are 60 childminders waiting for training in the Ards Sector. The Trust, in the Ards Sector, directly commissions training for childminders from the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA) and courses are planned for March (24th and 31st) and April (7th and 21st). In light of the demand, additional courses are now planned for May, June and September 2009.

Prescription Charges

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the annual monetary value will be from the (i) recent reduction in prescription charges and (ii) future abolition of prescription charges. (AQW 5591/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Prior to the reduction in charges the net annual income from prescription charges was £13 million. No figures are available yet with regard to the reduction in income following the reduction in charges to £3 from 1 January 2009.

Ten Day Payment Target

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of the total amount due to suppliers has been paid within the ten day payment target. (AQW 5643/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

Period	Amount Paid within the 10 day target *
Dec-08	2,510,027.80
Jan-09	4,141,406.84
Feb-09	3,125,196.17

* Payments should issue on or before the 10th working day after the receipt of a valid invoice. For reporting purposes Account NI cannot recognise bank/public holidays or weekends, therefore the statistics above are based on payments made on or within 14 calendar days from the invoice received date. They reflect payments made in a month and not the invoices raised in the month.

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to the answer to AQW 4440/09, if he will obtain information regarding the breakdown by religion of Director level staff, from the Western Health and Social Care Trust, and make it available to all Assembly Members. (AQW 5649/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Having approached the Western HSC Trust directly, we have been informed that as there are only 8 Executive Directors in the Trust, a breakdown by religion cannot be given as this would run the risk of disclosing individual personal information.

The Trust provides information on staff, including religious background, to the Equality Commission for monitoring purposes and summary data is published in the Equality Commission annual monitoring report.

Genetic Cardiac Abnormalities

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline what (i) statutory; and (ii) non statutory programmes are in place to detect and treat potentially genetic cardiac abnormalities affecting young people. (AQW 5670/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Many genetic disorders have major impacts on the cardiovascular system. However, in a recent review of evidence on screening for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), the main cause of sudden cardiac death, the UK National Screening Committee advised that screening should not be offered and that screening of athletes for HCM or other causes of sudden cardiac death should not be instituted.

However families with a high risk of inherited cardiac disorders can be identified and affected individuals are offered appropriate monitoring to reduce risk. Services for people with inherited cardiac disorders are provided by consultants at the Belfast City Hospital Regional Genetics Centre and a consultant cardiologist specialising in inherited cardiac diseases at the Royal Victoria Hospital. GPs and consultant cardiologists throughout Northern Ireland can refer patients with a suspected diagnosis or confirmed diagnosis to this regional service.

There are a number of voluntary organisations which promote heart screening and ECG testing programmes these include; Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY), the Cormac Trust, the British Heart Foundation, the Cardiomyopathy Association and the Ashley Jolly Sad (sudden arrhythmic death) Trust.

Patient Waiting Lists

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) total figures on patient waiting lists; (ii) when waiting list figures have and have not met the 13 weeks target for outpatient, and 21 weeks target for inpatient treatment, in Ulster Hospital in 2008. (AQW 5679/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department collects waiting time data by Health and Social Care Trust, not by hospital. Information is, however, available for the former Ulster Community and Hospital Trust. The (i) total number of patients waiting for inpatient treatment and a first outpatient appointment, and (ii) the number waiting over the 21 week inpatient and 13 week outpatient targets, at the former Ulster Community and Hospital Trust¹, for the four quarters of 2008, is shown in the table below.

Quarter Ending	Total Number of Patients Waiting for Inpatient Treatment	Number of Patients Waiting longer than 21 weeks	Total Number of Patients Waiting for a First Outpatient Appointment	Number of Patients Waiting longer than 13 weeks
31-Mar-2008	2,899	0	7,465	0
30-Jun-2008	3,006	0	8,655	0
30-Sep-2008	2,961	0	9,047	1
31-Dec-2008	3,252	0	8,959	1

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset and Departmental Return CH3.

1 – The former Ulster Community and Hospital Trust included the Ulster, Bangor and Ards hospitals.

Private Clinics

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to account for the circumstances where outpatients are referred to private clinics to meet the target of 13 weeks for an initial appointment, at the Ulster Hospital. (AQW 5680/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At the beginning of the financial year each Trust undertakes a service capacity and demand exercise to ensure that all patients are assessed within 13 weeks. Where it is clear that demand is greater than in-house capacity the Trust engages with the independent sector to provide patient services as required.

Private Clinics

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the private clinics/practices that are used for referrals from the Ulster Hospital. (AQW 5681/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In this financial year (08/09), the South Eastern Trust which operates not only the Ulster hospital but also Lagan Valley and Downe hospitals has procured services from the following independent sector providers:

- McIndoe Surgical Centre, East Grinstead, Sussex
- Fitzwilliam Clinic, Belfast
- 3fivetwo Healthcare Ltd, Belfast
- North West Independent Clinic, Ballykelly

The Trust also has an independent sector contract with a Consultant Cardiologist from Great Britain who carries out local clinics on its behalf.

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5693/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: One of the key actions taken by all NICS Departments, including DHSSPS, to reduce the amount of paper documentation was to introduce an Electronic Document and Records Management System (TRIM). TRIM provides a single electronic repository for the storage of documents and records and has reduced the amount of paper documentation created within the Department. From May 2007 the electronic record became the official record for the Department. In tandem, DHSSPS have actively encouraged staff to reduce the amount of paper they create and have provided guidance to staff to enable them to do this. Within the HSC there are currently a number of initiatives aimed at moving away from the paper record and providing more effective access to information needed to deliver safe, efficient, high quality care to patients and clients.

In relation to the usage of email, DHSSPS staff have been instructed that email should be the normal channel for communications within the NICS and the preferred channel for communications externally. Work to enhance the use of electronic messaging systems within the Health and Social Care sector is on-going.

Diabetes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many new cases of diabetes have been diagnosed in the last 12 months. (AQW 5712/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of new cases of diabetes that have been diagnosed in the last 12 months is not available.

Generic Medicines

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what rights patients have to remain on current medication and not be changed to generic medicines. (AQW 5736/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's policy position is that medicines should be prescribed generically instead of by their branded name in all appropriate circumstances. The use of generic medicines in favour of branded equivalents is a central strand in the Department's overall strategy aimed at promoting improved quality in medicines management for all patients through cost effective prescribing.

However, it is for the clinician, in consultation with their patient, to decide on an appropriate course of treatment for the patient and to prescribe the medication to support that treatment.

Respite Care Provisions

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what respite care provisions are currently in place for parents, in the North Down Area, whose children are seriously ill. (AQW 5737/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Within the North Down area of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust a number of respite services are currently available for parents whose children are seriously ill. This includes domiciliary support via Community Children's Nurses for parents of children who are seriously ill; access to the Hospice at Home service; and parents can also go to the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice and spend time there with their child, supported by staff in the unit.

Ravara House Day Centre, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any staff shortages at Ravara House Day Centre, Bangor. (AQW 5738/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently three staffing vacancies at Ravarra House Day Centre, one day care worker post and two care assistant posts. The two care assistant posts have already been advertised and the day care worker post will be advertised in the near future. The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are managing the vacancies by the use of Agency staff.

MENCAP: Bangor Office

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if Mencap's Bangor office is in danger of closure due to lack of funding. (AQW 5739/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust continue to contract with Mencap for care services in the Bangor area and there has been no change to the contract or funding to date. Mencap is a United Kingdom Charity and responsibility for operational matters rests with the charity.

Respite Beds

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust intends to buy a respite bed at the new Blair Lodge complex in Bangor. (AQW 5740/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have been advised by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust that whilst they are working closely with Blair Lodge to commission new and extended residential services they do not intend to commission a respite bed within current provision which is targeted at long stay care. The Trust will however be considering whether a transitions bed is required to facilitate phased admissions for those who have been assessed as requiring a longer term placement in the near future.

Loughview Surgery

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 4301/09, the timescale for a decision on Global Sum and Correction Factor payments for Loughview Surgery. (AQW 5750/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has written to Loughview Surgery to inform them of the outcome of the decision in relation to the practice's request for payment assistance.

Road Rescue Team

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 5439/09, if places in the new Road Rescue Team were offered to serving officers with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service who then declined the offers. (AQW 5756/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I can confirm that places were offered to current Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service personnel who then declined to take up appointment.

Family Support Workers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to (i) detail the proposal to cut eight family support workers to one, on a 16 hour weekly contract, in the Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social Services Trust area; and (ii) for his assessment of whether services will be adversely affected. (AQW 5815/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There is no proposal in the Southern Health & Social Care Trust (previously Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social Care Trust) to "cut eight family support workers to one, on a 16 hour weekly contract, in the Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social Services Trust area". The Southern Trust has family support workers in each of its three localities which are based on Legacy Trust areas. These are managed and supervised under differing arrangements. The Trust is currently reviewing its family support services including the management and deployment of these staff.

As part of this work Trust management have began meetings with family support staff.

The proposals should give efficiencies in management costs. There will be no reduction in the amount of family support provided in the Trust. The aim will be to provide an equitable consistent service across the Trust.

Family Support Workers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many families in the Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social Services Trust area are receiving assistance from a family support worker. (AQW 5816/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As at 3 March 2009, 29 families (73 children), within the Armagh and Dungannon area, were receiving assistance from a family support worker.

Age for Buying Alcohol

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he would consider raising the age for buying alcohol from 18 to 21 years old. (AQW 5903/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Addressing alcohol misuse, particularly binge and young people's drinking, is a key priority for my Department. To this end, my Department has led in the development of a Young People's Drinking Action Plan that seeks to co-ordinate action to tackle this issue. This plan is currently with my Executive colleagues for consideration.

The Young People's Drinking Action Plan does not currently propose to raise the age of sale of alcohol to 21, and responsibility for licensing legislation does not rest with my Department. However, this is an issue that may need to be considered further within Northern Ireland.

Review of Public Administration

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 5092/09, how many people taking up voluntary redundancy were aged 58 and over. (AQW 5904/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: 133 HSC staff who have taken RPA related voluntary redundancy were aged 58 and over.

Alcohol in Supermarkets

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if consideration is being given to banning the sale of alcohol in supermarkets. (AQW 5948/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am concerned about the availability of alcohol and the impact that alcohol misuse is having on Northern Ireland. However liquor licensing legislation, which regulates the sale of alcohol, is the responsibility of the Department of Social Development.

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are provided at the Urgent Care and Treatment Centre at Tyrone County Hospital in Omagh. (AQW 5971/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Centre provides a full range of minor injury services including treatment for cuts, bruises, sprains or minor fractures to limbs and treatment to walk-in patients. Care is delivered by experienced Emergency Nurse Practitioners with support from a team of general emergency department nurses and daily support from senior medical staff.

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many; and (ii) what the total cost was of, glossy documents on Tyrone County Hospital's transition of Acute Medical Services produced by the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 5972/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised that the Western Health and Social Care Trust has, to date, produced 60,000 copies of leaflets to inform the communities in Fermanagh and Tyrone on the transition of acute medical services at the Tyrone County Hospital.

The total cost of printing and distribution was £8420.

Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients admitted to Altnagelvin Hospital since 1 January 2009, have had to spend time on a trolley until a bed became available. (AQW 5974/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the form requested.

Erne Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients admitted to Erne Hospital since 1 January 2009, have had to spend time on a trolley until a bed became available. (AQW 5976/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the form requested.

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm if the 40 rehabilitation beds and the 22 palliative care beds are in place in Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh, and how many staff, broken down by grade, there are to deliver the service. (AQW 6016/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Health and Social Care Trust advises that it plans to provide 30 rehabilitation beds and 10 palliative care beds at the Tyrone County Hospital. A further 22 beds will be provided to support day procedures. This information was provided in the information leaflet 'Tyrone County Hospital: Transition of Acute Medical Services' recently distributed to households across Fermanagh and Tyrone.

I am advised that the rehabilitation ward is currently staffed for 17 beds with 23 whole time nursing staff broken down as follows - 1 band 7, 1 band 6, 13 band 5, 3 band 3 and 5 band 2 nurses. The Trust will be moving as soon as possible to the full complement of 30 beds with almost 40 whole time nursing staff.

I am also advised that the 10 palliative care beds are currently staffed by a complement of 22 nursing staff, comprising 1 band 7, 1 band 6, 14 band 5, and 6 band 2 staff.

The Trust is in the final stages of agreeing the numbers of Allied Health Professionals required to support these developments.

