
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 6 November 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Post Offices

Mr W Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) what services their Department currently provides through post offices; (ii) and for their assessment of any additional services that could be provided through local post offices. (AQW 737/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister currently provides no services through post offices.

There have been a number of exercises completed in the recent past to look at what additional services, if any, could be offered through post offices but none were identified.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what provision is made by their Department to make documents accessible to partially sighted and blind people. (AQW 1921/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 prohibits public authorities from discriminating against disabled people when carrying out public functions. The Act also imposes a duty on public authorities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in relation to the carrying out of public functions. The duty requires public authorities to anticipate the requirements of disabled people and the adjustments that may be needed.

The department's Disability Action Plan 2008-2011 states amongst its actions that it will pursue "measures to promote positive attitude towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life". This includes "In line with NICS practice, OFMDFM's website will be 'single A' compliant (shows compliance with all priority 1 checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and strive to meet 'AA' standards (shows compliance with all priority 1 and priority 2 checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Alternative formats can be made available where necessary." Our action plan also undertook to review and reissue guidance on accessible venues for departmental events. This was done in January 2009.

Para 5.8 of our Equality Scheme states that "Consideration will be given to accessibility of language and format of information in order to establish if there are any barriers to the consultation process, and if so, to ensure that these are removed. Accordingly, translations and alternative formats will be provided in a timely fashion. Issues concerning access to information highlighted in Section 9 "Public Access to Information and Services" will be given particular consideration. Taking into account the views of consultees, information will be made available on request in accessible formats, including Braille, large print, audiocassette, signed video cassette and in minority ethnic languages."

Our department's publications include information on how to obtain copies in alternative formats. On request, documents are produced in Braille, Digital Daisy and large print formats to meet the needs of partially sighted and blind people. For example we used the Royal National Institute of Blind People's services this year to produce a number of documents in Braille and digital daisy format.

Our department regularly reviews the level of service we provide to blind and partially sighted people through our Disability Action Plan.

Default Retirement Age

Mr D Simpson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 220/07, for an update on the monitoring of the effectiveness of the default retirement age. (AQW 1926/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: In July this year, the UK Government announced that it was bringing forward the scheduled review of the default retirement age from 2011 to 2010.

We will monitor this process and of course take account of any specific local considerations

Community Relations Council

Mr M Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if his Department has carried out any analysis of the use of funding by the Community Relations Council (CRC) to encourage understanding and tolerance of the beliefs and values of evangelical Protestantism; and if he will work with the CRC to encourage this. (AQW 1937/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We have not carried out any analysis of the use of funding by the Community Relations Council (CRC) to encourage understanding and tolerance of the beliefs and values of evangelical Protestantism. The Community Relations Council works to promote greater understanding of all sections of the community.

Investment

Mr J Spratt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the potential investment in Northern Ireland as a result of the Clinton Global Initiative and other meetings held during their recent visit to the USA. (AQO 239/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We participated in the Clinton Global Initiative's annual conference. We were asked to address a special session, chaired by President Clinton, on the promotion of investment opportunities here.

We addressed an audience of more than 350 people, including senior executives from major financial institutions, the film industry and the media. Secretary of State Clinton's newly appointed Economic Envoy, Declan Kelly, shared the platform with us and made a persuasive pitch to corporate America to consider investing here. The Employment and Learning Minister, Sir Reg Empey, also attended the session and outlined the bespoke training programmes his Department can offer incoming investors.

The panel was completed by the Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward, and the Irish Foreign Affairs Minister, Micheal Martin.

While in New York, we also met a number of senior executives from financial organisations which are in discussions with Invest NI about investing here. One of these was the New York Stock Exchange which announced on Monday investment that will result in upwards of 500 high quality jobs in the financial services sector.

We also met with Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to discuss Policing and Justice and then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, with whom we discussed the current political situation and the potential for US investment. Secretary of State Clinton maintains a close interest in the situation here, as her visit last week showed.

Policing and Justice: Funding

Mr P Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions, if any, have been held with the Conservative Party regarding funding for policing and justice after it is devolved. (AQO 241/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We met Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, on 21 October, when we discussed the devolution of policing and justice.

Executive Confidentiality

Mr G Savage asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline from where Executive Ministers take their advice in relation to Executive confidentiality. (AQW 1981/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Executive has agreed a protocol on confidentiality, the terms of which all Ministers are required to take into account in relation to the business of the Executive.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps have been, or will be, taken by their Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 1984/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 prohibits public authorities from discriminating against disabled people when carrying out public functions. The Act also imposes a duty on public authorities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in relation to the carrying out of public functions. The duty requires public authorities to anticipate the requirements of disabled people and the adjustments that may be needed.

The department's Disability Action Plan 2008-2011 states amongst its actions that it will pursue "measures to promote positive attitude towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life".

Access to services requires good information, documentation and access to that information. This department strives to ensure that all its information is fully accessible. Correspondingly our Disability Action Plan states that "In line with NICS practice, OFMDFM's website will be 'single A' compliant (shows compliance with all priority 1 checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and strive to meet 'AA' standards (shows compliance with all priority 1 and priority 2 checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Alternative formats can be made available where necessary." Our action plan also undertook to review and reissue guidance on accessible venues for departmental events. This was done in January 2009.

Para 5.8 of our Equality Scheme states that "Consideration will be given to accessibility of language and format of information in order to establish if there are any barriers to the consultation process, and if so, to ensure that these are removed. Accordingly, translations and alternative formats will be provided in a timely fashion. Issues concerning access to information highlighted in Section 9 "Public Access to Information and Services" will be given particular consideration. Taking into account the views of consultees, information will be made available on request in accessible formats, including Braille, large print, audiocassette, signed video cassette and in minority ethnic languages."

Our department's publications include information on how to obtain copies in alternative formats. On request, documents are produced in Braille, Digital Daisy and large print formats to meet the needs of partially sighted and blind people. For example we used the Royal National Institute of Blind People's services this year to produce a number of documents in Braille and digital daisy format.

Our department regularly reviews the level of service we provide to blind and partially sighted people through our Disability Action Plan.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much has been spent by their Department on media training for staff in each of the last five years. (AQW 2046/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Within our Department nothing has been spent on media training in each of the last five financial years.

Promoting Social Inclusion Report

Mrs M O'Neill asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Promoting Social Inclusion report. (AQW 2064/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Five subgroups comprising representatives from various disability organisations and officials from Government departments, were established to take forward the work on the themes outlined below:

- Access to Employment;
- Children, Young People and their Families;
- Housing, Transport, Information and Access;
- Legislation, Citizenship, Language and Attitudes; and
- Lifelong Learning, Arts, Sports and Culture.

The reports from the five sub-groups have been completed and a composite report, complete with recommendations, will be presented to Ministers shortly.

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if their Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

(AQW 2156/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Department of the Environment has lead policy responsibility for Climate Change and is the primary point of contact with the Committee on Climate Change. The Minister of the Environment liaises with the Committee on Climate Change on behalf of Executive colleagues and keeps Departments informed of the ongoing work of the Committee.

Executive Papers

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what time must have elapsed before Executive papers are available for public scrutiny.

(AQW 2218/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Official documents are eligible for release after 30 years.

An independent panel set up to review the operation of the 30-year rule recommended a reduction to 15 years in its January 2009 report. However, the Prime Minister in a statement to the House of Commons on 10 June 2009 said his government would strengthen protection for information concerning the Royal family and for Cabinet Papers, and would “reduce the time for release of all other official documents below the current 30 years, to 20 years”. On 31 July 2009, in response to correspondence on this subject from Michael Wills MP, Minister of State in the Ministry of Justice, we indicated our support for this reduction.

To date no legislation has been brought forward to bring about the aforementioned changes.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff Travel Costs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much was spent by her Department on staff travel cost claims in the last financial year.

(AQW 1876/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The amount spent on staff travel cost claims was £3,900,170.72

Work Beyond the Age of 65

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many staff within her Department have applied to work beyond the age of 65; and how many of these applications were granted, for each year since 2006.

(AQW 1899/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: On 1 October 2006 the default age for retirement within the NICS was set at age 65, however, staff could apply to continue working beyond this age. The following summary reflects the number of applications and approvals between 1 October 2006 and 31 August 2008.

	2006	2007	2008
Applications	Nil	5- all approved	5- all approved

On 1 September 2008 the default age for retirement was removed and staff were no longer required to make formal application to continue working after their 65th birthday.

However, for completeness I can confirm that an additional 12 staff have reached the age of 65 since 1 September 2008 and continued to work in the Department.

Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has supported, either verbally, in writing, or by any other means of communication, any individual projects being undertaken under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. (AQW 1975/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I can confirm that I have not issued any communication written or otherwise to support a specific project(s) undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. However in my role as a constituency Member of Parliament I have offered my support to a number of constituency based projects submitted under the programme. All applications to Axis 3 are independently scrutinised for eligibility and assessed by an independent panel made up of voluntary members of statutory bodies and the social sector within the rural community. Projects achieving the pass mark or above at assessment are then eligible to be funded within the implementation budget of the area. These projects are recommended to the Joint Council Committee and then a letter of offer is issued. Throughout the process there is the right to ask for a review of any decision and this is dealt with by the Joint Council Committee. At no point in the process do I as Minister have a role to play.

Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many letters she has sent to projects that are being undertaken under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme; and to detail the purpose of each of these letters. (AQW 1976/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I can confirm that I have not issued any communication written or otherwise to support a specific project(s) undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. However in my role as a constituency Member of Parliament I have offered my support to a number of constituency based projects submitted under the programme. All applications to Axis 3 are independently scrutinised for eligibility and assessed by an independent panel made up of voluntary members of statutory bodies and the social sector within the rural community. Projects achieving the pass mark or above at assessment are then eligible to be funded within the implementation budget of the area. These projects are recommended to the Joint Council Committee and then a letter of offer is issued. Throughout the process there is the right to ask for a review of any decision and this is dealt with by the Joint Council Committee. At no point in the process do I as Minister have a role to play.

Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the basis of all correspondence she has had with individual projects being undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. (AQW 1977/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I can confirm that I have not issued any correspondence to support a specific project(s) undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. However in my role as a constituency Member of Parliament I have offered my support to a number of constituency based projects submitted under the programme. All applications to Axis 3

are independently scrutinised for eligibility and assessed by an independent panel made up of voluntary members of statutory bodies and the social sector within the rural community. Projects achieving the pass mark or above at assessment are then eligible to be funded within the implementation budget of the area. These projects are recommended to the Joint Council Committee and then a letter of offer is issued.

Throughout the process there is the right to ask for a review of any decision and this is dealt with by the Joint Council Committee. At no point in the process do I as Minister have a role to play.

Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has sent any letters of support for individual projects that are being undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme.

(AQW 1978/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I can confirm that I have not issued any letters to support a specific project(s) undertaken as part of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. However in my role as a constituency Member of Parliament I have offered my support to a number of constituency based projects submitted under the programme. All applications to Axis 3 are independently scrutinised for eligibility and assessed by an independent panel made up of voluntary members of statutory bodies and the social sector within the rural community. Projects achieving the pass mark or above at assessment are then eligible to be funded within the implementation budget of the area. These projects are recommended to the Joint Council Committee and then a letter of offer is issued.

Throughout the process there is the right to ask for a review of any decision and this is dealt with by the Joint Council Committee. At no point in the process do I as Minister have a role to play.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been, or will be, taken by her Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people.

(AQW 1985/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has been working hard to raise awareness of the issues impacting on blind and partially sighted people and have taken a number of positive actions to help deal with the barriers many face when accessing our services.

My Equality team have been engaging with key organisations on how we can make our services even more accessible. RNIB representatives recently addressed a meeting of our Equality Steering Group. At this meeting they outlined the work of RNIB and specific measures that we can put in place to ensure that people who are blind or have limited vision are able to access and utilise public information, services and publications.

All Departmental publications include an accessibility statement outlining how alternative formats can be requested and who to contact.

I am pleased to advise that this year my Department's Business Plan and Disability Action Plan have been pro-actively published in a wide range of accessible formats to help underline the Department's commitment to making its services as accessible as possible. These publications have been prepared using Plain English and other formats available upfront for customers have included Easyread, Braille and audio CD / mp3 formats.

A cd with all word, pdf and audio files has also been prepared and availability of this and other formats have been circulated widely to stakeholders and key equality organisations. We have sought comments and feedback on these pro-active developments and how our service could be improved further. Our business areas are being encouraged to proactively produce more of their publications in these alternative formats.

This year we have also contributed to RNID's talking newspaper in which we provided a brief outline of my Department's role and the work of the Equality Unit. We aim to provide more audio articles in the future to highlight topics of interest to our customers, for example, information about open days at our Forest Parks or about events such as the Balmoral Show.

Complimentary tickets were provided to several equality focused organisations including RNIB for them to use to encourage their membership to consider attending the 2009 Balmoral Show.

The Department has just recently initiated a formal review of its Internet web-presence. As part of that review and other work in relation to the Department's Intranet it has already accessed the RNIB's guidance which provides information and advice on making websites accessible to everyone. The RNIB guidance, which recognises that web accessibility is a pan-disability subject and encompasses people with sight problems, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments, will be fully factored into the review.

The College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) website offers a Browse Aloud program to allow it to become speech enabled. Any visitors with reading/vision difficulties will be able to position the mouse over an area of the web page, which in turn will be spoken out. The site is designed according to the recommendations of the Learning Skills Development Agency (LSDA) to ensure accessibility to students with specific learning difficulties. It uses Arial font size 14 in black against a white background to improve readability in the main bodies of text. The page font can also be altered.

Students are given opportunities to make a disclosure of their disability at every stage of the application process. Students can also make arrangements for assistance when they come to College open days for recruitment. Once a student has made a disclosure of disability they are directed to the Student Support Officer who guides them through the process of applying for Disabled Student Allowance.

Where a student discloses that they are blind or partially sighted and have been accepted onto a course they are invited into the College in advance of starting their course to agree Reasonable Adjustments and to get an Assessment of their Needs carried out to enable support mechanisms to be in place from enrolment.

Reasonable adjustments by lecturers can include: provision of OHP materials and handouts prior to the start of the lesson; written material printed on coloured paper; written materials presented in 12-point type or above; a Risk assessment (s) to be completed; access to computer for assessments and being allowed to tape lectures.

Items which may be required if confirmed by needs assessment are: provision of a laptop computer; provision of Dictaphone; extended library borrowings; access to voice activated software; access to other specialist software; extra time for internal/external assessments; a reader for internal / external assessments; a scribe for internal/external assessments; a helper in class and study support.

Within formal Forest Service recreation areas, all paths are colour coded by difficulty. Colours used provide sufficient contrast for partially-sighted people. Paths describes as easily accessible, are maintained to: be free of physical barriers; have level surfaces; have clearly defined edges; have a "clear corridor" (no overhanging branches), have tactile way-markers.

In October 2009, Forest Service and RNIB arranged a visit to one of these paths by a group of partially-sighted / blind people. Feed back received was positive, and suggestions for minor improvements have been recorded.

My Department's Disability Forum which was established in 2002 aims to encourage staff with disabilities to debate general issues which affect them in the work place. The Forum has worked steadily to help raise awareness of disability issues in DARD, and members have taken forward a range of projects and group work over the years, such as writing articles, developing a disability intranet site, speaking at events, considering accessibility issues and providing comments on consultation documents.

Equality Branch launched an electronic newssheet in November 2008 and this has issued on a regular basis to DARD business areas. This e-zine is proving to be a useful and practical way to keep policy makers up-to-date about the latest equality news including advice and publications on all accessibility related matters. We also provide advice to our business areas on developing accessible formats for customers through our Intranet and Internet sites.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what provision is made by her Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people. (AQW 2037/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department has been working hard to raise awareness of the issues impacting on blind and partially sighted people and have taken a number of positive actions to help deal with the barriers many face when accessing our services.

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Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been spent by her Department on media training for staff in each of the last five years. (AQW 2047/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has spent the following on media training in each of the last 5 years:

2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Nil	£2,200	Nil	£1,590	Nil

Independent Review Panels

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the usefulness of Independent Review Panels, given that its decisions can, and have been, overturned by the Minister, for example on Single Farm Payments when a farmer successfully appealed her Department's decision. (AQW 2119/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Independent Review Panel brings a valuable element to the process of decision making. The Panel views are important as they allow my Department to objectively assess its decisions. Experience shows that in over 90% of cases the Panel recommendations are accepted in full and in a further 3% of cases are accepted in part.