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why inpatient services for acutely ill patients was not sustained at the Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh. (AQW 6017/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer you to the answer I gave in AQW 4362/09 on 2 February.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the second Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service appliance is still in Portstewart or was it removed, prior to his decision on its future. (AQW 6094/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The second appliance is still located in Portstewart.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline (i) any public health issues and (ii) any potential health issues related to the proposed runway extension at George Best Belfast City Airport. (AQW 6123/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I believe it is imperative that any decisions on the proposed runway extension at George Best Belfast City Airport are taken in the context of a proper understanding of the wider impacts that such a development may have on the local communities most affected. I share the concerns that have been raised by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board with Planning Service in relation to potential health impacts and public safety issues. These concerns relate to health impacts that may arise from increased levels of noise and air pollution, and public safety concerns associated with the proximity of significant residential development and major industrial sites and the possibility of bird strikes. In particular, I support the Board's call for a Health Impact Assessment to be carried out in relation to these proposals.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Northern Ireland Water

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development how much water was lost through system leakage in the Craigavon Borough and Banbridge District Council areas in each of the past three years; and what steps have been taken to improve this situation. (AQW 5222/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it assesses the levels of water lost through the water distribution network by geographical water supply areas which differ from council areas. However, the water supply areas that relate most closely to the council areas for which the information is requested are Craigavon and Newry. The leakage levels for these areas, in each of the past 3 years, are set out in the table below.

Water Supply Area	Leakage (million litres)		
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Craigavon	7063	6121	5636
Newry	6176	4873	4880

NIW continues to be engaged in a major programme of leakage control to reduce overall losses through leakage detection and repair. During the past three years almost £14 million has been invested in the Craigavon and Banbridge council areas on watermains rehabilitation. One of the objectives of the watermain rehabilitation programme is to reduce leakage.

M2 Improvement Scheme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to remove any paramilitary or sectarian items or displays on his Department's property along the boundary of the M2 prior to the completion of the expansion scheme. (AQW 5547/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has signed up to a multi agency protocol about the display of flags in public areas, which was launched in April 2005. The aim of the protocol is to provide a pro-active approach, with the support of communities and their representatives, to address the removal of flags from arterial routes, town centres and from particular locations, such as interface areas, or near schools, hospitals and churches.

The protocol recognises that an effective resolution to the flags issue is more likely to be achieved through the co-operation of local communities. It will require widespread community support to enable the partnership established by the protocol to be effective. The agency that is in the most effective position to consult, negotiate or resolve the situation will take the lead.

Roads Service has referred this issue to the PSNI, who are considered best placed to lead, on this occasion.

Under the protocol, Roads Service will facilitate the removal of flags as necessary by providing access equipment and resources to remove unwanted flags, but only on the provision that prior agreement for their removal has been established.

M2 Improvement Scheme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how many trees will be planted when the landscaping of the M2 is complete; and how many trees were removed during the construction process.

(AQW 5548/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that some 44,000 trees and shrubs will be planted as part of the M2 improvement scheme. Roads Service does not hold records of the number of trees removed during the course of this scheme. However, every effort was made to keep the number of trees removed to a minimum.

MV Canna Ferry

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Regional Development how many days in each month since July 2008 the (a) MV Canna ferry and (b) the relevant passenger-only ferry have been out of service on the Ballycastle-Rathlin line; and to detail the reasons.

(AQW 5553/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The MV Canna was not out of service for any full day of sailings during the months of July and August 2008. It was out of service from 29 September to 3 October 2008 during its annual overhaul. An alternative roll-on/roll-off vessel was used during this period to provide the service. The MV Canna was out of service for two days during October, two days during November 2008 and one day during January 2009 due to adverse weather conditions.

The relevant passenger-only ferry service did not miss any full day of sailings during July and August 2008. On days during these months when the vessel was unavailable due to mechanical problems, sailings were provided by a relief vessel. The passenger-only ferry was out of service on one day during September for planned maintenance and two days in November due to mechanical problems. A relief vessel was not provided on these days but the MV Canna was available for passengers.

The passenger only ferry was out of service for two days during October, one day during November, one day during December 2008 and five days during January 2009 due to adverse weather conditions.

Traffic Calming Schemes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many traffic calming schemes are in place in North Down.

(AQW 5568/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are 33 traffic calming schemes, and four school travel and safety projects, in North Down.

Free Public Transport

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development the annual monetary value of free public transportation for people over 60.

(AQW 5592/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have interpreted the term 'value' to equate to the cost of the scheme – that is reimbursement to transport operators.

Before 1 October 2008, free public transport was available to people aged 65 and over. On 1 October 2008, the scheme was extended to cover people aged 60-64.

The annual cost of providing free public transport to these age groups over the last 3 financial years, is detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Cost of Travel
2006/2007	£11.9 m – for age 65+
2007/2008	£13.5 m – for age 65+
2008/2009*	£18.2 m – for age 65+ ; and for age 60-64 from 1 October 2008

The costs above do not include administration.

* The cost for 2008/2009 is projected, as actual costs are only available up to the end of January 2009.

Salt Boxes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many, and the location of salt boxes provided in the North Down area. (AQW 5611/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Road Service has provided 145 salt boxes within the North Down area, and they are located as follows:

Location	
Cultra Slip Road, Belfast bound to Folk Museum;	Clandeboyne Way, opposite S/L No.6;
Abbots Wood, near junction Demesne Road;	Rostrevor Drive, opposite name plate;
Strathearn Court at Street Light (S/L) No. 1;	Moyne Road, Conlig, junction Vermont Avenue at S/L No.5;
Cedar Grove, opposite S/L No.4;	Bangor Road, Conlig, at top of Green Road;
The Green at S/L No.1;	Meadowvale, opposite No.15;
Inver Park, opposite S/L No.4;	Meadowvale Park at S/L No.2;
Demense Park at No.15, at wall;	Beechfield junction Main Street, Conlig;
Demense Avenue at No.15;	Tower Road/Main Street, Conlig;
Elizabeth Road, opposite S/L No.3;	Forrest Hill/Main Street, Conlig;
Ardmore Road at S/L No.6;	Forrest Hill, Conlig, at S/L 10 at side of No. 74;
Ardmore Heights, opposite No.9 at S/L No.6;	Westmorland Crescent, side of No.2 (on grass);
Ardmore Road, past No.39, near radius;	Westmorland Crescent at S/L No.6;
Glenview Road No.7;	Harehills Drive, junction Westmorland Crescent;
Glenview Avenue opposite S/L No.3;	Silverstream Crescent at No.61 (in laneway);
Ardmore Park at No.3;	Silverstream Drive at No.18 (at wall);
Brook Street at Clinic;	Silverstream Avenue at No 31;
Windsor Avenue at No.12;	Manor Park/Manor Avenue;
Victoria Road at end of grass verge;	Hillcrest Walk, outside No 9;
Tudor Oaks, No 3, at wall;	Bangor Police Station/Castle Park Avenue;
Old Quay Court, No.4;	King Street at sign no. 4;
Kintyre Avenue at S/L No.5;	Tennyson Avenue at S/L No.1;
Princess Gardens at S/L No.15;	Princetown Road at Junction of Seacourt Lane;
Princess Park, opposite No.9;	Railwayview Street, No.54;

Location	
Torgrange at No.10, near S/L;	Windsor Gardens at No.2-4;
Invergourie Road at Stathleven Park name plate;	Rugby Avenue, opposite No.60;
Brown's Brae, opposite No.5;	Donard Avenue, No.44 (upper side of BT pole);
The Spires at S/L No 3;	Donard Avenue, No.25;
Woodcroft Park, outside No 3;	Maryville Park, opposite No.22;
Creighton's Green Road, before speed limit sign 1/3 on bend;	Bryansglen West, No.7 (lower side of S/L);
Creighton's Green Road, down from No.15 on bend;	Bryansglen Avenue, No.21;
Creighton's Green Road, down from No.41 on RHS at field gate;	Grange Avenue, No.5;
Carlston Avenue, No.1/Whinney Hill;	Downshire Road, upper side of Maxwell Road at S/L No.14;
Martello Park, No.10;	Downshire Road, lower side of Maxwell Road at S/L 15;
Martello Park, No 28;	Clelland Park South at No.12;
Larch Hill ,No.1 (half way up hill);	Alexandra Gardens, SL 6;
Larch Hill Drive, No.3;	Church Avenue, junction Church Drive at wall;
Ballygrainey Road, No.3 (at wall near A2);	Abbey Park, No.49/51;
Ballygrainey Road, opposite No.15;	Fairfield Road, at junction Dellmont Road side of no. 50;
Station Road, Craigavad, junction A2 opposite S/L 157;	Fairfield Road, opposite No.103 on verge;
Dalchoolin at No 19;	Dellmont Drive at S/L 3 outside No 10;
Cultra Avenue, opposite No.41;	Sunningdale Park No.7;
Tarawood at S/L No.1;	Glenanne Park, opposite Sunningdale Court between hedges;
Carney Hill, near junction A2;	Stanley Road, opposite No.9;
Quarry Court, past S/L No.2;	Seaforth Road, opposite S/L No.3;
Grey Point at S/L No.3;	Grove Park, junction Bellevue;
Ballymoney Road, near Whinney Hill;	Baylands Fourth Avenue at No.4;
Ballymullen Road, opposite No.40;	Beverly Hills, junction Beverly Drive at white wall;
Ballymullen Road at No.6;	Beverly Gardens, junction Beverly Drive opposite No.34;
Meadow Way, junction near Ballymullan Road;	Conniston Drive, beside S/L No.2;
Burnside Park, at No.2 (at wall/Meadow Way);	Chippendale Vale, junction Chippendale Park;
Meadow Park North, No 11 at mini pillar;	Windmill Lane at S/L No.1;
Carolsteen Park at No.1A junction Bridge Road;	Portview/Ballymacconnell Road;
Killaire Avenue, opposite S/L No.8 (at fence);	Balloo Crescent, opposite Howells;
Ailsa Park at S/L No.3;	Cranley Road, opposite No.4;
Ravelstone Avenue, junction Killaire Park (at wall);	Cranley Grove, S/L No. 4;
Killaire Avenue at No 5;	Cranley Hill, No.2;
Station Road, opposite S/L No.15 (on grass) below No.68 on waste ground;	Irvine Park, outside No 38;
Station View at S/L No.1;	Hanover Chase at wide footpath, beside No 7 Hanover Court;
Wandsworth Park, junction Wandsworth Road;	Beaumont Drive, outside No 26;
Lyndhurst Avenue, opposite No.2;	Malvern Heights at S/L No. 28, at bottom of Hill;
Kilieen Avenue at S/L No.9;	The Brae junction Ard-Na-Ree;
Innisfayle Drive opposite S/L No.4;	Springwell Drive, beside S/L No.3;

Location	
Jubilee Drive, near S/L No.15;	Springwell Drive, junction The Brae, opposite No.7;
Springhill Heights, No.10;	Springwell Crescent, No.58 at BT pole;
Farm Grove, junction Springhill Avenue;	Springwell Crescent, opposite S/L 4 at rose bed;
Ballyquinton Gardens, side of No.18 at BT pole;	The Brae, at wall opposite Hillfoot;
Kilclief Gardens at S/L No.103;	Glenganagh Park at S/L 3;
Craigboy Mews at telegraph pole;	Towerview at S/L No.4;
Balligan Gardens at S/L No.122;	Ivyhill Crescent at S/L No. 2;
Birch Park, junction Birch Drive;	Ballymacormick Park at name plate;
Clandeboy Way at S/L No.1;	Towerview Avenue, opposite No.101; and
Monea Way at S/L No.8 (end of wall);	Sherwood Road at S/L No.6;
Rostrevor Way at No.12;	

Salt Boxes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria for the location of salt boxes. (AQW 5612/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it will consider the provision of a salt bin on roads adopted/maintained by them, which do not qualify for inclusion onto the gritting schedule, when the following criteria are met:-

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

In addition, new salt bins will not be provided unless requested by a member of the public, who also agrees to spread the salt provided.

Where salt bins are provided they shall:-

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

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

Rathlin Island Ferry

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development why a public service obligation was not in place before the new Rathlin Island ferry contract was signed. (AQW 5622/09)

Minister for Regional Development: A public service obligation, as defined in Article 2 (4) and Article 4 (2) of Regulation (EEC) No. 3577/92, is not required for the Rathlin Island ferry service contract. Moreover, the contract that has been put in place for this public service was considered to be more appropriate in that it places a wide range of obligations on the operator, including conditions concerning the quality of service which could not form part of a public service obligation. In any event, the Commission guidance COM (2006) 196 makes clear that the service would be exempt from a requirement for notification because of the scale of operations.

Rathlin Island Ferry

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has issued a written apology to the former Rathlin Island ferry staff member whose identity was revealed following his ‘whistle blowing’ allegations. (AQW 5623/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In correspondence following the publication of the Investigation into the Procurement of the Rathlin Ferry Service contract my officials acknowledged in writing the difficulty that the process had caused for those who considered themselves to be “whistleblowers”. The investigation report dealt fully with the concerns expressed by the former staff member.