However, the Panel do not make decisions they make recommendations which are not binding on my Department. This is because my Department is the Paying Agency and I and my officials have responsibilities to make decisions based on reasonable and relevant grounds in terms of the strict and often narrow requirements of EU legislation.

Where a Panel recommendation appears inconsistent with the legislation we are sensitive to the views of the Panel and, before reaching a decision, we carefully examine all the relevant information to ensure that we have considered all the options open to us within the EU rules.

However, given the concerns raised by the farming industry I have instructed my Department to initiate a review of the Single Farm Payment Review of Decisions process. This Review will be managed by a project group which will include the UFU and NIAPA. To ensure objectivity and impartiality, the Review will be undertaken by independent consultants.

Milk Producers

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the financial benefits that milk producers can expect to receive as a result of the 280m euro support funding announced in Brussels on 19th October 2009. (AQW 2120/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I welcome the proposal for additional help for the dairy sector made by the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 19 October. Following the significant lobbying which I and my Executive colleagues did over the past twelve months to help the dairy industry through these challenging times, I am pleased that the European Commissioner continues to monitor the situation closely and bring forward positive proposals. However, at this stage I am not able to say to what extent our dairy farmers will benefit from the €280 million fund which we estimate equates to about 0.18 pence per litre. The proposal first of all requires the approval of EU Finance Ministers who meet on 19 November. To date we have had no detail on how the money may be used. In addition, should the British Government not support this measure on 19 November and then seek to refuse to provide additional funds for this purpose, this could disadvantage our dairy farmers compared to those in other EU countries.

Wild Deer

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail what measures are in place to control wild deer given recent public safety incidents. (AQW 2154/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department is responsible for the welfare of farmed animals and has in place a Code of Recommendations for the welfare of farmed deer to encourage all those responsible for looking after these animals to adopt the highest standards of husbandry.

The Code, made under Section 3 of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972, relates to all farmed deer and recommends as essential, a high standard of perimeter fencing, of around 2.0m high (6ft 6in) to prevent escape.

The Code applies to all farmed deer but it is not intended to apply to wild deer which may be on agricultural land but are not within the occupier's control. However, observance of the Code is recommended even in circumstances where the 1972 Act does not apply.

I understand that the Environment Minister intends to bring forward a Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill. Part of the Bill is concerned with the management of the wild deer population here. It is intended to mitigate the impacts from deer in certain circumstances by giving the DOE broader powers to issue licences to kill, injure or take any (fallow, red or sika) deer during the close season. It will allow licences to be issued for the purposes of preserving public health or safety, conserving the natural heritage or preventing serious damage to property.

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government. (AQW 2157/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department have not sought advice on agriculture issues from the independent Committee on Climate Change, established by the British Government, as their work programme to date has concentrated more on issues such as low-carbon power, buildings emissions and transportation. While these areas impact on all sectors, including agriculture, I have noted the Committee's

forward work programme which includes non-carbon emissions such as methane and nitrous oxide, both of which are very relevant to agriculture production.

I will take their recommendations and future work into account in future policy development.

While the Committee's work is important it remains my responsibility to decide on measures, levers and mechanisms appropriate for tackling climate change here in the north of Ireland. My approach is to work with stakeholders to find ways to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change while at the same time continue to produce food to meet growing market demands. Displacement of production to other countries will not reduce emissions.

I have discussed climate change with other Ministers and my officials are actively engaged with the Rural Climate Change Forum and other administrations to establish robust measurement and reporting tools through green house gas inventories. My officials also sit on the Defra led Carbon Budget Working Group.

Policy areas are currently being developed and include land management, nutrient management, livestock management and renewable energy all of which require a sound scientific base for the changes that will deliver deep emissions reductions.

Local Action Groups or Joint Council Committees

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has had any correspondence with Local Action Groups or Joint Council Committees since the beginning of this calendar year; and if so, to detail the basis for the correspondence. (AQW 2159/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I have had numerous items of correspondence with Local Action Groups and Joint Council Committees as detailed in the table appended (Appendix 1).

APPENDIX 1

Date Received	Description	Organisation	Return date
27/01/2009	Invitation to the Council's Agricultural Diversification event	Limavady Borough council	12/02/2009
29/01/2009	Invitation to attend the Launch of GROW South Antrim	GROW South Antrim	10/02/2009
02/02/2009	Invitation on SOAR Launch on 25/2/09	SOAR - Craigavon borough Council	11/02/2009
06/02/2009	Invitation to Launch of RDP in North West on 18/3/09	Omagh District Council (North West Cluster)	16/02/2009
16/02/2009	Invitation to Lagan Rural Partnership Launch on 12/3/09	Lagan Rural Partnership	23/02/2009
18/02/2009	Invitation to North East Region Launch w/c 6/4/09	Ballymena Borough Council	02/03/2009
19/05/2009	Invitation to Programme Launch at Down Rural Partnership	Ards Borough Council	27/05/2009
05/06/2009	Invitation for a meeting to discuss progression of the contract between DARD and JCC's	SOAR - Craigavon Borough Council	11/06/2009
16/07/2009	Invitation to opening of first call	SOAR - Craigavon borough Council	23/07/2009
07/10/2009	Invitation to speak at event for the issue of SWARD Letters of Offer	SWARD	Ongoing
13/01/2009	Letter re implementation of the 2007-2013 RDP	Ballymoney Borough Council	28/01/2009
04/03/2009	Letter from SWARD about Axis 4 of the RDP	Chair SWARD	18/03/2009

Date Received	Description	Organisation	Return date
28/05/2009	Letter from SWARD re provision of scoring framework for Axis 3 applications	SWARD JCC Chair	04/06/2009
23/06/2009	Letter about Public Accountability Training	Carrickfergus Borough Council	29/06/2009
11/08/09	Letter following meeting with Cappagh Village Regeneration Group	Chair SWARD	11/08/09

Local Action Groups or Joint Council Committees

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has met with any representatives from Local Action Groups or joint Council Committees since the beginning of this calendar year; and if so, to detail the reason for those meetings. (AQW 2160/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural development I have met with representatives of Local Action Groups and Joint Council Committees at a number of events and launches that I have attended since 1st January 2009. These are detailed in the table below.

Date of attendance	Description/Reason for meeting	Invitation From	Organisation
28/01/09	Launch of NIRDP at Loughry	DARD	
25/02/2009	Invitation to SOAR Launch	Maria Magennis	SOAR - Craigavon Borough Council
18/02/2009	Invitation to North east Region Launch w/c 6/4/09	Eammon Matthews	Ballymena Borough council
18/03/2009	Invitation to Launch of RDP in North West on 18/3/09	Alison McCullagh	Omagh District Council (North West cluster)
30/03/2009	Invitation to NI Rural Woman's Network – Annual Conference - Opportunities offered by Axis 3 for rural women	Nora Smith	NIRWN
25/09/2009	Invitation to NI Rural Woman's Network – to host an event for women in LAG's	Mary Duggan	NIRWN

* this was not LAG and JCC specific but was whole programme

Cappagh Village

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has had any communication, verbal, written or otherwise, with South West Action for Rural Development, Joint Council Committees or Local Actions Groups, concerning Cappagh Village, or the Cappagh Village Regeneration Group; and if so, to detail the purpose of those communications. (AQW 2161/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I met with members of the Cappagh Village Regeneration Group, at their invitation, in Cappagh on 4 August 2009. I subsequently wrote to the Chair of South West Action for Rural Development to inform them of the meeting, the discussions held and to stress the importance of ensuring that levels of deprivation are key criteria in the implementation of their 'Village Renewal and Development' measure.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Ulster Scots Agency's Musical and Dance Tuition Scheme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many applications have been received for the Ulster Scots Agency's musical and dance tuition scheme. (AQW 1924/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): The Ulster-Scots Agency has received 345 applications for funding under its 'Community Tuition Scheme' for the 2010 calendar year. The scheme includes projects relating to musical and dance tuition.

Ulster Scots Agency's Musical and Dance Tuition Scheme

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps he is taking to address the £800,000 shortfall in funding for the Ulster Scots Agency's musical and dance tuition scheme. (AQW 1925/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Board of the Ulster-Scots Agency has considered 345 applications for funding from its 'Community Tuition Scheme' for the next calendar year.