Rathlin Island Ferry

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department’s subsidy payments for the Rathlin Island ferry service complied with European Union state aid regulations. (AQW 5624/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The contract utilised and the payments made to enable operation of the Ballycastle to Rathlin Island ferry service are compliant with EU state aid law.

Rathlin Island Ferry

Mr J Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development if a public service obligation is currently in place for the Rathlin Island ferry route. (AQW 5625/09)

Minister for Regional Development: A public service obligation, as defined in Article 2 (4) and Article 4 (2) of Regulation (EEC) No. 3577/92, is not required and is not in place in relation to the Ballycastle to Rathlin Island ferry service.

Tourist Signage

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development in what circumstances tourist signage will be provided to tourist attractions or amenities in the countryside from locations other than the nearest A or B class junction. (AQW 5668/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department’s Roads Service has advised that the main purpose of tourist signs is to guide visitors to their desired destinations, via the most appropriate route, at the latter stages of their journey, particularly where destinations are hard to find. As with all other direction signs, tourist signs are an aid to safe and efficient navigation, to complement, but not replace, pre-planning of the journey and the use of verbal instructions, maps and road atlases.

One of the fundamental principles behind Road Service’s tourist signing policy is that tourist signing should supplement, rather than duplicate, information on other direction signs already provided for the guidance of all traffic. Consequently tourist signing is generally only provided from the nearest ‘A’ or ‘B’ route, unless there are very good traffic management or road safety reasons for signing from further away.

Tourist Signage

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development if any review is planned in relation to the policy on road signage for tourist attractions. (AQW 5669/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department’s Roads Service facilitates the provision of tourist traffic signs using its policy “Tourist Signing in Northern Ireland”. The policy was published in April 2004 and was jointly developed and agreed with the Tourist Board.

Under the policy, Roads Service agrees and implements local tourist signing plans. These plans are drawn up by local Councils in conjunction with the Tourist Board.

The policy provides a consistent framework for the provision of tourist signing, and I can advise the Member that there are no plans to review it, at present.

Trains on the Larne Line

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how old is the Larne line train that left Carrickfergus at 8:05am on Thursday 5 February 2009. (AQW 5682/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The train is 31 years old.

Average Age of Trains

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development the average age of all trains on each railway route. (AQW 5683/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have informed me that the average age of trains on the Larne line is 24 years. The average age of trains on the Bangor, Portadown/Newry and Londonderry lines is 3.5 years.

Trains on the Larne Line

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what safety checks are carried out on trains on the Larne Line, and how often they are carried out. (AQW 5684/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The following safety checks are carried out on Class 450 and Class 80 trains which operate mainly on the Larne Line:

- Operational checks: at every station/halt, before departure the conductor is required to check that all platform workings are complete and doors are closed;
- Pre-service daily checks: at the start of service each day, train crew check and sign off the brake system, the train emergency system, doors, and the door central locking system;
- Fuel checks: when the train is fuelled there is a visual inspection of the train. Any issues logged during the day are attended to;
- Every night a train environmental check is carried out, including toilet function, condition of doors, vestibules, floors, and seats;
- Every 20 operating days or three weeks, a comprehensive engineering inspection is carried out, incorporating detailed condition analysis of the above systems.

Water Pressure

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how many complaints have been received about poor water pressure, broken down by constituency or council area. (AQW 5685/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that complaints are not recorded by parliamentary constituency or council area and it is not possible to provide the breakdown sought. However, since its establishment on 1 April 2007, NIW has received a total of 12,672 complaints from customers regarding poor water pressure.

Train Passengers

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development why passengers were asked to get off the train at Yorkgate on Thursday 5 February 2009. (AQW 5686/09)

Minister for Regional Development: An incident occurred on one of the recently refurbished Class 80 slam door trains on the 07:55 Whitehead to Belfast service. The incident involved a carriage door that had not been properly closed prior to departure and as a result it came into contact with a bridge and was badly damaged. Although the train was fitted with a central door locking mechanism, this requires the door to be properly closed if it is to be effective. There were no injuries and passengers were moved into another carriage by the conductor, de-trained at York Road and directed onto another train. Translink has advised me that all train conductors have been briefed again fully on the correct station dispatch procedures which will ensure doors are securely closed.

Increasing the Usage of E-mail

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to reduce the amount of paper documentation and to increase the usage of e-mail. (AQW 5692/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department promotes the use of electronic working through the use of e-mails for internal correspondence as standard and for external correspondence where appropriate. The Department's internet site and intranet are used for electronic publication and the TRIM electronic document and record management system is the mainstay for the management and storage of records. In addition my Department has an on-going project running in its Clarence Court headquarters the aim of which is to reduce the quantity of paper copy held. This exercise complies with guidance set by the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland (PRONI).

My Department is on occasions required to produce and maintain paper copy, for example for legal reasons or to cater for those without access to IT facilities.

Gritting Roads

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development to list all the roads on the gritting schedule in the Lagan Valley constituency. (AQW 5721/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of my Department's Roads Service gritting schedule for roads in the Lagan Valley constituency area are set out in the table below.

ROADS SERVICE GRITTING SCHEDULE – LAGAN VALLEY CONSTITUENCY

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Aghnarisk Road	Culcavy Road	Kesh Road
Antrim Road	Bentrim Road roundabout	Ballymacash Road
Antrim Road roundabout	Bentrim Road	Bentrim Road
Antrim Street	Bow Street	Bentrim Road roundabout
Avonmore Park	Drumbeg Drive	Warren Gardens
Bachelor's Walk	Antrim Street	Railway Street
Ballinderry Road	Longstone Street	Moira Road
Ballinderry Road	Soldierstown Road	Lower Ballinderry Road
Ballycoan Road	Hillhall Road	Mealough Road
Ballylesson Road	Milltown Road	Purdyburn Hill
Ballylesson Road	Purdyburn Hill	Drumbeg Road
Ballymacash Road	Pond Park Road	Prince William Road
Ballymacash Road	Prince William Road	Rathvarna Drive
Ballymacash Road	Rathvarna Drive	Nettlehill Road
Ballynahinch Road	Main St, Saintfield	Carryduff Road
Ballynahinch Road	Saintfield Road	Mini roundabout, Ballynahinch
Ballynahinch Road	Kensington Park	Comber Road
Ballynahinch Road	Young Street	Kensington Park
Ballynahinch Road	Hillsborough Road, Dromara	Dromore Rd, Ballynahinch
Ballyskeagh Road	Drumbeg Road	Belfast Road
Barrack Street	Church Lane	Smithfield Street

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Belfast Road	Seymour Street	Black's Road
Belfast Road	Black's Road	Finaghy Road North
Belfast Road	A26 Moira Road	Bridge Road
Belfast Road, Hillsborough	Dromore Road	Dromara Road
Belsize Road	Belfast Road	Milltown Road
Benson Street	Causeway End Road	Bentrim Road
Bentrim Road	Benson Street	Bentrim Road roundabout
Bentrim Road	Bentrim Road roundabout	Antrim Road roundabout
Lisburn Area		
Bentrim Road roundabout	Prince William Road	Prince William Road
Blaris Road	Hillsborough Road	Halfdown Road
Bow Street	Market Place	Antrim Street
Bridge Street	Queens Road	Market Square
Bridge Street, Banbridge	Church Square, Banbridge	Newry Street
Brokerstown Road	Glenavy Road	Knockmore Road
Carnreagh	Lisburn Road	Carnreagh Road
Carnreagh Road	Carnreagh	Ballynahinch Road
Castle Street	Railway Street	Seymour Street
Causeway End Road	Ballinderry Road	Causeway End Park
Chapel Hill	Theipval Road	Bow Street
Church Lane	Hillsborough Road	Barrack Street
Church Street	Banbridge Road	Market Square
Clonevin Park	Magherlave Road	Antrim Road
Comber Road	Ballynahinch Road	Carryduff Road
Comber Road	Upper Ballynahinch Road	Ballynahinch Road
Creighton Road	Old Golf Course Road	Stewartstown Road roundabout
Cross Lane	Ballinderry Road	Moira Road
Crumlin Road	Lower Ballinderry Road	Chapel Road
Culcavy Road	Lisburn Road	Harry's Road
Culcavy Road	Aghnarisk Road	Blaris Road
Derriaghy Road	Belsize Road	McKinstrey Road
Derriaghy Road	Magheralave Road	Pond Park Road
Dromara Road	Dromare Road	Ballynahinch Road
Dromore Road	High Street, Ballynahinch	Mossvale Road, Dromore
Drumbeg Drive	Killany Avenue	Warren Gardens
Drumbeg Road	Ballylesson Road	Upper Malone Road
Drumbo Road	Front Road	Hillhall Road
Duncans Road	Antrim Road	Kirkwoods Road

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Dundrod Drive	Ballinderry Road	Killany Avenue
Edenturchar Road	Crumlin Road	Glen Road
Fort Road	Ballylesson Road	Purdyburn Hill
Front Road	Mealough Road	Drumbo Road
Front Road	Mealough Road	Comber Road
Glebe Road	Ballynahinch Rd, Annahilt	Ballykeel Road
Glen Road, Maghaberry	Moira Road	Maghaberry Road
Glenavy Road	Brokerstown Road	Moira Road
Governor's Road	Hillsborough Road	Longstone Street
Governor's Road roundabout	Longstone Street	Longstone Street
Gravelhill Road	Moira Road	Dunygarton Road
Halftown Road	Blaris Road	Moira Road
Harmony Hill	Belsize Road	Moss Road
Harry's Road	Culcavy Road	Hillsborough Road
Hill Street	Laganbank Road	Linenhall Street
Hill Street (southbound)	Laganbank Road	End
Hillhall Road	Drumbeg Road	Mercer Street
Lisburn Area		
Hillsborough Road	Sprucefield Depot	Market Place
Hillsborough Road	Thornbrook Road	Innisloughlin Road
Hillsborough roundabout	Hillsborough Road	Hillsborough Road
Hospital Road	Purdysburn Hill	Hospital entrance
Hospital Road	Hospital entrance	Milltown Road roundabout
Jersey Avenue	Belsize Road	Lester Avenue
Kensington Park	Ballynahinch Road	Saintfield Road
Kesh Road	Dunygarton Road	Aghnatrisk Road
Killany Avenue	Dundrod Drive	Drumbeg Drive
Kirkwoods Road	Duncans Road	Belsize Road
Knockmore Road	Brokerstown Road	Moira Road
Knockmore Road	Brokerstown Road	Prince William Road
Laganbank junction	Laganbank Road	Queens Road
Laganbank Road	Hillsborough Road	Hill Street
Laganbank Road	Union Bridge	Hill Street
Lany Road	Innisloughlin Road	St James' Road
Laurelhill Road	Prince William Road	Ballymacash Road
Lester Avenue	Jersey Avenue	Magherlave Park East
Linenhall Street	Market Street	Bridge Street
Lisburn Road	Hillsborough Road	Ballynahinch Road

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Lisburn Road, Ballynahinch	Riverside Road	Main Street, Hillsborough
Lisnabilla Road	Moira Road	Moira Road
Lissue Road	Moira Road	Ballinderry Road
Longstone Street	Governor's Road	Warren Gardens
Longstone Street	Governor's Road roundabout	Ballinderry Road
Low Road	Queen's Road	Belfast Road
Lower Ballinderry Road	Moira Road	Crumlin Road
Maghaberry Road	Glen Road	Moira Road
Magheraconluce Road	Ballynahinch Road	Ballynahinch Road
Magherlave Park East	Lester Avenue	Magherlave Road
Magherlave Road	Bachelor's Walk	Clonevin Park
Magherlave Road	Magherlave Park East	Thiepval Barracks
Magherlave Road	Magherlave Park East	Clonevin Park
Main St, Hillsborough	Ballynahinch Road	Hillsborough Road
Market Place	Smithfield Street	Bow Street
Market Square	All sides of Linen Centre	Market Street
Market Street	Market Square	Smithfield Street
McKinstrey Road	Belfast Road	The Cutts
McKinstrey Road	Derriaghy Road	Stewartstown Road roundabout
Meadow Road	Moira Road	Thornbrook Road
Mealough Road	Saintfield Road	Front Road
Milltown Road	Belsize Road	Magheralave Road
Moira Road	Knockmore Road	Lissue Road
Moira Road	Ballinderry Road	Knockmore Road
Moira Road	Halftown Road	M1 roundabout, Moira
Moira Road	St James' Road	Hillsborough Road
Lisburn Area		
Moira Road	Nutts Corner Roundabout	M1 roundabout, Moira
Moss Road	Skyline Drive	Belsize Road
Moss Road	Belfast Road	Skyline Drive
Mullaglass Road	Barnfield Road	Sheepwalk Road
Nettlehill Road	Ballymacash Road	Prince William Road
Nettlehill Road	Pond Park Road	Prince William Road
Pond Park Road	Derriaghy Road	Ballymacash Road
Pond Park Road	Nettlehill Road	Mullaghglass Road
Prince William Road	Nettlehill Road	Bentrim Road roundabout
Purdyburn Hill	Ballylesson Road	Hospital Road
Queens Road	Union Bridge	Seymour Street