The Agency has allocated £750k to the Community Tuition Scheme in 2010. This equates to twice the amount of funding committed to the scheme in 2009 and reflects the Agency's priorities and objectives as set out in its draft 2010 Business Plan.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much has been spent by his Department on media training for staff in each of the last five years. (AQW 2048/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Within the last 5 years the Department has spent a total of £3,645.00 for Media Training. This includes training provided by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) which is the sole provider of generic training for the NICS and other external providers.

Staff at the Ulster Museum

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQO 263/10, to outline the difficulties regarding the staff at the Ulster Museum. (AQW 2058/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Throughout the planning and execution of the Ulster Museum refurbishing work, the welfare of the staff was a paramount issue. There has been a voluntary early retirement scheme in operation and staff could avail of the opportunity to leave the organisation rather than be redeployed. This scheme was sanctioned by trade union side. For those who decided to remain with the organisation but did not want to transfer to Cultra every effort was made to find alternative employment within National Museums.

It is recognised that change of the type involved with the refurbishment has the capacity to produce a degree of uncertainty. It should be noted that there was no compulsory redundancy and that every effort was made to accommodate the staff. The staff redeployed to Cultra are now accommodated in new state of the art offices.

'Green and White Army- The Fans' Story' DVD

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline what discussions his Department has had, or intends to have, with the Irish Football Association and the Amalgamation of Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs with a view to increasing access to, and widening distribution of, the 'Green and White Army- The Fans' Story' DVD. (AQW 2110/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for increasing access to, and widening distribution of, the 'Green and White Army – The Fans' Story' DVD rests, in the first instance, with the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs. I have, however, had

sight of the DVD and I welcome the excellent work undertaken by the IFA and the Northern Ireland fans in creating a more inclusive environment and atmosphere at international matches.

Sport Governing Bodies

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list all sport governing bodies currently operating in Northern Ireland. (AQW 2155/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. The list below indicates those governing bodies of sport operating in Northern Ireland that are recognised by SNI.

- 2&4 Wheel Motorsport Steering Group Limited
- Association of NI Car Clubs
- Athletics NI
- Basketball NI
- British Horse Society NI Region
- Canoe Association of NI
- Cycling Ulster
- DanceSport NI Limited
- Disability Sport NI
- Fitness NI
- Golfing Union of Ireland Ulster Branch
- Gymnastics NI
- Irish Bowling Association
- Irish Football Association
- Irish Indoor Bowling Association
- Irish Ladies Golf Union NI Region
- Irish Water Ski Federation NI Sub Committee
- Irish Women's Bowling Association
- Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association
- Motorcycle Union of Ireland Ulster Centre
- Motorcycle Racing Association
- Mountaineering Ireland
- National Chinese & Association Martial Arts
- Netball NI
- NI Aikido Association
- NI Amateur Weightlifters' Association
- NI American Football Association
- NI Archery Society
- NI Association of Aeromodellers
- NI Billiards and Snooker Association
- NI Blind Sports
- NI Cricket Association
- NI Equestrian Sports Committee
- NI Federation of Sub Aqua Clubs
- NI Fencing Union
- NI Ice Skating Association
- NI Ju Jitsu Association

- NI Judo Federation
- NI Karate Board
- NI Karting Association
- NI Orienteering
- NI Pike Society
- NI Pool Association
- NI Small bore Shooting Union
- NI Surfing Association
- NI Ten Pin Bowling Federation
- NI Tug of War Association
- NI Volleyball Association
- NI Wrestling Association
- Rowing Ireland Ulster Branch
- Royal Life Saving Society NI
- Royal Scottish Country Dance Society
- Royal Yachting Association (NIC)
- Shooting Federation of NI
- Speleological Union of Ireland
- Swim Ulster Limited
- Taekwondo Association of NI
- Ulster Branch Badminton Union of Ireland
- Ulster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union
- Ulster Branch Irish Table Tennis Association
- Ulster Branch Irish Triathlon Association
- Ulster Branch Tennis Ireland
- Ulster Angling Federation
- Ulster Camogie Council
- Ulster Clay Pigeon Shooting Association
- Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation
- Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association
- Ulster Council Irish Sea Anglers
- Ulster Council Racquetball Association of Ireland
- Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs
- Ulster Flying Club
- Ulster Gliding Club
- Ulster Handball Council
- Ulster Hang Gliding & Paragliding Club
- Ulster Hockey Union
- Ulster Karate Council
- Ulster Provincial Council Irish Amateur Boxing Association
- Ulster Rifle Association
- Ulster Squash
- Yoga Fellowship of NI
- Nelson McCausland MLA

Committee on Climate Change

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if his Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

(AQW 2158/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has not sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change.

Under the Programme for Government DCAL contributes to Sustainable Development and Biodiversity Strategies and has agreed to participate in the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC).

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Backlog in School Maintenance

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what is the extent of the backlog in school maintenance in monetary terms.

(AQW 853/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): De réir chóras bainistíochta eastát na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, tá riaráiste cothabhála scoile de £272m ann.

According to the Education and Library Boards' estate management system the school maintenance backlog is £272m.

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education (i) to outline the status of the business plan she submitted to the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General relating to the Middletown Autism Centre; (ii) if that plan has now changed; (iii) if she now intends to submit a new proposal; and if so (iv) when she intends to present the revised business plan to the Assembly.

(AQW 1416/10)

Minister of Education: Ba mhaith liom a chur in iúl nár cuireadh plean gnó faoi bhráid na hOifige Iniúchóireachta maidir le hIonad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin (MCA).

I should first of all explain that a business plan has not been submitted to the Audit Office in relation to the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA).

As a result of a material change in building costs for the MCA, a revised economic appraisal was submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in December 2008 and has not been revised since that date.

I remain committed to the Middletown project, which is a pioneering north/south initiative that already delivers a range of innovative new services in order to improve the education of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders in partnership with families and existing statutory and voluntary service providers.

School Governors

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to list (i) the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who were not reappointed under the reconstitution of the Boards for 2009-13, including the schools involved; and (ii) the School Governors who resigned from their posts.

(AQW 1542/10)

Minister of Education: I have arranged for lists to be placed in the Assembly Library of:-

- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) were not reappointed to their schools; or
 - (ii) have resigned from their schools.

- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) have been reappointed to their schools; and
 - (ii) the schools to which they have been reappointed.

Léiríonn an tábla seo thíos an staid reatha i dtaca le líon na nGobharnóirí Scoile i limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ar athcheapadh iad nó nár athcheapadh iad, faoin bheart athchóirithe reatha.

The table below shows current position on the number of School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who, under the current reconstitution exercise, were reappointed or not reappointed.

Type of Representative	Number Reappointed	Number Not Reappointed*
Board	328	1
Transferor	241	43**
Teacher	15	11***
Parent	16	30***
Department	87	10

* The figures exclude those who have resigned.

** The transferor representatives are nominated or renominated by the relevant Protestant churches. Those not reappointed are those not renominated and may include representatives who have decided not to volunteer to serve for another term of office.

***The teacher and parent governors “not reappointed” are those who decided not to stand again for election, or were not re-elected.

None of the controlled or maintained schools in the South Eastern Education & Library Board’s area have had their Boards of Governors fully reconstituted at this stage. These schools are normally reconstituted in the first term of the school year with the election of parent and teacher governors taking place mid-term in October and November. Existing governors are expected to remain in post until their successors are appointed.

The lists exclude grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools.

School Governors

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education (i) to list the School Governors of the South Eastern Education and Library Board area that have been reappointed under the reconstitution for 2009-13; and (ii) to which schools they have been reappointed. (AQW 1544/10)

Minister of Education: I have arranged for lists to be placed in the Assembly Library of:-

- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) were not reappointed to their schools; or
 - (ii) have resigned from their schools.
- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) have been reappointed to their schools; and
 - (ii) the schools to which they have been reappointed.

Léiríonn an tábla seo thíos an staid reatha i dtaca le líon na nGobharnóirí Scoile i limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ar athcheapadh iad nó nár athcheapadh iad, faoin bheart athchóirithe reatha.

The table below shows current position on the number of School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who, under the current reconstitution exercise, were reappointed or not reappointed.

Type of Representative	Number Reappointed	Number Not Reappointed*
Board	328	1

Type of Representative	Number Reappointed	Number Not Reappointed*
Transferor	241	43**
Teacher	15	11***
Parent	16	30***
Department	87	10

* The figures exclude those who have resigned.