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Railway Street	Bachelor's Walk	Castle Street
Rathvarna Drive	Ballymacash Road	Ballymacash Road
Ravarnet Road	Young Street	Ravarnet Road
Ravarnet Road	Ravarnet Road	Hillsborough Road
Ravarnet Road	A1 Hillsborough Road	Comber Road
River Road	Belfast Road	Ballyskeagh Road
Saintfield Road	M1 Junction 6	Hillsborough Rd, B'hinch
Saintfield Road	Carryduff Road	Saintfield Road
Saintfield Road	Kensington Park	Sloan Street
Seymour Street	Castle Street	Wallace Avenue
Seymour Street	Wallace Avenue	Belfast Road
Sheepwalk Road	Mullaglass Road	Glenavy Road
Skyline Drive	Belsize Road	Moss Road
Sloan Street	Mercer Street	Young Street
Smithfield Street	Market Street	Market Place
Soldierstown Road	Moira Road	Ballinderry Road, Aghalee
The Cutts	McKinstrey Road	Belfast Road
Theipval Road	Bentrim Road roundabout	Chapel Hill
Trench Road	Aghnatrisk Road	Moira Road
Union Bridge	Queens Road	Young Street
Upper Ballynahinch Road	Ballykeel Road	Comber Road
Wallace Avenue	Seymour Street	Railway Street
Warren Gardens	Longstone Street	Warren Park
Warren Gardens	Drumbeg Drive	Warren Park
Warren Park	Warren Gardens	Hillsborough Road
Whitemountain Road	Sheepwalk Road	Pond Park Road
Wilmar Road eastbound	Belsize Road	McKinstrey Road
Wilmar Road roundabout	McKinstrey Road	McKinstrey Road
Wilmar Road westbound	McKinstrey Road	Belsize Road
Young Street	Union Bridge	Ballynahinch Road
Total length in Lisburn Section		303 km
Banbridge Area		
B7 Rathfriland Road	Constituency boundary	Dromara
Kinallen Road	Howe Road	Banbridge Road
Tullyniskey Road	Gall Bog Road	Enagh Road
Banbridge Area		
Knockgorm Road	Gall Bog Road	Waringsford Road
Waringsford Road (C328)	All	

Lisburn Area		
Road Name	From	To
Dromore Road (B2),	All	
Ballynahinch Road (B2) (into Dromore)	Constituency boundary	Dromore
Mossvale Road	All	
Princess Street	All	
Market Square	All	
Bridge Street	All	
Meeting Street	All	
Banbridge Road	All	
Lower Quilly Road	All	
Church Street	All	
Maypole Hill	All	
Gallows Street	All	
Milebush Road	All	
Slip Road	All	
Hillsborough Road	All	
Mount Street	Market Square	Princess Street
Market Square	All	
Maypole Hill	All	
Barban Hill	All	
Rampart Street	All	
Meeting Street	All	
Pound Hill	Meeting Street	Wallace Park
Wallace Park	All	
Pound Hill	All	
Diamond Road	Dromore	Gall Bog Road
A1 Dual Carriageway	Constituency boundary	Backnamullagh Road
Total length in Banbridge Section		68 km
Craigavon Area		
Aghalee Road (part)	Constituency boundary	Aghalee
Lisburn Road, Moira (part)	Moira	M1 Roundabout
Meeting Street/Clarehill Road Moira	Main Street, Moira	Bottier Road
Lurgan Road, Moira	Constituency boundary	Moira
Backwood Road, Moira (part)	Main St, Moira	Langtry Lodge
Lurgan Road, Dromore	Constituency boundary	Dromore
Total length in Craigavon Section		11.3 km

Gritting Roads

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the amount spent on gritting roads in the Lagan Valley constituency in the last 12 months. (AQW 5722/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not maintain a record of specific salting costs by Electoral Area. However, I can advise that the annual cost of providing the complete service in the North is approximately £5 million.

Water Pressure

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions have been taken to improve water pressure. (AQW 5723/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it has invested approximately £110 million over the past five years on new or rehabilitated watermains as part of its Watermains Rehabilitation Programme. This programme of work has provided substantial benefits for customers including improved water pressure. The programme will continue for the next three years with further planned investment of £90 million.

Water Pipe System

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development how much water is lost through leakages in the pipe system. (AQW 5724/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is continuing to undertake a major programme of leakage detection and repair to reduce overall water losses. During the 2007/08 financial year the level of water lost through the water distribution network and customers' private supply pipes was almost 157 million litres per day.

NIW is currently reviewing the methodology for assessing the reported levels of water lost through the distribution system and this will be reflected in the figures from 2008/09 onwards.

Water Pipe System

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the percentage of the water system in North Down has asbestos lagging on the pipes and when these will be replaced. (AQW 5732/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that there are approximately 560 kilometres of water mains in the North Down area of which 17 kilometres (approximately 3%) are asbestos cement pipes.

It is important to note that asbestos cement pipes are fully approved for use within Britain and here in the North and they are only replaced if there is a specific problem at a location, for example where there is insufficient hydraulic capacity or the structural condition of the pipework makes it susceptible to frequent bursts. NIW is progressively replacing asbestos cement pipework through its Mains Rehabilitation Programme. In the period from July 2004 to December 2008, almost 70 km of asbestos cement pipe was replaced and it is envisaged that a further 40 km will be replaced in 2009 based on the same criteria.

NIW continuously assesses the condition and performance of asbestos cement mains within the Watermains Rehabilitation Programme and during daily operational activity.

Water Pipe System

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development the annual costs of leakages in the water pipe system. (AQW 5735/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that, based on the operating costs of producing water, the cost of water lost through the distribution network during the 2007/08 financial year equated to approximately £5 million.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail road traffic accidents involving Metro and Ulsterbus vehicles in East Antrim in 2008. (AQW 5759/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The number of road traffic accidents involving services operating from the depots at Larne and Newtownabbey, including services provided in Ballyclare and Larne was 157. The figure comprises all accidents including those where other vehicles were not involved. Fourteen of the accidents involved personal injuries reported at the time of the accident.

Clearing Litter

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on clearing litter in each of the last five years, and what responsibility his Department has for cleaning litter. (AQW 5764/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Article 7 of the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 places a duty on Councils to ensure that all roads within their area, with the exception of designated roads, are, so far as is practical, kept clear of litter. Responsibility for keeping designated roads clear of litter rests with my Department's Roads Service. Designated roads include the motorway network, the Ballymena Bypass and a section of the A8.

In the last five financial years Roads Service has spent the following on the sweeping and cleaning of designated roads:-

- 2003/04 - £116,000;
- 2004/05 - £137,000;
- 2005/06 - £119,000;
- 2006/07 - £100,000; and
- 2007/08 - £92,000.

A5 Upgrade

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the A5 upgrade will include a by-pass for the village of Newbuildings. (AQW 5773/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has confirmed that the A5 dualling project will include a by-pass for Newbuildings. It is not yet decided whether this stretch of road will be to the east or west of Newbuildings. It is anticipated that the preferred route will be announced this summer.

Upgraded A5 and A6 Routes

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to linking the upgraded A5 and A6 routes in the south east of Derry/Londonderry. (AQW 5774/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service commissioned consultants in June 2008 to examine existing proposals, by Roads Service and the National Roads Authority, to improve the primary road network approaching Derry and to consider how traffic, on these proposed roads, could best be distributed into and around the city.

This commission has been extended to consider, as a priority, the feasibility of a link between the A6 and A5. This work will consider if such a link has merit and to make recommendations. A report is expected by summer 2009.

Lagan Ferroviai

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if Lagan-Ferroviai has a permit to carry out quarrying operations on the roadside 300 yards south of Cloughogue roundabout adjacent to three housing developments and a primary school; and if so, what environmental protection does the permit ask them to observe; and (ii) what his Department is doing to monitor the situation in relation to air and other pollution.

(AQW 5836/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Lagan Ferroviai has undertaken extensive rock excavation by blasting south of Cloughogue roundabout, as an integral part of the construction of the A1 Beech Hill to Cloughogue dual carriageway scheme, in particular, for the new flyover type junction planned for this location. While the rock blasting operations south of Cloughogue are substantially complete, other construction processes are continuing at this location.

Road Service's contractor on site is required to employ current good practice in relation to these construction processes, to ensure all necessary and appropriate measures are implemented, to minimise the nuisance and disruption experienced at properties in the vicinity of the work.

Amey Lagan Roads Ltd, Roads Service's Design Build Finance and Operate Contractor, and Lagan Ferroviai, the Construction Contractor, attend regular Liaison Meetings with elected representatives, community representatives and Roads Service personnel. These meetings are facilitated by the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council, and any matters of concern arising from the construction works are considered. Amey Lagan Roads Ltd has also appointed Anne Monaghan as a Community Liaison Officer, to act as a point of contact, between individuals, communities and the contractor.

Roads Service cannot confirm that the Environmental Health Department of Newry and Mourne District Council have specifically undertaken air quality monitoring, at properties south of Cloughogue. However, Roads Service understand that such monitoring has been undertaken elsewhere on the site, and monitoring of the rock blasting is continuing.

I have arranged for my Roads Service officials to bring your enquiry directly to the Contractor's attention, asking that the matter be investigated without delay and appropriate action taken, if required. A report will be provided at the forthcoming Liaison Meeting, which is scheduled for Friday 13 March 2009.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Regional Development how many billing complaints Northern Ireland Water received since this was out-sourced.

(AQW 5840/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that a total of 3,865 complaints related to billing have been received since the contract with Crystal Alliance was established in October 2006.

Northern Ireland Water

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Regional Development how many staff in Northern Ireland Water are absent due to stress as a result of an increased work load.

(AQW 5841/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that at 5 March 2009, 11 staff were recorded as being absent from work due to stress related illnesses. There is no indication that any of the absences were attributable to increased workload.

Bramblewood Development

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answers to AQW 518/08 and AQW 2107/08, if (i) the remedial work in the Bramblewood development has taken place; (ii) the road and sewers have been adopted; and (iii) any legal action has been taken against the developer.

(AQW 5849/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it will liaise with the developer to ascertain the work still to be carried out to bring the streets and footway to adoption standard. If the developer is unwilling to complete the necessary works, Roads Service will have the works carried out, adopt the streets and recover the costs.

I have also been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the developer has completed the necessary remedial work to bring the sewers at Bramblewood up to an acceptable standard for adoption. Northern Ireland Water expects to adopt the sewers in the development at the end of August 2009, following the expiry of an agreed maintenance period.

I can advise that to date it has not been necessary to take legal action against the developer.

Roads Service

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to increase the resources available to Roads Service Southern Division for more effective maintenance of minor roads and prevent further deterioration. (AQW 5902/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service budget is allocated to its four Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators, tailored to each maintenance activity. Divisions use these indicators when apportioning across council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds

I can assure the member that the structural integrity of the roads network remains a high priority for Roads Service. You may be interested to note that the outcome of the Budget 2008-2011, means that Roads Service's total funding for structural maintenance in 2009/10 will increase to £71.8 million, compared with the initial allocation of £56.3 million in 2008/09.

Review of Public Administration

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development which functions will transfer from his Department to local government under the Review of Public Administration. (AQW 6018/09)

Minister for Regional Development: On 31 March 2008, Minister Foster, the then Minister of the Environment, announced that responsibility for the public realm aspects of local roads functions will transfer to local government. The local roads public realm responsibilities listed for transfer include Roads Service work in relation to:-

- streetscaping;
- town and city centre environmental improvements;
- grass cutting and weed spraying;
- gully emptying;
- street lighting;
- off-street parking;
- pedestrian permits;
- maintenance of amenity areas;
- alley-gating;
- permitting local events to be held on roads; and
- salting of footways.

The functions detailed above are currently being considered further by Central and Local Government, with a view to agreeing a defined list of functions that will transfer to Local Government in May 2011.

Public Transport: Lisburn/Sprucefield

Mr E Poots asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to improve public transport linkages between Lisburn City Centre and Sprucefield. (AQO 2232/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Following my meeting with a delegation from Lisburn City Council in July 2008, I understand that officials from Translink and my Department met the Council to discuss, among other things, improved linkages between Sprucefield shopping centre and Lisburn city centre. I am informed by Translink that it considers services between the two to be adequate from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM. Translink cannot commit to additional services at this time but is considering a pre booking service for passengers using night time buses to Dublin and wanting to board at Sprucefield. Translink is also considering the possibility of the Belfast/Enniskillen and Belfast/Armagh services stopping at Sprucefield with onward links to Lisburn.