** The transferor representatives are nominated or renominated by the relevant Protestant churches. Those not reappointed are those not renominated and may include representatives who have decided not to volunteer to serve for another term of office.

***The teacher and parent governors “not reappointed” are those who decided not to stand again for election, or were not re-elected.

None of the controlled or maintained schools in the South Eastern Education & Library Board’s area have had their Boards of Governors fully reconstituted at this stage. These schools are normally reconstituted in the first term of the school year with the election of parent and teacher governors taking place mid-term in October and November. Existing governors are expected to remain in post until their successors are appointed.

The lists exclude grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools.

School Governors

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to list the schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area which (i) have had their Boards of Governors reconstituted for 2009-13; and (ii) have not had their Boards of Governors reconstituted for 2009-13. (AQW 1546/10)

Minister of Education: I have arranged for lists to be placed in the Assembly Library of:-

- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) were not reappointed to their schools; or
 - (ii) have resigned from their schools.
- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) have been reappointed to their schools; and
 - (ii) the schools to which they have been reappointed.

Léiríonn an tábla seo thíos an staid reatha i dtaca le líon na nGobharnóirí Scoile i limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ar athcheapadh iad nó nár athcheapadh iad, faoin bheart athchóirithe reatha.

The table below shows current position on the number of School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who, under the current reconstitution exercise, were reappointed or not reappointed.

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Board	328	1
Transferor	241	43**
Teacher	15	11***
Parent	16	30***
Department	87	10

* The figures exclude those who have resigned.

** The transferor representatives are nominated or renominated by the relevant Protestant churches. Those not reappointed are those not renominated and may include representatives who have decided not to volunteer to serve for another term of office.

***The teacher and parent governors “not reappointed” are those who decided not to stand again for election, or were not re-elected.

None of the controlled or maintained schools in the South Eastern Education & Library Board’s area have had their Boards of Governors fully reconstituted at this stage. These schools are normally reconstituted in the first

term of the school year with the election of parent and teacher governors taking place mid-term in October and November. Existing governors are expected to remain in post until their successors are appointed.

The lists exclude grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools.

School Governors

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who were (i) reappointed; and (ii) not reappointed, under the reconstitution of the Boards of Governors for 2009-13, broken down by (a) Board representatives; (b) transfer representatives; (c) teacher representatives; and (d) parent representatives. (AQW 1549/10)

Minister of Education: I have arranged for lists to be placed in the Assembly Library of:-

- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) were not reappointed to their schools; or
 - (ii) have resigned from their schools.
- the School Governors in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area who under the current reconstitution exercise:
 - (i) have been reappointed to their schools; and
 - (ii) the schools to which they have been reappointed.

Léiríonn an tábla seo thíos an staid reatha i dtaca le líon na nGobharnóirí Scoile i limistéar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ar athcheapadh iad nó nár athcheapadh iad, faoin bheart athchóirithe reatha.

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***The teacher and parent governors “not reappointed” are those who decided not to stand again for election, or were not re-elected.

None of the controlled or maintained schools in the South Eastern Education & Library Board’s area have had their Boards of Governors fully reconstituted at this stage. These schools are normally reconstituted in the first term of the school year with the election of parent and teacher governors taking place mid-term in October and November. Existing governors are expected to remain in post until their successors are appointed.

The lists exclude grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools.

Allegations of Abuse of Children

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education what record her Department keeps of allegations of abuse of children which occurred when (i) in a school building; and (ii) engaged in a school activity outside school property. (AQW 1580/10)

Minister of Education: Tá cosaint leanaí fíor-thábhachtach agus tá ról lárnach suntasach ag scoileanna chun páistí a chosaint. Caithfear gach líomhain mí-úsáid leanaí a chuirtear in iúl don fhoireann scoile a thuairisciú do na gníomhaíochtaí cigireachta, seirbhísí sóisialta nó na péas.

Child protection is of paramount importance and schools have a very particular and significant role to play in safeguarding children. All allegations of child abuse which are made to schools' staff must be reported to the investigation agencies, either social services or the police.

Not all allegations of child abuse relate to abuse on the school premises or to situations where the child was involved in a school activity. Indeed at any time allegations of child abuse which are under investigation may not have been referred through a school and schools may only be involved at the stage of a multi-agency plan to support the child and his/her family.

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

Foilsíonn na gníomhaíochtaí cigireachta staitisticí ar líon na líomhaintí tarchurtha agus foinsí na líomhaintí seo. Statistics about the number of allegations referred and their source is published by the investigating agencies.

Cambridge Primary Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the finding of the Cambridge Primary Review that children should not begin formal learning until age six. (AQW 1867/10)

Minister of Education: I am aware of the Cambridge Primary Review and its findings. I am also aware that we have the youngest starting age to formal learning in Europe. My Department is currently preparing the Early Years (0-6) Strategy, which will be published for consultation early in 2010. I expect the Strategy to consider how we manage the transition from pre-school to the Foundation Stage of the revised curriculum, which aims to ensure that children are introduced to education in a way and a pace that takes account of their age and level of maturity.

The school starting age was reduced from 5 years to 4 years and 2 months under the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 which also brought in a range of major education reforms including a new statutory curriculum.

Bhí sé mar bhunaidhm ag an ord seo go mbeadh P1 ar comhbhrí le bliain naíolainne, ach díreach ina dhiaidh seo, cuireadh an curaclam foirmiúil i bhfeidhm ar pháistí i mórán scoileanna. Is é is aidhm do Bhonnchém an churaclaim athbhreithnithe deireadh a chur leis an gcleachtadh seo.

The original intention was that P1 would be equivalent to a nursery year but in many schools children in P1 were quickly introduced to the formal curriculum. The Foundation Stage of the revised curriculum is designed to eliminate this practice.

Visits to Schools

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education how many visits she has made to (i) Controlled schools; (ii) Maintained schools; and (iii) Integrated schools, in the last year. (AQW 1887/10)

Minister of Education: Sa bhliain a chuaigh thart, thug mé 10 cuairt ar Scoileanna Rialaithe, 29 cuairt ar Scoileanna faoi Chothabháil, agus 5 cuairt ar Scoileanna Imeachtha.

In the last year I have made 11 visits to Controlled schools, 29 visits to Maintained schools and 5 visits to Integrated schools.

Byron Review

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what steps she has taken to implement the recommendations of the Byron Review. (AQW 1909/10)

Minister of Education: Tá an fhreagracht as cur i bhfeidhm na moltaí ó Athbhreithniú Byron ar an Fhochoiste Aireachta ar an Fhoghrúpa um Dhaoine Óga a Chosaint a bhfuil an Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí (DHSSPS) mar chathaoirleach air.

Implementation here of the recommendations of the Byron Review 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 improvements in the way we keep children safe in the digital world which extends way beyond the classroom and school. 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 established to deal with the full range of Byron Report recommendations and the Department represents the interests of the education sector here on this. As a member of the Working Group we will be contributing to the Council on Child Internet Safety's strategy and action plan which is due to be published late this year.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education what provision is made by her Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially sighted people. (AQW 1931/10)

Minister of Education: Cuireann mo Roinn Doiciméid Comhairliúcháin ar fáil i bhformáidí eile de réir mar a iarrtar, mar shampla i gcló mór, i mBraille, ar chloschaiséad, i bhformáid furasta le léamh agus ar dhiosca ríomhaire do dhaoine atá dall nó lagradharcach. Chomh maith leis sin, sonraítear i Scéim Fhoilsitheoireachta na Roinne Oideachais gur féidir doiciméid na Roinne a chur ar fáil i réimse formáidí malartacha má iarrtar iad.

My Department offers Consultation Documents in other formats as requested, such as, large print, Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disk for blind and partially sighted people. In addition DE's Publication Scheme states that the Department's documents can be made available in a range of alternative formats upon request.

Mental Well-Being

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what consideration her Department has given to the adoption of a 'whole-school' approach to mental well-being across primary and post-primary education. (AQW 1933/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár na Roinne um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúcháin na nDaltaí, a bheidh dírithe ar an earnáil iarbhunscoile i dtosach, á fhorbairt i gcomhpháirtíocht le réimse leathan páirtithe leasmhara ríthábhachtacha ó scoileanna agus ón earnáil pobail agus dheonach, lena n-áirítear feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí. Cuirfidh an Clár seo, nuair atá sé bunaithe, go mór leis na straitéisí níos forleithne atá ann chun sláinte mheabhrach inár bpobal a fheabhsú.