Fuel Oil: Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail what costs have been or will be incurred by Translink in buying fuel oil for buses and trains over (i) the last two quarters; and (ii) the next three quarters. (AQO 2233/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In this quarter and the last quarter Translink paid £6.9m for bus fuel and £2.9m for train fuel.

Over the next three quarters Translink will pay £10.8m for bus fuel and £4.6m for train fuel.

These fuel costs are on a net basis i.e. they exclude taxes and commissions. They also exclude the small percentage of fuel not purchased under forward contracts, approximately 10%, where it is not possible to forecast market prices payable.

Rapid Transport Scheme

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of progress on the Belfast rapid transport scheme. (AQO 2234/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I am pleased with progress on the development of a new Rapid Transit System for Belfast.

At present, the newly-formed Rapid Transit Division within my Department is examining all the route options for the 3 routes in the pilot study (Titanic Quarter, East Belfast and West Belfast) to confirm the findings of the Strategic Outline Case. Once this is complete they will move into the preliminary design stage for the best route alignments, when site surveys and the required statutory assessments will be undertaken. The preliminary designs for each route will form the basis for public consultation which will afford people the opportunity to make their views known and influence how the project is implemented.

My Department has also completed land purchase for a park and ride site at Millmount in the East of the city and is investigating the legal basis under which the system will be implemented.

A26 Dualling

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the dualling of the A26. (AQO 2235/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is progressing plans for the provision of a 7 km 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.

In August 2008, I announced the preferred route, which closely follows the existing corridor. 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, for planning and land acquisition, which I would anticipate occurring during the 2009/10 financial year.

It is anticipated that construction will commence in the latter part of the Investment Delivery Plan period.

Trains: Larne Line

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister for Regional Development when the order for new trains will be placed and if they will operate on the Larne line. (AQO 2236/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I intend to make an announcement about the award of contract prior to the end of this financial year and I can confirm good progress has been made with the procurement exercise. The first of the batch of 20 new trains is scheduled to be introduced to passenger service by 2011 with the final set in 2013. This will allow the old trains currently in service on the Larne line to be replaced.

Rapid Transport Scheme

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to extending the proposed Belfast rapid transport scheme to Lisburn, Newtownards and Newtownabbey. (AQO 2237/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Rapid Transit System will initially operate on three pilot routes running to East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the City Centre.

Consideration will be given to proposals to provide extension of the RT System to the North and South of the City.

The decision on when to progress the extension(s) of the network will depend on the levels of funding available and, to some degree, on the success of the 3 pilot routes.

It is also important that we investigate the possibility of developer contributions at this stage so that such opportunities are not missed.

At present there are no plans to extend the Rapid Transit System outside of the greater Belfast area.

Regional Transportation Strategy: Greenhouse Gases

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Regional Development what contribution the Regional Transportation Strategy will make to the reduction of greenhouse gases. (AQO 2238/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Regional Transportation Strategy has been the catalyst for a number of measures that will assist in reducing greenhouse gases here. For example, the investment in improving public transport, both in terms of newer vehicles, services and routes, the use of more sustainable types of fuel for public transport, the TravelWise initiative seeking to encourage smarter travel, including walking and cycling, and gauging the public attitude to reducing transport emissions, etc.

The Strategy is being reviewed and will explore what further enhancement to existing measures can be provided to reducing greenhouse emissions. I am keen that my Department maximises its contribution to the Executive's commitment to reduce greenhouse gases through challenging targets and outcomes.

Public Transport Reform

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on public transport reform, and to detail what progress has been made and a timeframe for the reform. (AQO 2239/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The public transport reforms, which will be designed to comply with EU Regulation 1370/2007, aim to introduce new contractual arrangements for the delivery of public transport. The options for how best to introduce new organisational arrangements that will support the reforms are currently being addressed as part of the development of an Outline Business Case. This will be completed shortly. It is planned to undertake a public consultation exercise on the reforms later this year, after which policy proposals for any required legislative changes would be introduced to the Assembly.

Collaborative Spatial Planning Framework

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress been made on the Collaborative Spatial Planning Framework for the North West and across the island of Ireland. (AQO 2240/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department, jointly with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, has prepared two draft cross border spatial planning frameworks. The first, entitled “Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: A Framework for Collaboration”, sets out a rationale for cross border spatial planning in a European, north/south and east/west context. The second, entitled “North West Gateway Spatial Framework”, provides spatial planning guidance for the North West Gateway Initiative. These Frameworks deal with cross cutting issues and I am bringing them forward to the Executive.

Fuel Oil: Translink

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what changes are being considered by Translink in relation to the purchasing of fuel to ensure best value for money. (AQO 2241/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have no direct involvement in the negotiation and approval of Translink’s fuel purchasing function. NITHC operates commercially under the Transport Act (NI) 1967. The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed between NITHC and my department defines operational roles and responsibilities.

The NITHC Board is formally responsible for the agreement of all contracts entered into by NITHC and delegates day to day operational issues to its executive team.

Translink have not indicated any change to their current arrangements which run up to June 2010. Translink anticipate that fuel costs will fall from June 2009 under current contracts.

Rural Transport

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of plans to slash rural transport and the importance of developing integrated public transport services. (AQO 2242/09)

Minister for Regional Development: There is no plan to slash rural transportation and I recognise the importance of integrated public transport services.

My officials are in negotiation with NITHC/Translink with respect to the development of the Translink Corporate Plan for 2009/10. Within this exercise financial plans have to be agreed to ensure Translink meets its financial obligations. This plan will have to be agreed by me, and this process is still ongoing.

Translink, itself, is an example of an integrated public transport company covering both bus and rail. There are no plans to change this status.

Translink Passenger Charter: Punctuality Targets

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the Translink Passenger Charter punctuality targets. (AQO 2243/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The punctuality targets in the Translink Passenger’s Charter have been in place for some years and are subject to periodic review.

The rail targets are similar to ones used by rail operators in the UK and RoI, and while bus comparisons are more difficult to make, it is the view of my Department, the Consumer Council and Translink that the punctuality targets in the Charter are realistic and challenging.

Roadside Trees

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the responsibility of his Department in ensuring that roadside trees do not fall on passing vehicles. (AQO 2244/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department’s Roads Service has a statutory duty to maintain the public road network, which includes ensuring that boundary trees or hedges do not overgrow the roadway and footway, thereby impeding road users and pedestrians.

The statutory obligation requires that Roads Service initially advise the adjacent land owner, responsible for the overgrowing hedge, requesting that the necessary remedial work to remove or cut the trees or hedges is carried out in the interests of public safety. This is normally undertaken by the issue of an informal letter which generally resolves the majority of the problems identified. If that fails, Roads Service has powers, under Article 50 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, to serve a notice on the land owner requiring that the tree or hedge is removed or cut back, so as to remove the danger or obstruction. Where the requirements of the notice are not complied with, Roads Service may carry out the necessary works and recover the costs from the land owner.

Regional Development Strategy: Fundamental Review

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the fundamental review of the Regional Development Strategy and to detail what public engagement has taken place to date. (AQO 2245/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has been working on the revised RDS taking account of the comments and advice it has received. My intention is to present a draft document to Ministers by May this year.

My officials have been meeting with the Regional Development Committee on a monthly basis to update them on progress and to gauge their views. I also met with Ministerial colleagues in an Executive Sub Group and a further meeting is taking place on 12 March. An External Working Group was established to provide specialist advice and 3 meetings have taken place.

During November and early December 2008 my officials held a series of stakeholder events on the basis of the proposed new Council areas. The purpose of these was to hear local views on challenges and issues facing their areas.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Housing Projects

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to list all social housing projects (i) for this year and (ii) planned for next year, and the value of the each investment. (AQW 5502/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): I have attached at Appendix 1 a list of all new build schemes either started or anticipated to start during this financial year. The total cost of these schemes is £111.8m

At Appendix 2 I also attach a list of all improvement schemes scheduled for this year. The draft Social Housing Development Programme for 2009-2014 has not yet been approved and I am unable to provide you with that information at this stage. In addition the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are currently reassessing their improvement schemes for 2009/10 based on the resources available to them and as such that information is also not yet available.

APPENDIX 1

ACTUAL NEW BUILD STARTS 2008/2009

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Number of Dwellings	Client Group
Belfast Community	BCHA West Belfast Acquisitions Phase 4A	1	General Needs
Belfast Community	Acquisitions, Polelgass, Phase 4A	7	General Needs
Belfast Community	East Belfast Acquisitions, Phase 2A	4	General Needs
Belfast Community	East Belfast Acquisitions, Phase 2B	10	General Needs
Belfast Community	East Belfast Acquisitions, Phase 2C	7	General Needs
Belfast Community	2 Cherryvale Avenue, Newtownabbey	1	Physically Disabled
Belfast Community	Carrickvale Manor, Lurgan	10	General Needs
BIH	94 & 97 Hornbeam Road, Dunmurry	2	General Needs

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Number of Dwellings	Client Group
BIH	29-31 Beechmount Avenue, Belfast	5	General Needs
BIH	16 Iniscarn Close, Lisburn	1	General Needs
BIH	Chequer Hill, Armagh Road, Newry	33	General Needs
Clanmil	24 Glenville Green, Newtownabbey	1	General Needs
Clanmil	46 Inisharoan Court, Newtownards	1	General Needs
Clanmil	Foxhill, Derry	5	General Needs
Clanmil	The Bush, Dungannon	6	General Needs
Clanmil	Wolfhill Manor, Ligoniel Road, North Belfast	8	General Needs
Clanmil	Sydney Street West, Belfast	4	General Needs
Clanmil	Church Lane, High Street, Donaghadee	6	General Needs
Clanmil	Pottingers Quay, Belfast	27	General Needs
Connswater	14 Lisvarna Place, Belfast	1	General Needs
Connswater	31-35 Donaghadee Road, Newtownards	40	General Needs
Flax	Ardoyne Acquisitions, Phase 7E, Belfast	2	General Needs
Flax	Ardoyne Acquisitions, Phase 8A, Belfast	1	General Needs
Fold	33 Rosnagalliagh, Galliagh, Derry	1	General Needs
Fold	1 Lawnfield Court, Newcastle	1	General Needs
Fold	PSNI Site, Downpatrick Road, Ardglass	11	General Needs
Grove	1 St Aubyn Street, Belfast	1	General Needs
Grove	North Belfast Acquisitions, Phase 1C	2	General Needs
Habinteg	Derry Acquisitions Phase 12	9	General Needs
Habinteg	22 Templemore Street, Belfast	1	General Needs
Habinteg	Greater West Belfast DPF Acquisitions	3	General Needs
Habinteg	Lourdes Hall, Waterloo Place, Londonderry	13	General Needs
Habinteg	Slatequarry Road, Cullyhanna, Newry	6	General Needs
Newington	15 Atlantic Avenue, Belfast	1	General Needs
Newington	14 Willowbank Gardens, Belfast	1	General Needs
Newington	52 Carlisle Road, Belfast	1	General Needs
Newington	124-126 Antrim Road, Belfast	6	General Needs
North & West	West Bank, Ph16A, Londonderry	10	General Needs
North & West	West Bank, Ph16B, Londonderry	10	General Needs
North & West	Dove Gardens, Phase 1, Londonderry	63	General Needs
Oaklee	7 Iris Walk, Belfast	1	General Needs
Oaklee	5 Tynan Close, Newtownabbey	1	General Needs
Oaklee	18L Duncairn Parade, Belfast	1	General Needs
Oaklee	Antrim Road, Belfast	6	General Needs
Oaklee	79 Thornhill Drive, Dromore	1	General Needs
Oaklee	Ellis Street, Carrickfergus	18	Learning Disabilities
Oaklee	Shaftesbury Road, Bangor	34	Elderly

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Number of Dwellings	Client Group
Oaklee	Longlands, Newtownabbey	50	General Needs
Oaklee	Longlands, Newtownabbey	6	General Needs
Oaklee	7a Glen Road, Derry City	6	General Needs
Oaklee	Throne Retail Park, Whitewell Road, Belfast	11	General Needs
Rural	2&3 Ashgrove Court, Newtownbutler	2	General Needs
Rural	7&8 Beech Tree Lane, Tempo	2	General Needs
Rural	Culowen, Blackwatertown, Co Armagh	6	General Needs
South Ulster	The Hollows, New Mills, Dungannon	9	General Needs
South Ulster	Ballygowan/Levin/Meadowbrook	25	General Needs
South Ulster	Mark Street, Lurgan	22	General Needs
Triangle	North East Buy Backs	2	General Needs
Triangle	Station Road, Dunloy	4	General Needs
Triangle	18 Coronation Park, Clough	1	General Needs
Triangle	12 Alan Close, Newcastle	6	Learning Disabilities
Trinity	38 - 40 Bryansburn Road, Bangor	11	Elderly
Trinity	Church Street, Newtownards	20	Elderly
Trinity	115 - 117 Hamilton Road, Bangor	5	Elderly
Trinity	38 Belfast Road, Comber	10	Elderly
Ulidia	7 Drumbawn Close, Enniskillen	1	General Needs
Total Starts. 66 Schemes 584 Units			

ANTICIPATED NEW BUILD STARTS 2008/2009

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Dwellings	Client Group
Ark	Greenvale House Rossmore Dr, Belfast	11	Learning Difficulties
BIH	3 & 5 Ashgrove Road, Newry	16	General Needs
BIH	1-3 Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor	21	Elderly
BIH	Abbots Cross, Newtownabbey	13	Learning Difficulties
Clanmil	Seymour Street, Lisburn	48	Elderly
Clanmil	Grange Meadows, Kilkeel	8	General Needs
Connswater	Trinity Place, Lisburn	15	General Needs
Flax	Ballybone, Oldpark, Belfast	15	General Needs
Fold	Upritchard Court, Bangor	14	General Needs
Fold	Guide Street, Broughshane	4	Elderly
Fold	23 Cairnshill Court, Belfast	1	General Needs
Fold	24 Cairnshill Court, Belfast	1	General Needs
Fold	Fairy Glen, Crossmaglen	18	General Needs
Fold	Torrens Phase 3a	112	General Needs
Habinteg	Clanrye Avenue, Newry	7	General Needs
Hearth	Re-Improvement, Glenarm	13	General Needs
Oaklee	Library Site, Sion Mills, Strabane	3	General Needs

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Dwellings	Client Group
Oaklee	St Gall's Site, Ph 2, Belfast	8	General Needs
Oaklee	Pond Park, Lisburn	112	General Needs
Rural	60 The Old Mill, Killyleagh	1	General Needs
St Matthews	27 Woodside Walk, Poleglass	1	General Needs
St Matthews	2A Beechfield Street, Belfast	8	Elderly
Triangle	107 A North Road, Belfast	8	General Needs
Trinity	70 Sunnyside Street, Belfast	12	General Needs
Trinity	Stradreagh Challenging Behaviour Unit, Londonderry	18	Learning Difficulties
Ulidia	The Ferns, Rostrevor Road, Hilltown. Newry	10	General Needs
Various	Existing Satisfactory Purchases (DPF)	25	General Needs
Total Anticipated Starts. 27 Schemes 523 Units			

APPENDIX 2 IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Northern Ireland Housing Executive District	Type of Work	Scheme Name	Dwellings	Start Date	Estimated Cost
Castlereagh	Ext Cyclic Maint	Tullycarnet 1	164	28-Apr-08	294,000.00
Ballycastle	Ext Cyclic Maint	Ballycastle	167	16-Jun-08	275,346.00
Lisburn Antrim Street	Ext Cyclic Maint	Manor, Jubilee, Warren & Ward	274	27-Jun-08	404,239.00
Dungannon	Ext Cyclic Maint	Coalisland/Gortgonis	151	30-Jun-08	227,708.00
Newtownabbey 1	Ext Cyclic Maint	Newtownabbey	194	30-Jun-08	308,301.00
Armagh	Ext Cyclic Maint	Killylea/Orangefield/Ballinaho	153	30-Jun-08	225,970.00
Portadown	Ext Cyclic Maint	Obins/Parkside/Ballyoran/Garvaghy	240	25-Aug-08	303,823.00
Waterside	Ext Cyclic Maint	Waterside Urban-Hollymount/Claudy	175	01-Sep-08	288,459.00
Collon Terrace	Ext Cyclic Maint	Bloomfield/Moss/Slievemore	221	01-Sep-08	659,297.00
Belfast Region	Ext Cyclic Maint	Ballysillan	73	20-Oct-08	130,134.00
Carrickfergus	Ext Cyclic Maint	Carrickfergus	254	15-Dec-08	297,121.00
Fermanagh	Ext Cyclic Maint	Irvinestown/Kesh/Ederney	200	19-Jan-09	151,600.00
North Belfast	Ext Cyclic Maint	Ballysillan Phase 2	101	09-Feb-09	293,814.00
Carrickfergus	Grounds Maintenance	Woodburn	0	14-Apr-08	218,630.00
Antrim	Grounds Maintenance	Parkhall	0	01-Jan-09	149,428.00
North Belfast	H&S (Asbestos)	Mount Vernon	99	23-Feb-09	237,715.00
Lisburn Antrim Street	Revenue Repair	Moynes Emergency/L1 Lighting	112	12-Jan-09	156,420.00
Castlereagh	Revenue Repair	Westwinds Stairwell Window Replace	88	26-Jan-09	374,000.00
East Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Lord Street/Trillick	112	19-May-08	407,354.00
Fermanagh	Revenue Replacement	Erne Pk/Loughview Dr	91	27-May-08	482,500.00
Coleraine	Revenue Replacement	Ballysally	68	02-Jun-08	249,458.00
South Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Donegall Pass Phase 3	72	02-Jun-08	277,460.00
South Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Abingdon	77	16-Jun-08	273,708.00
Waterside	Revenue Replacement	De Glin Pk/Primity Gdns	62	23-Jun-08	246,014.00

Northern Ireland Housing Executive District	Type of Work	Scheme Name	Dwellings	Start Date	Estimated Cost
West Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Irwell/Thames/Broadway	55	23-Jun-08	348,812.00
Waterloo Place	Revenue Replacement	Greenwalk/Long Tower Ct/Mulroy	142	23-Jun-08	643,417.00
Collon Terrace	Revenue Replacement	Friel CI/Gogarty CI	106	23-Jun-08	415,982.00
Collon Terrace	Revenue Replacement	Bracken Park/ Collon Lane	65	23-Jun-08	240,041.00
Antrim	Revenue Replacement	Greystone Ph 2	113	26-Jun-08	301,913.00
East Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Short Strand Phase 3	101	26-Jun-08	317,236.00
Castlereagh	Revenue Replacement	Cregagh Ph 3	72	27-Jun-08	300,000.00
Bangor	Revenue Replacement	Loughview	99	27-Jun-08	281,000.00
Lisburn Antrim Street	Revenue Replacement	Ballymacoss	64	27-Jun-08	219,000.00
Newtownards	Revenue Replacement	Greyabbey/Kircubbin/Portaferry	36	27-Jun-08	126,000.00
Fermanagh	Revenue Replacement	Cleenish Pk/Lisgoole Pk	59	30-Jun-08	279,158.00
Fermanagh	Revenue Replacement	Drumbawn/Derrychara	44	30-Jun-08	228,361.00
Newry	Revenue Replacement	South Armagh Various Estates	75	30-Jun-08	325,943.00
North Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Carlisle	5	15-Sep-08	249,750.00
Collon Terrace	Revenue Replacement	Grainan Dr/Grainan Pk Etc	22	15-Sep-08	156,133.00
Coleraine	Revenue Replacement	Ballysally Area	107	03-Dec-08	357,723.00
Newtownabbey 1	Revenue Replacement	Ardmillan Dr/Ardgart Pl Etc	101	05-Jan-09	295,917.00
Shankill	Revenue Replacement	Dover Street Ph 3/Brown Square	65	14-Jan-09	258,295.00
West Belfast	Revenue Replacement	Leeson Street	71	14-Jan-09	274,649.00
Lurgan Brownlow	Revenue Replacement	Drumbeg North	50	19-Jan-09	222,417.00
Strabane	Revenue Replacement	Carlton Drive Estate	123	19-Jan-09	524,720.00
Ballymoney	Revenue Replacement	Rasharkin/Millicent	83	26-Jan-09	326,053.00
Newtownards	Revenue Replacement	Scrabo	148	26-Jan-09	894,167.00
Castlereagh	Revenue Replacement	Braniel Ph 2	123	26-Jan-09	568,034.00
Portadown	Revenue Replacement	Portadown	45	09-Feb-09	185,032.00
Dungannon	Revenue Replacement	Springfield Cr/Bernagh Etc	53	09-Feb-09	230,549.00
Newtownards	Smoke Alarm Install	Se Area	1421	01-Apr-08	102,000.00
Belfast Region	Smoke Alarm Install	10yr S/Alarms (Heat) Phase 1	500	01-May-08	174,057.00
Strabane	Clean Air Conversion	Strabane Clean Air Conversion	39	23-Jun-08	203,885.00
Newtownards	Environmental Improvement	Bowtown Ph1	0	02-Jun-08	853,245.00
Lisburn Dairyfarm	Environmental Improvement	Glenwood Woodside Boundary Wks	0	12-Jan-09	214,000.00
Omagh	Environmental Improvement	Strathroy	0	12-Jan-09	174,484.00
Bangor	Health & Safety Schemes	Communal Areas/Ecm:church Green	81	20-Oct-08	438,000.00
West Belfast	Health & Safety Schemes	Roden Street/ Underpinning	17	23-Feb-09	118,000.00
Newtownards	Heating Installation	Se Area	30	01-Apr-08	145,776.00

Northern Ireland Housing Executive District	Type of Work	Scheme Name	Dwellings	Start Date	Estimated Cost
Ballymena	Heating Installation	Ballymena Area	40	01-Apr-08	220,000.00
Bangor	Heating Installation	K'ilcooley/Churchill	91	01-Apr-08	399,648.00
West/Nw Region	Heating Installation	Emergency Scheme	40	01-Apr-08	102,000.00
Waterside	Heating Installation	Primity Cres/Terrace	21	07-Apr-08	110,951.00
Newtownabbey 1	Heating Installation	Newtownabbey 1 Ph 6	100	07-Apr-08	531,281.00
Banbridge	Heating Installation	Cline Rd/Edenderry Ph 2	82	07-Apr-08	400,216.00
Shankill	Heating Installation	Shankill	66	14-Apr-08	277,517.00
Belfast Region	Heating Installation	Emergency	60	01-May-08	288,161.00
South Region	Heating Installation	Gather Up	50	06-May-08	301,374.00
Newry	Heating Installation	Mullaghbawn/Drumintee/Forkhill	39	19-May-08	196,571.00
North Belfast	Heating Installation	North & East	28	26-May-08	121,983.00
Downpatrick	Heating Installation	Windmill	42	26-May-08	263,000.00
Limavady	Heating Installation	Ard-Na-Smoll/Gortnaghey	43	02-Jun-08	280,989.00
Ballycastle	Heating Installation	Bushmills	102	23-Jun-08	485,875.00
Magherafelt	Heating Installation	Alexander Pk/Desertmartin Etc	60	23-Jun-08	270,000.00
Lisburn Dairyfarm	Heating Installation	Twinbrook/Poleglass	56	28-Jul-08	264,000.00
Fermanagh	Heating Installation	Lisbellaw/Mayobridge/ Brookeborough	29	04-Aug-08	197,555.00
Newtownards	Heating Installation	Movilla & Open Fires Ph 1	51	01-Sep-08	246,948.00
Collon Terrace	Heating Installation	Stephen/Syngé/Joyce Ct	55	06-Oct-08	309,420.00
Lurgan Brownlow	Heating Installation	Meadowbrook	65	06-Oct-08	352,476.00
Collon Terrace	Heating Installation	Sheelin Pk/O'connor Ct (Ph 2)	40	13-Oct-08	227,870.00
Belfast Region	Heating Installation	Emergency One Off's	40	01-Nov-08	191,602.00
Newtownards	Heating Installation	Movilla & Open Fires Ph 2	88	26-Jan-09	429,791.00
Antrim	Heating Installation	Greystone	184	26-Jan-09	1,025,759.00
Waterloo Place	Heating Installation	Long Tower Ct/Durrow Pk	62	02-Feb-09	337,400.00
Fermanagh	Heating Installation	Newtownbutler/Rosslea/Donagh	104	09-Feb-09	647,762.00
Newry	Multi Element	Slievshan Park Flats 8a-8f	6	19-May-08	275,413.00
Antrim	Multi Element	Townparks North Bungalows	31	02-Jun-08	1,089,600.00
Lisburn Antrim Street	Multi Element	Ballymacoss	49	30-Jun-08	1,763,220.00
Waterloo Place	Multi Element	Alexander Memorial Cottages	6	08-Sep-08	227,700.00
North Belfast	Multi Element	Whitewell Phase 3	9	09-Feb-09	334,000.00
Dungannon	Single Element	Eastvale/ Charlemont St	37	05-Jan-09	816,000.00

Housing Executive Properties

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties are awaiting repairs before they can be allocated. (AQW 5569/09)

Minister for Social Development: At 31 January 2009, 1189 Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties were awaiting repairs or major improvement works being completed before they could be allocated.