My Department's Pupils' Emotional Health and Well-Being Programme, which will focus on the post-primary sector initially, is being developed in partnership with a very broad range of key stakeholders from schools, the voluntary and community sector including officials from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Programme, once it is established, will make a significant contribution to the wider strategies around improving mental health in our community.

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- Self Assessment by schools of their approach to emotional health and wellbeing;
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- Identification of existing good practice in schools and its dissemination;
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- Preparation of new guidance for schools on the management of critical incidents and a review of our current arrangements to support schools when an incident occurs.

Underpinning much of this development is the need to have a shared or agreed understanding of what is meant by 'pupils' emotional health and wellbeing. A definition has now been developed and agreed.

Research has been commissioned to evaluate assessment tools which schools can use to audit the range of their activities which contribute to promoting positive emotional health and their appropriateness for schools here. We expect the report in February next year.

Discussions are in hand around building on an existing directory of services for children and young people and moving it to a web-based facility which schools can access. Interface with a DHSSPS database is also under active consideration.

New guidance for schools on the preparation for and management of critical incidents will be available early in 2010. A protocol for a regional approach to the management of critical incidents by services which support schools is in preparation.

No consideration has been given to scoring of schools based on the well-being of their pupils as yet.

Scoring Schools

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what consideration her Department has given to scoring schools based on the well-being of their pupils. (AQW 1935/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár na Roinne um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúchánach na nDaltaí, a bheidh dírithe ar an earnáil iarbhunscoile i dtosach, á fhorbairt i gcomhpháirtíocht le réimse leathan páirtithe leasmhara ríthábhachtacha ó scoileanna agus ón earnáil pobail agus dheonach, lena n-áirítear feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí. Cuirfidh an Clár seo, nuair atá sé bunaithe, go mór leis na straitéisí níos forleithne atá ann chun sláinte mheabhrach inár bpobal a fheabhsú.

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Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what action her Department is taking to support schools in protecting and promoting the emotional health and mental well-being of children and young people.

(AQW 1939/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár na Roinne um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúchánach na nDaltaí, a bheidh dírithe ar an earnáil iarbhunscoile i dtosach, á fhorbairt i gcomhpháirtíocht le réimse leathan páirtithe leasmhara ríthábhachtacha ó scoileanna agus ón earnáil pobail agus dheonach, lena n-áirítear feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí. Cuirfidh an Clár seo, nuair atá sé bunaithe, go mór leis na straitéisí níos forleithne atá ann chun sláinte mheabhrach inár bpobal a fheabhsú.

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School Nurses

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how many mainstream schools employ or have access to a school nurse; and of those schools, how many pupils are in receipt of a Care Plan. (AQW 1949/10)

Minister of Education: Tá banaltra ainmnithe ag gach scoil sa tuaisceart atá fostaithe ag an tseirbhís um shláinte i scoileanna sna hIontaobhais, atá freagrach as an Chlár um Chur Chun Cinn Sláinte Páistí a sholáthar do pháistí i ngach scoil. Cuimsíonn an clár vacsaíniú, measúnú sláinte, athbhreithniú ar fhorbairt, scagthástáil ar chloisteáil agus ar radharc, tomhas innéacs corpmhaise (BMI) agus gníomhú a leanann uathu i gcásanna ina bhfuil cásmhaireachtaí sláinte mar riochtaí fadtéarmacha (mar shampla, plúchadh, ailléirgí bia, diaibéiteas, is araile).

All schools here have a named nurse employed from within the school health service within Trusts, who is responsible for delivering the Child Health Promotion Programme to children within each school. The programme includes vaccination, health appraisal, review of development, hearing and vision screening, measurement of body mass index (BMI) and follow up where there are health concerns such as long term conditions (e.g. Asthma, food allergies, diabetes, etc).

Regarding pupils of mainstream schools in receipt of a care plan, Trusts have confirmed that 3,194 pupils presently have care plans in place.

Staff Travel Costs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education how much was spent by her Department on staff travel cost claims in the last financial year. (AQW 1969/10)

Minister of Education: Chaith mo Roinn £502,883 ar éilimh ar chostas taistil na foirne sa bhliain airgeadais dar críoch 31 Márta 2009.

My Department spent £502,883 on staff travel cost claims in the financial year ended 31 March 2009.

Children Who are Blind

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Education what is her Department's strategy for helping children who are blind with reading skills. (AQW 1971/10)

Minister of Education: The Department's strategy for helping children who are blind with reading skills is the same strategy as for helping all children with special educational needs (SEN) and is detailed in the Education (NI) Order 1996 as amended by the Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SEND0) and associated regulations. The 1996 Order provided for the formal introduction of a Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP) to which schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) are required to have regard in dealing with children with SEN. A Supplement to the COP was issued on foot of SEND0.

Dá bhrí sin, tá sé de dhualgas ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBannas) agus ar Bhoird Gobharnóirí na scoileanna foráil le haghaidh scileanna léitheoireachta a sholáthar do dhaltáí atá dall.

The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils who are blind with reading skills rests therefore with the ELBs and the Boards of Governors of schools.

Special Education provision is matched to the assessed individual needs of each child, and this assessment will take account of professional advice, both from the education and medical professions, and will consider such matters as the child's age and academic ability. For some pupils who are blind or visually impaired the medium through which to make the special education provision may be enlarged print, for others Braille, while for others an IT solution may best meet their needs.

Service to Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Education what action her Department has taken, or intends to take, to provide a level of service to blind and partially-sighted people equal to that of fully-sighted people. (AQW 1988/10)

Minister of Education: Tá mo Roinn go hiomlán comhlíontach i dtaca leis an Disability Discrimination Act agus tugann an Roinn leibhéal cuí seirbhíse do dhaoine atá dall agus lag-radharcach lena n-áirítear soláthar foilseachán ón Roinn i bhformáidí eile agus soláthar áis BrowseAloud ar a láithreán gréasáin le cuidiú le nascleanúint, mar aon le comharthaíocht chuí agus áiseanna rochtana ar fhoirgnimh na Roinne.

My Department is fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and provides an appropriate level of service to blind and partially-sighted people including, offering the Department's publications in alternative formats and the provision of a BrowseAloud facility on its website to assist with navigation, together with appropriate signage and access facilities to DE buildings.

Byron Review

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what action she has taken to ensure that (i) a benchmarking exercise is carried out in relation to the Byron Review; and (ii) an action plan relating to internet safety is presented to the Ministerial Sub-Committee. (AQW 2002/10)

Minister of Education: Tá sé de dhualgas ar an bhFoghrúpa um Chosaint, a bhunaigh an

Fochoiste Aireachta um Leanaí agus Daoine Óga, plean gníomhaíochta um ríomhshábháilteacht a fhorbairt.

The development of an action plan on e-safety is the responsibility of the Sub Group on Safeguarding which has been established by the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People.

My Department, along with others, will contribute to this action plan and to any benchmarking exercise.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Training

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education which children have participated in Child Exploitation and Online Protection training in schools. (AQW 2003/10)

Minister of Education: Léiríonn figiúirí a bhí curtha ar fáil ag CEOPanna go bhfuair 70,065 dalta traenáil ar Dhúshaothrú Leanáí agus Cosaint ar Líne ar scoileanna. Seo a leanas sonraí ar an traenáil a fuair 60,645 dalta ón bhliain 2007 ar aghaidh:

Figures provided by CEOPs show that 70,065 pupils have received Child Exploitation and Online Protection training in schools. Since 2007, 60,645 pupils have received training as follows:

Key Stage	Number of pupils
KS1	3,654
KS2	22,258
KS3/4	34,733

Information on the number of children trained before 2007 cannot be provided by key stage.

Partially-Sighted Children

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Education what help is available for partially-sighted children in primary schools and post-primary schools in each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 2011/10)

Minister of Education: The Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have informed me that the Regional Strategy Group for Special Educational Needs (RSG) has established a Visual Impairment Working Group the aim of which is to promote a consistent approach across the five ELBs in relation to service delivery in schools. The Working Group has consulted with the voluntary and statutory sectors as well as parents and children. The Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) has had an active role in this consultation process and has met with the Working Group to discuss outcomes. The Group has reported its findings to RSG and the key recommendation is that a regional resource base is needed, in the context of an overall strategy of achieving full educational inclusion and of improving levels of educational attainment amongst children and young people with a visual impairment. I can confirm that DE, as part of a strategic stocktake, has prioritised the future development of a centralised resource, within the above context.

Ós rud é go bhfuil sé de dhualgas reachtúil ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne soláthar a dhéanamh le freastal ar na riachtanais mheasúnaithe atá ag páistí le riachtanais speisialta oideachais, is iad na Boird atá freagrach as a áirithiú go bhfuil rochtain ag daltaí lagamhairc, a oiread agus is féidir, ar eolas i bhformáid inrochtana. Úsáidtear straitéisí éagsúla faoi láthair sna cúig Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne le cuidiú a thabhairt do pháistí lag-radharcacha.

As ELBs have the statutory duty to make provision to meet the assessed needs of individual special educational needs children, it is, therefore, the responsibility of the Boards to ensure that, as far as possible, pupils with a visual impairment are given access to information in an accessible format. A number of strategies are currently employed across the 5 Education & Library Boards to help partially sighted children. These are co-ordinated by Vision Support Services working within each of the Board areas and range from the use of high tech equipment such as Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) readers to the more basic, yet effective and acceptable method of enlarging materials using a photocopier.

The following is an indication of the arrangements currently in place:-

- Provision of specialist equipment to enable students to access information produced in DAISY format;
- Provision of magnification aids eg CCTV;

- Provision of screen magnification/reading software eg Zoomtext, JAWS, etc. (Laptops/scanners are also generally provided to facilitate the use of such software);
- Accessing large print/braille copies of text from a range of sources including publishers/other visual impairment services/ RNIB/ National Blind Children's Society/RNIB National Library Service, etc;
- Use of Belfast Education and Library Board Reprographics Department which will assist in the production of school texts in an enlarged print or e-book format as required;
- Enlargement of materials using photocopier.

In addition to the provision of specialist equipment, Vision Support teachers also provide advice, support and training to the pupils and staff regarding the use of this equipment and other visual impairment related issues.

Contractual Pay Increases

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education when she expects contractual pay increases effective from 1 April 2009, to be paid to non-teaching staff. (AQW 2016/10)

Minister of Education: Agreement has been reached between the NJC and Trade Union Side on the rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2009.

Mar aitheantas ar na deacrachtaí a d'fhéadfaí bheith ag na Boird roimh bhunú an ESA, tá réimse socrúithe speisialta comhaontaithe ag mo chuid feidhmeannach leis an Roinn Airgeadais agus Pearsanra i dtaca le cur i bhfeidhm Bhronnadh Bliantúil Pá 2009/10. Éascóidh na socrúithe nua seo an t-ualach riaracháin atá ar fhoireann na mBord agus cinnteoidh siad go socrófar an bronnadh pá seo go gasta agus go sásúil.

In recognition of the difficulties which the Boards may experience in advance of the establishment of ESA my officials have agreed a series of special arrangements with the Department of Finance and Personnel for the implementation of the 2009/10 Annual Pay Award. These new arrangements will greatly ease the administrative burden on Board staff and ensure that this pay award is brought to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion.

Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress made by the inter-departmental Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing programme. (AQW 2018/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár na Roinne um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúcháin na nDaltaí, a bheidh dírithe ar an earnáil iarbhunscoile i dtosach, á fhorbairt i gcomhpháirtíocht le réimse leathan páirtithe leasmhara rithábhachtacha ó scoileanna agus ón earnáil pobail agus dheonach, lena n-áirítear feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí. Cuirfidh an Clár seo, nuair atá sé bunaithe, go mór leis na straitéisí níos forleithne atá ann chun sláinte mheabhrach inár bpobal a fheabhsú.

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No consideration has been given to scoring of schools based on the well-being of their pupils as yet.

Mental Wellbeing

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what steps have been taken by her Department to ensure the successful implementation of a mainstreamed approach to mental wellbeing in primary and post-primary education. (AQW 2019/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár na Roinne um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúchánach na nDaltaí, a bheidh dírithe ar an earnáil iarbhunscoile i dtosach, á fhorbairt i gcomhpháirtíocht le réimse leathan páirtithe leasmhara ríthábhachtacha ó scoileanna agus ón earnáil pobail agus dheonach, lena n-áirítear feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí. Cuirfidh an Clár seo, nuair atá sé bunaithe, go mór leis na straitéisí níos forleithne atá ann chun sláinte mheabhrach inár bpobal a fheabhsú.

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New School Builds

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education why the new builds of (i) Tannaghmore primary school; (ii) Portadown College; and (iii) Lurgan College have been delayed; and to provide a new timescale for work to commence. (AQW 2049/10)

Minister of Education: It is critically important that investment in the education estate is consistent with and supportive of the policy framework I am putting in place. At the heart of this is Every School a Good School, Sustainable Schools, the Revised Curriculum and the Entitlement Framework. As area based planning develops, these policies will drive the reshaping of our estate and the consequential investment plans.

As Minister for Education, I need to ensure that the substantial resources we are now investing produce the best outcomes for children and value for the taxpayer. I have, therefore, commissioned a review of current projects, including those for Tannaghmore Primary School and Portadown College, to validate that all are consistent with the policy framework and hence will be viable and sustainable in the long term.

I am not, therefore able, at this time, to provide a timescale for work to commence on these two projects.

Bhain mo Roinn de thátal as an Bhreithmheas Eacnamaíochta do Lurgan College nach bhfuil dóthain fianaise ann chun dearbhú a thabhairt go mbeadh an fhorbairt seo mar chuid de phlean straitéiseach do cheantar Craigavon agus go mbeadh sí ábalta rochtain a sholáthar ar an réimse cúrsaí a bheadh de dhíth chun an Creat Teidlíochta a chur i bhfeidhm go hiomlán ón bhliain 2013. Mar gheall air sin, ní raibh an Roinn ábalta an togra le haghaidh scoil nua a fhaomhadh.

In reviewing the Economic Appraisal for Lurgan College, my Department concluded there was insufficient evidence to provide assurance that this development was part of a strategic plan for the Craigavon area and would be capable of delivering access to the range of courses required to fully implement the Entitlement Framework from 2013. As such, the Department was unable to approve the proposal for a new school.

Following a series of meetings, my Department has written to the Southern Education and Library Board outlining its concerns and asking that it reviews the needs of Lurgan College, within the wider context of delivery of the Entitlement Framework in the Craigavon area, with the view to bringing forward a strategic plan for the area.

Capital Projects

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on capital projects for (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools, in each constituency, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2050/10)

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

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

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2052/10)

Minister of Education: Tá sonraí ar fáil thíos maidir leis an gcaiteachas ar oiliúint ar na meáin d'fhoireann na Roinne Oideachais sna cúig bliana airgeadais a chuaigh thart.

Expenditure on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years is detailed below.

2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	£450

Development of Innovation and Enterprise

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education to outline her Department's provision for the development of innovation and enterprise in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools. (AQW 2072/10)

Minister of Education: Is é is aidhm don churaclam athbhreithnithe ná daoine óga a ullmhú do gach gné oibre agus saoil agus cuidiú a thabhairt dóibh le forbairt mar dhaoine deaslabhartha muiníneacha a bheidh ábalta páirt iomlán a ghlacadh sa tsochaí agus sa gheilleagar. Trí Fhorbairt Phearsanta agus Comhthuisceant ag leibhéal bunscoile agus trí Fhoghlaim don Saol agus don Obair ag leibhéal iarbhunscoile, beidh gach duine óg ábalta ullmhú do phleanáil ghairme ó leibhéal bunscoile ar aghaidh. Ar leibhéal iarbhunscoile, cuimsíonn an snáithe Infhostaitheachta d'Fhoghlaim don Saol agus don Obair, Obair sa Gheilleagar Áitiúil agus Domhanda, Bainistíocht Ghairme agus Tionscnaíocht agus Fiontraíocht.

The revised curriculum aims to better prepare all our young people for all aspects of life and work and enable them to develop as confident and articulate individuals, able to play their full part in our society and economy. The area of Personal Development & Mutual Understanding at primary and Learning for Life and Work at post-primary will enable all young people to prepare for and engage in career planning from primary school onwards. At post-primary, the Employability strand of Learning for Life and Work consists of Work in the Local and Global Economy, Career Management and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Pupils will continue to reflect on their own skills and areas for self-development and explore the changing concept of 'career' and various types of jobs, including in the local area, as well as explore enterprise and entrepreneurship which provides opportunities for our young people to investigate the need for creativity and enterprise, whether as an employer or employee, and to identify and practise some of the skills and develop the attributes associated with being enterprising.