Ten Day Payment Target

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development how much of the total amount due to suppliers has been paid within the ten day payment target. (AQW 5642/09)

Minister for Social Development: Having recently gone live on the new Account NI automated payment system in November 2008, the Department for Social Development is striving to meet the 10 day payment target for all invoices as soon as possible. During February 2009, the Department cleared 70% of supplier invoices within the 10 day target, which equated to some £8.2m of the total £12.2m invoiced.

Housing Benefit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development whether the present downturn in the economy has resulted in an increase in numbers applying for Housing Benefit and, if so, whether the necessary staff are in place to cope with the situation. (AQW 5647/09)

Minister for Social Development: There have been significantly higher numbers of transactions (25%) including new claims and higher numbers of changes in circumstances. In view of this increase in demand, the Housing Executive is currently implementing a plan to increase Housing Benefit resources.

Benefit Fraud

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the measures and initiatives her Department is currently undertaking to identify persons guilty of benefit fraud, and what her Department is doing to ensure that genuine applicants receive the service they deserve. (AQW 5654/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Social Security Agency has a robust counter fraud strategy which has led to a reduction in estimated levels of fraud from £60m (1.88% of expenditure) in 2001 to £12.7m (0.35% of expenditure) in 2007. Some of the measures and initiatives that the Agency uses to identify persons who may be guilty of benefit fraud are set out below:-

- Regular electronic Data Matching of benefit records with other government departments and private organisations to identify cases where incorrect information may have been supplied.
- Arrangements that allow information from other government departments and public organisations to be provided.
- A dedicated telephone line that allows members of the public to report in confidence customers who may be committing benefit fraud, also a secure internet link on the Department's Web Site.
- from the Social Security Agency and the Republic of Ireland's Department for Social and Family Affairs meet regularly to discuss operations aimed at detecting individuals committing benefit fraud in a cross border scenario.

The level of customer service the Agency provides is covered by a range of quantitative and qualitative targets. These include accuracy and clearance time targets that are published in the Department's Strategic and Business Plan. At present 19 out of 20 operational service delivery targets are either being achieved or are on course to being achieved. Further customer service improvements through the introduction of enhanced IT systems and new telephony are being developed under the Agency's Modernisation Programme. In addition, the Agency is seeking to provide full entitlement amongst current customers and other members of the public through the Benefit Uptake Programme.

Housing Benefit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development (i) the length of time it takes to process new Housing Benefit claims in the West Region; (ii) if targets for processing claims are being maintained; and (iii) whether her budget is adequate to deal with processing claims. (AQW 5672/09)

Minister for Social Development:

- i) The target timescale for new Housing Benefit claims is to process 100% of new claims (where all required information has been provided) within 14 days.
- ii) Housing Benefit applications within the Housing Executive's West area are processed by the Derry and Omagh Housing Benefits units. The most recently available figures regarding the processing of new Housing Benefit claims within the West Area administrative boundaries (where all required information had been supplied) demonstrate that:
- In January 2009 the Housing Executive's Derry Housing Benefit unit assessed 74% within 14 days;
 - In January 2009 the Housing Executive's Omagh Housing Benefit unit assessed 90% within 14 days.
- iii) There have been significantly higher numbers of transactions including new claims and higher numbers of changes in circumstances. In view of this increase in demand, the Housing Executive is currently implementing a plan to increase the Housing Benefit resources.

Social Housing Projects

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the social housing projects currently underway in the Lagan Valley constituency, and the total value of each investment. (AQW 5720/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available by parliamentary constituency. The Housing Executive's Lisburn and Banbridge District Offices include the areas which comprise the Lagan Valley Constituency. The table below details the social housing projects currently under way and the total value of each investment.

Housing Executive District Office	Scheme	Cost
Lisburn	Moynes Emergency Lighting	£156k
	South East Lightning Conductors	£89k
	Ballymacoss Multi Element	£1,763k
	Priory Close Multi Element	£849k
	Glencairn Multi Element	£530k
	Manor/Jubilee External cyclical maintenance	£404k
Banbridge	Parkhill Multi Element	£829k

Housing Executive

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development the number of vacant Housing Executive properties in the North Down constituency. (AQW 5730/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency. However, there are 313 vacant properties in the Housing Executive's Bangor and Newtownards District Offices (which include the areas which comprise the North Down constituency).

Ballyclare Environmental Improvement Scheme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development in relation to the Ballyclare Environmental Improvement Scheme (i) if the costs have increased; (ii) why they have increased; and (iii) which agencies will contribute additional finance to address any extra costs which have been incurred. (AQW 5766/09)

Minister for Social Development: I can confirm that the costs for this scheme increased due to unforeseen work; the inclusion of additional improvements to widen the footpaths, installing new railings, replacing trees, relocating street lighting columns and accommodating site restrictions to alleviate traffic congestion at peak

times. The additional funding is being provided by my Department, the Department of Regional Development's Roads Service and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Hope Centre in Ballymena

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what he is doing to prevent the Hope Centre in Ballymena from closing. (AQW 5771/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department for Social Development funded a three year project to support the development of volunteering under the Community Volunteering Scheme. This project funding will end in March 2009 and there are no further DSD funding streams available to support the work of the Centre, whose principal activities fall under the general area of responsibility of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development (i) when the new Warm Homes Scheme will commence (ii) what arrangements will be in place for the delivery of the scheme; (iii) what advantages will accrue through participation in the programme; and (iv) what households will be eligible to apply. (AQW 5772/09)

Minister for Social Development: The evaluation of all applications to deliver the Warm Homes Scheme received has been completed and applicants informed of the outcome. As tenders have not yet been invited I am unable to comment further but I expect the new scheme managers to be appointed in May.

The Warm Homes Scheme will be aimed at vulnerable, fuel poor households who could not afford to fund the energy efficiency measures required to reduce their fuel bills themselves. The Scheme will fund a range of cost-effective energy efficiency measures tailored to the needs of individual households.

The Scheme will have two elements: Warm Homes and Warm Homes Plus. A summary of the eligibility criteria and measures available under Warm Homes and Warm Homes Plus is shown below.

Warm Homes - Eligibility Criteria	Measures Available
Householder of any age in receipt of one or more of the following benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit • Rate Rebate • Income Support • Income Related Employment Support Allowance • Income Based Job Seekers Allowance • Pension Credit • Child Tax Credit • Working Tax Credit • Disability Living Allowance • Attendance Allowance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cavity Wall Insulation • Loft Insulation • Hot Water Cylinder Jackets • Benefit Check • Energy Advice

Warm Homes Plus	Measures Available
<p>Householder of any age who are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit • Rate Rebate • Income Support • Income Related Employment Support Allowance • Income Based Job Seekers Allowance • Pension Credit • Working Tax Credit <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who are passported through from Warm Homes as their home requires one of the measures available under Warm Homes Plus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of a fully controllable, energy efficient oil or gas central heating system where no system currently exists; • Conversion of an existing bottled gas (LPG), solid fuel or Economy 7 heating system to a more energy efficient oil or natural gas central heating system; • Insulation requirements which exceed the statutory grant maximum available under Warm Homes • For properties of solid wall construction, further measures may be considered to minimise heat loss or reduce fuel bills. These may include use of solid wall insulation or use of a renewable technology.

Housing Executive Estate Strategy

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development to explain the delay in Phase 1 of the Housing Executive Estate Strategy for Dunclug. (AQW 5790/09)

Minister for Social Development: Whilst it had been expected to start work on Phase 1 of this strategy before now, a combination of events has meant that work can not yet start.

A number of issues have arisen out of the Economic Appraisal for Phase 1 which has delayed the approval of that Appraisal. The collapse of the land and property market has also significantly reduced the resources available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for Environmental Improvement schemes such as this and a review of the 2009/10 programme has been made to identify what resources are now available for schemes, once the necessary approvals are in place.

Housing Executive Estate Strategy

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development when the Economic Appraisal for phase 1 of the Housing Executive Estate Strategy for Dunclug was passed to the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval. (AQW 5791/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department completed its technical and professional assessment of this Economic Appraisal on 5 December 2008 and it was referred that same day to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Housing Executive Estate Strategy

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether funding is in place to deliver phase 1 of the Housing Executive Estate Strategy for Dunclug. (AQW 5792/09)

Minister for Social Development: The shortfall in receipts resulting from the collapse of the land and property market has forced the Housing Executive to undertake an urgent and immediate review of all its programmes. No decisions have yet been made on the programme of improvement schemes for 2009/10.

Housing Executive Estate Strategy

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm when work will start on Phase 1 of the Housing Executive Estate Strategy for Dunclug which was due to begin in November 2008. (AQW 5793/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Department is currently working with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to resolve a number of issues regarding the Economic Appraisal for this phase of the project.

Once these are resolved, approvals received and funding identified, work can begin.

Social Housing

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development what plans are there for the development of social housing in the Ballymacross/Ballymacash area, in the next three years. (AQW 5812/09)

Minister for Social Development: This information can not currently be provided as the new 5 year Social Housing Development Programme (2009/10 – 2013/14) is currently being formulated and, pending appropriate approvals, will be published on the Housing Executive's website at www.nihe.gov.uk.

Social Housing

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development what plans there are for spending on social housing developments and the development of any of her Department's unused sites, to help the construction industry, in the next financial year. (AQW 5866/09)

Minister for Social Development: The draft Social Housing Development Programme for 2009-2014 has not yet been finalised for approval and I am, therefore, unable to provide you with information on plans and spending at this stage. As part of the process to develop the Programme my officials have been working closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to assess the suitability of all surplus sites, including those within my own Department that may be identified for social housing.

I recognise how the Social Housing Development Programme can make a significant contribution to the economy and in particular the construction industry. I have already made the case to my Ministerial colleagues about how an increased investment in social housing could provide an immediate stimulus to the economy and at the same time help those in housing stress.

Strategic Business Review

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development for her assurance that elderly people will not be disadvantaged as a result of the new service proposed under the Strategic Business Review. (AQW 5867/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Strategic Business Review proposals deal with services delivered to customers of the Social Security Agency's local office network. The vast majority of elderly people do not use the local office network preferring instead to access pension services directly by telephone.

Nevertheless you have my assurance that elderly people or any other customer grouping using the local office network will not be disadvantaged as a result of the Strategic Business Review's proposals.

Housing Executive

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to reduce the six to seven week period for a vacant Housing Executive house to be offered to a tenant. (AQW 5893/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive allocates 94% of its lettable stock within two weeks. Vacant properties which have been held for some time to assist with decanting in improvement schemes are now being reviewed and it is intended to bring these properties back into use.

Energy Savings for Homes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many enquiries there have been about energy savings for homes in (i) Ards; and (ii) Strangford, in the last financial year. (AQW 5894/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have been advised by Eaga that they do not record details of energy efficiency enquiries and can therefore only report on actual referrals recorded. The number of referrals received in the last financial year for Ards Council Area was 294 and for Strangford constituency were 349.

Northern Ireland Energy Agency (NIEA) is a member of the Bryson Charitable Group who through the management and operation of the Energy Saving Trust Advice centre, offer free and impartial telephone advice to households across Northern Ireland on energy efficiency. NIEA currently hold details of the number of energy

efficiency enquiries for the 3 year period 1 April 2005 to the 31 December 2008 for each of the local authorities. However, they are unable to produce figures for each financial year or per constituency.

The total number of enquiries recorded by NIEA for Ards Council during the period 1st April 2005 to the 31st December 2008 was 16,329. The figures for Strangford would include most of the 16,329 for Ards, part of the 16,498 figure for Castlereagh and part of the 12,509 figure for Down local authority.

Energy Efficiency

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development why funding is not available for young couples who are struggling financially and are not on benefits, and who want to make their homes more energy efficient. (AQW 5895/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Audit Office published a Value for Money study on the Warm Homes Scheme in June 2008. In this report the Audit Office highlighted a number of areas for change including the eligibility criteria. The Audit Office criticised the fact that families with children and householders aged under 60 years of age were only eligible for the Warm Homes element of the Scheme, which provides insulation and basic energy efficiency measures.

The Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee agreed that the existing eligibility criteria provided assistance for some people who were not in fuel poverty and actually excluded people who were in fuel poverty and change was needed to refocus the scheme. For this reason, from spring this year, the eligibility criteria will be changed to include families in receipt of Working Tax Credits who will now qualify for assistance with improving the heating in their homes.

Prior to a subsequent Public Accounts Committee hearing in October 2008 my Department had accepted all of the recommendations made by the Audit Office and had proposed a number of changes to the current scheme. My Department recently finished a consultation exercise on the proposed changes and over 90% of respondents supported changing the eligibility criteria. In changing the criteria, lone parents and low income families will qualify not only for insulation measures but also heating measures, thus improving the energy efficiency of their homes.

As these groups have been defined as those in greatest need, then this is where the funding must be targeted.

Rathgill Estate and Breezemount Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development if money from the Small Pockets Of Deprivation will continue for Rathgill Estate and Breezemount Estate, Bangor for the next financial year. (AQW 5935/09)

Minister for Social Development: I can confirm that the funding for areas eligible under the SPOD programme has now been extended for another year until 31 March 2010. The Rathgill Estate is eligible for funding from the SPOD programme. The Breezemount Estate is not within the most 10% deprived areas in Northern Ireland and is not therefore eligible for SPOD funding.

Housing Executive

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development if she is aware of the significant number of Housing Executive homes without cavity walls that have been sold to tenants; and to detail what mechanisms are in place to ensure these properties will be brought up to building regulation standard. (AQW 5936/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive does not hold records regarding properties without cavity walls that have been sold to tenants. Upon completion of the sale, the ongoing maintenance of the property becomes the responsibility of the owner.

Housing in Antrim Borough Council

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development (i) if she is aware that the Antrim Borough Council area has one of the highest rankings for housing stress; (ii) to explain why a large number of properties

remain boarded up in the Springfarm area despite increases in the housing waiting list; and (iii) to detail a time-scale when these properties will be brought up to building regulation standard and released back into the housing stock pool. (AQW 5937/09)

Minister for Social Development: The level of housing stress, out of a total waiting list of 1051 applicants within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Antrim District Office area, is broadly comparable to similarly sized District Office areas in Northern Ireland.

The Ministry of Defence terminated the leases of two lots of dwellings within the Springfarm Estate, Antrim which they had previously leased from the Housing Executive. The first lot was sold to a private developer who refurbished them and sold them to private sector residents. In respect of the second lot of 114 dwellings, the Housing Executive has leased 18 to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and allocated a further 13 to applicants on the social housing waiting list. The Housing Executive continues to complete the required remedial works, dependent on the availability of finance, and allocate the properties in line with demand within the area.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development to provide information on the amount of cold weather payments (i) assessed; and (ii) paid, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5944/09)

Minister for Social Development: Cold weather payments are triggered when the average temperature is, or is forecast to be, zero degrees or below over 7 consecutive days from November to March based on temperature readings supplied to my Department by the Met Office from its 5 weather stations located throughout Northern Ireland. Payments are made automatically and there is no requirement to assess individual entitlement when the qualifying conditions are met. The number and amount of cold weather payments made in the last 3 years are set out in the Table below.

TABLE 1

Year	Number of payments made	Total amount paid
2006/07	Nil	Nil
2007/08	Nil	Nil
2008/09 – to date	72,628	£1.82m

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development how she intends to address the backlog of referrals made to eaga.plc under the (i) Warm Homes Plus; and (ii) Warmer Ways to Better Health schemes, from the Antrim Borough Council area. (AQW 5945/09)

Minister for Social Development: I am advised by Eaga that they do not have systems that can readily provide a breakdown for the Antrim Borough Council area. However, the budget available for the Warm Homes Scheme has been fully committed for this financial year and my Department has met, and I anticipate will exceed, its Public Service Agreement target of alleviating fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures. I submitted a bid in the June and December monitoring round for additional resources to clear the waiting list, but unfortunately neither bid was met.

I have asked my officials to look for ways that those households, who remain on the waiting list and are most in need, will receive some assistance.

There is no backlog of applications for the Warmer Ways to Better Health scheme.

Energy Savings for Homes

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many enquiries her Department has received in relation to energy savings for homes in the North Down constituency in the last financial year. (AQW 5963/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have been advised by Eaga that they do not record details of energy efficiency enquiries and can therefore only report on actual referrals recorded. The number of referrals received from the North Down constituency in the last financial year was 453.

Northern Ireland Energy Agency (NIEA) is a member of the Bryson Charitable Group who through the management and operation of the Energy Saving Trust Advice centre, offer free and impartial telephone advice to households across Northern Ireland on energy efficiency. NIEA currently hold details of the number of energy efficiency enquiries for the 3 year period 1st April 2005 to the 31st December 2008 for each of the local authorities. However, they are unable to produce figures for each financial year or per constituency.

The total number of enquiries recorded by NIEA for North Down local authority during the period 1st April 2005 to the 31st December 2008 was 19,918.

Housing Executive

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development how many vacant Housing Executive properties there are in the Ards Borough Council area. (AQW 5988/09)

Minister for Social Development: There are 124 vacant properties in the Housing Executive's Newtownards District Office area, which covers the Ards Borough Council area.

Department Owned Properties and Sites

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development what properties and sites are owned by her Department in the Strangford constituency, and what plans and time-scale there are for their development. (AQW 5990/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive owns undeveloped land holdings but does not hold the information requested by Parliamentary constituency. The table below details the undeveloped land holdings within the Newtownards, Castlereagh and Downpatrick District Office areas (which include the locations within the Strangford constituency) and the plans for their development.

District	Location	Plans
Newtownards	Holly Park Road, Killinchy	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Main Street, Greyabbey	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Cypress Park 1 & 2, Donaghadee	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Parsonage/Rectory, Kircubbin	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Cuan Avenue, Portaferry	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Moat Road, Ballyhalbert	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Main Street, Carrowdore	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Steel Dickson Gardens, Portaferry	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Greenwood Avenue	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Beechfield Drive	Retain for future use
Newtownards	North Street, Greyabbey	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Lawson Park, Portavogie	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Armstrong Avenue Site 1	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Armstrong Avenue Site 2	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Newtownards	Belheim Drive Site A	Retain for future use
Newtownards	Glenbrook Rd Site 1	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule

District	Location	Plans
Newtownards	Glenbrook Road Site 2	Programmed for transfer to Housing Association
Newtownards	Manse Road, Carrowdore	Retain for future use
Newtownards	51 Old Newtownards Road	Programmed for transfer to Housing Association
Newtownards	Dunsy Way, Comber	Programmed for transfer to Housing Association
Castlereagh	Milltown Road, Belvoir	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	Killynure Estate, Carryduff	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	Morven, Ballybeen	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Castlereagh	Sunderland/Sterling Road	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Castlereagh	Keel Way, Moneyreagh	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Castlereagh	Coleshill Gardens, Belvoir	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	Grays Park, Belvoir	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	97-107 Gilnahirk Road	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	21 Grahamsbridge Road	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	Millmount Retained Land	Retain for future use
Castlereagh	Lower Braniel Road	Programmed for transfer to Housing Association
Downpatrick	Castlewellan Road, Newcastle	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Drumhill Court, Drumaroad	Programmed for transfer to Housing Association
Downpatrick	Windmill View/Drive Site 1	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Ballyhornan Road, Downpatrick	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Ardkeel Park, Newcastle	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	The Links, Strangford	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Fountain Court	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Downpatrick	Chapel Street, Killough	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Downpatrick	Pegasus Wk, Flying Horse	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	St Dymphnas Site 2	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Lislane Park, Saintfield	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Grove Park & Gardens	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Isabella Way, The Ward	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Downpatrick	Murphys Close, C'astlewellan	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule
Downpatrick	14-20 Loughside Drive	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Frederick Street Carpark	Retain for future use
Downpatrick	Windmill View/Drive Site 2	Transfer to Surplus Land Schedule

In relation to timescales for development, any sites indicated for transfer to Housing Associations will be as programmed in the new 5 year Social Housing Development Programme for 2009/10 – 2013/14 which is due to be published shortly. The Housing Executive currently undertakes to dispose of surplus sites within 3 years of being declared surplus. Sites retained for future use are subject to feasibility studies to determine their best use and an appropriate timeframe for further action.

Housing Executive

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development how many houses have been sold to tenants by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, broken down by District Office area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 5991/09)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the numbers of Housing Executive properties sold to tenants, broken down by District Office area, in each of the last three years.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Total
Belfast West	189	117	65	371
Belfast East	76	66	23	165
Belfast North	85	137	52	274
Belfast Shankill	72	78	32	182
Belfast South	60	82	36	178
Bangor	77	36	25	138
Newtownards	77	85	28	190
Castlereagh	78	81	20	179
Lisburn 1/2	113	107	42	262
Lisburn 3	82	76	25	183
Downpatrick	59	49	19	127
Banbridge	45	23	21	89
Newry	115	77	29	221
Armagh	59	50	15	124
Lurgan/Brownlow	74	55	20	149
Portadown	35	47	19	101
Dungannon	50	45	15	110
Fermanagh	86	69	43	198
Ballymena	105	66	14	185
Antrim	113	93	23	229
Newtownabbey 1	53	70	27	150
Newtownabbey 2	60	57	19	136
Carrickfergus	47	64	22	133
Larne	30	39	18	87
Ballycastle	36	23	11	70
Ballymoney	41	37	8	86
Coleraine	80	53	18	151
L'derry 1	57	52	17	126
L'derry 2	82	73	22	177
L'derry 3	95	76	20	191
Limavady / Magherafelt	114	69	15	198
Strabane	68	70	18	156
Omagh	57	47	14	118
Cookstown	52	32	13	97
Total	2522	2201	808	5531

Social Security Offices

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development in the light of the economic downturn, whether she will review her decision concerning the future of Social Security office locations. (AQW 6025/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have not made any decisions concerning the future of Social Security office locations. The Strategic Business Review proposals are currently subject to ongoing public consultation. Final decisions on the review's proposals, including the number and location of Benefit Processing Centres, will not be made until consultation has been completed and the responses have been fully considered.

Traveller's Sites

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to her answer to AQW 2216/09, if the planning of any programmes or schemes for the provision of Traveller's sites must legally be within the geographical areas of Traveller families' choice or if there is flexibility to provide sites elsewhere. (AQW 6142/09)

Minister for Social Development: The planning of any programme or scheme in relation to Traveller sites is determined by the results of a comprehensive needs assessment which ensures that an informed and strategic approach can be taken. The Housing Executive is not obliged to provide Traveller's sites in a geographically identified area (or at all) unless it considers that it is appropriate to provide such a site.

The Housing Executive has a statutory duty to provide such sites as it considers appropriate for the accommodation of caravans of members of the Traveller community. In considering whether it is appropriate to provide a Traveller site in any particular location all relevant factors must be taken into account. In drawing up a programme of schemes the Housing Executive will give consideration to greatest need and land availability in consultation with individuals, families and the wider community.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Assembly Computer Network

Mr L Cree asked the Assembly Commission what steps have been taken to prevent outside access to the Assembly computer network, including access by unauthorised Civil Service staff. (AQW 5659/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Rev Dr R Coulter): The Assembly Commission operates 2 computer networks in Parliament Buildings. The IS Office on behalf of the Assembly Commission has implemented a number of measures to secure the primary computer network designated for use solely by Members and other authorised Assembly users. These include;

- Use of a UK government approved firewall at the perimeter of the network;
- Implementation of a secure network design by expert 3rd party installers;
- Implementation of segregation of the different user traffic across the network;
- Monitoring of traffic patterns across the network;
- Provision of a secure web based portal system for remote access, which includes a two factor authentication system, in line with public sector best practice;
- Implementation of intrusion detection systems.

The second NI Assembly owned computer network, uses wireless technology, and is regarded as less secure, being provided for use by a wider group of people using their own equipment including Members; Press; Civil Servants and other visitors to the building. All users must register with the IS Office to use the system and are then provided with access for periods ranging from 24 hrs to 3 months. There is no direct connection between this network and the primary, secure network. All computer access from this network must come through the firewall system and use the secure web based portal.

Finally the NI Civil Service have been granted permission to operate their own independent network to selected areas within Parliament Buildings for use by Ministers and other officials. This network operates to NI Civil standards and has no direct connection to the NI Assembly networks.

Eurest Customer Satisfaction Survey

Mr T Burns asked the Assembly Commission when Eurest will publish the results of the customer satisfaction survey recently conducted for the Blue Flax Restaurant. (AQW 5763/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): In response to the Members question, the results of the recent Customer Survey are now available on AssIST following an analysis of the results and comments by Eurest and Facilities Branch. A summarised version of the results will also be available in the Blue Flax Restaurant. I have attached a copy of the results from the survey for the Members perusal.

Twitter Website

Mr D McKay asked the Assembly Commission what use it has made of the Twitter website. (AQW 5789/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Moutray): The Northern Ireland Assembly began piloting the use of Twitter on 17th November 2008 in order to ascertain what benefits the Assembly could accrue by using the service.

As part of the Assembly's Engagement Strategy, approved by the Commission and debated in Plenary on 3 March 2009, the Assembly is seeking to increase the use of social networking websites such as Twitter to better interact and engage with the public.

To date, the pilot Assembly Twitter site has 140 followers including MLAs, journalists, and government organisations including councils, members of the public and charitable groups. It has been used to inform followers of forthcoming business, and of recent publications such as committee reports and press releases.

The Assembly Twitter site has also been used to publicise the forthcoming Assembly road shows and the 'Your Assembly, Your Say' website. It is anticipated that the Assembly will further develop its use of Twitter as a communications tool to promote its business and activities.

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