The Department also provides funding to a number of organisations to provide enterprise, employability and innovation events and programmes (many of which are STEM related) either in school or at larger regional events, for both primary and post-primary pupils. These organisations include Young Enterprise, Sentinus, School Employer Connections (formerly FOSEC), Charter Work Experience and a number of Business Education Partnerships. The Department, in partnership with Invest NI, is also providing funding to a number of enterprise/innovation programmes, to include the 'Mark Your Mark Challenge', as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week, and 'The Stock Market Challenge' event. Such events help to create an enterprise culture within the classroom and to develop in our young people more innovative and enterprising skills and attitudes, not just to set up businesses but also to build their own careers and to stay employable.

The Department's provision in the area of innovation and enterprise will do much to develop individuals, and therefore a workforce that is innovative, creative, enterprising and flexible.

Extra Funding

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Education, given that spend per pupil in Northern Ireland is the lowest in the UK, if she plans to allocate extra funding to address this differential. (AQW 2090/10)

Minister of Education: Mar Aire Oideachais, tá mé an-tiomanta dona dhearbhu go bhfuil an deis ag na páistí agus daoine óga go léir a gcumas iomlán a bhaint amach mar gheall ar sheirbhísí oideachais de chaighdeán ard. Caithfeadh a chuimhneamh, áfach, go bhfuil mé ag obair faoi bhuiséad réamhdhearbhaithe don oideachas.

As Minister for Education, I am fully committed to ensuring that all our children and young people have the opportunity to fulfil their full potential through quality education services, however, it must be recognised that I am working within a finite budget for Education.

I will continue to seek the support of all parties in the Assembly to endorse my efforts to secure additional funding for Education.

'Sure Start' Projects

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of Education if he plans to increase the budget for 'Sure Start' projects to increase the spending per child, which is significantly lower than in England, Scotland and Wales. (AQW 2095/10)

Minister of Education: Faoi chúram an chláir Sure Start i Sasana faoi láthair, tá seirbhís sláinte leanaí agus seirbhís sláinte teaghlaigh, seirbhís cúraim lae agus oideachais le haghaidh páistí suas le ceithre bliana déag d'aois, nó suas le sé bliana déag d'aois i gcás páistí faoi mhíchumas. Ní féidir, mar sin, comparáid ar an gcaiteachas a dhéanamh mar nach bhfuil faoi chúram an chláir Sure Start i dtuaisceart na hÉireann ach páistí idir 0-4 bliana agus a gcuid teaghlach.

The Sure Start programme in England now includes in its remit any child and family health service, daycare and early education service for children up to age fourteen, or sixteen for those with disabilities. Therefore any comparisons on spend are not possible as the remit of Sure Start in the north of Ireland remains for children 0-4 and their families. At present resources are targeted at those families living in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas to prioritise those who most need support. My Department provides more than £18 million per annum to deliver Sure Start programmes and an evaluation of these services is planned which, alongside the publication of the Early Years strategy, will provide direction on the possible future investment in the programme.

DVD 'Green and White Army- the Fans' Story'

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education what discussions her Department has had, or intends to have, with the Irish Football Association and the Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters' Clubs, in relation to using the DVD 'Green and White Army- the Fans Story' in schools as a tool for improving community relations. (AQW 2111/10)

Minister of Education: Deileálann an curaclam athbhreithnithe le caidreamh pobail trí Fhorbairt Phearsanta agus Comhthuiscint ag leibhéal na bunscoile, agus soláthraíonn Saoránacht Áitiúil agus Dhomhanda ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile cur chuige fócasaithe chun athmhuintearas, cothroime, comhthuiscint agus daonlathas a chur chun cinn inár sochaí agus buntacaítear an próiseas seo ag luachanna Ceart Daonna. Tríd an gcuraclam, is féidir le múinteoirí déileáil le sainceisteanna ilchineálachta le daoine óga mar chuid thábhachtach dá gclár níos forleithne foghlama.

The revised curriculum addresses community relations and equality through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding at primary level, while at post-primary level Local and Global Citizenship provides a focussed approach to promoting reconciliation, equality, mutual understanding and democracy in our society and is underpinned by human rights values. Through the curriculum teachers are able to address issues of diversity with young people as an integral part of their wider programme of learning.

However, each school can choose what resources to use when delivering community relations programmes in schools.

Pupils Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what steps her Department has taken to ensure that 'Pupils Emotional Health and Wellbeing' is addressed, mainstreamed and funded appropriately in the long term. (AQW 2114/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúcháin na nDaltaí, a dhíreofar ar earnáil na hiarbhunscolaíochta i dtosach, á fhorbairt go fóill. Nuair a bheas an clár i bhfeidhm, táthar ag dúil leis go gcuirfidh an clár go mór leis na straitéisí níos leithne maidir le sláinte mheabhrach a fheabhsú inár bpobal.

The Pupils' Emotional Health and Well-Being Programme, which will focus on the post-primary sector initially, is still in development. It is expected that the Programme, once established, will make a significant contribution to the wider strategies around improving mental health in our community.

The Working Groups established to take this work forward will address the issues such as:

- The training and support required by teachers and other schools' staff in promoting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing to supplement that provided for implementing the personal development elements of the Revised Curriculum; and
- Current services and sources of support available to schools' pupils and how these might be accessed.

Members of the Working groups comprise a very wide range of experience and expertise drawn from the education sector, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and a number of voluntary organisations with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.

A review session with all partners is planned for November at which achievements to date will be shared. The current timetable envisages that the Programme should be in place to roll out in the 2010/11 school year and once established, its effectiveness will be monitored over time.

Mental Health and Emotional Problems

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what action her Department is taking to assist teachers and schools in recognising and responding to pupils with mental health and emotional problems. (AQW 2117/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúchánach na nDaltaí, a dhíreofar ar earnáil na hiarbhunscolaíochta i dtosach, á fhorbairt go fóill. Nuair a bheas an clár i bhfeidhm, táthar ag dúil leis go gcuirfidh an clár go mór leis na straitéisí níos leithne maidir le sláinte mheabhrach a fheabhsú inár bpobal.

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A review session with all partners is planned for November at which achievements to date will be shared. The current timetable envisages that the Programme should be in place to roll out in the 2010/11 school year and once established, its effectiveness will be monitored over time.

Inter-Disciplinary Work

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what action her Department intends to take regarding the sharing of information and confidentiality requirements of inter-disciplinary work between schools and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. (AQW 2121/10)

Minister of Education: Ghlac an Roinn páirt ghníomhach, i gcomhar leis an Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí san athbhreithniú i dtaca le feabhsuithe ar na seirbhísí atá beartaithe do pháistí agus do dhaoine óga a bhfuil fadhbanna sláinte mheabhrach acu. Bhí ionadaithe ón Roinn ar ghrúpaí oibre a bhí freagrach as gnéithe ábhartha d'athbhreithniú Bamford a chur i bhfeidhm, bhí baint ag an Roinn le freagra an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin ar an athbhreithniú agus bhí baint aici leis an phlean gníomhaíochta ina dhiaidh sin.

The Department has participated actively with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public safety in the review and improvements planned in services to support children and young people with mental health conditions. The Department was represented on working groups taking forward relevant elements of the Bamford review, contributed to the response of the Executive to the review and the subsequent action plan.

To ensure that the children and young people under the care of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) receive the most appropriate support from both health and education services, DE and SEELB are planning, in partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, a new purpose-built Regional Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Centre. This will include a Learning Resource Centre which will deliver a new flexible education model, on the Forster Green site to bring together the Adolescent Psychiatric Unit and the Child and Family Centre. It is hoped that the Adolescent Centre will be operational from early 2010 and the Children's Centre operational from spring 2010.

In the development of the Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme the interface between schools' staff and the CAMHS in respect of pupils who have been referred or a being treated will be addressed.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is developing an information sharing protocol which will underpin the relationship between all agencies and personnel engaged in working to support children. The Department is engaged in this process and the outcome will be shared with schools in due course.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what action her Department has taken to improve links and collaboration between schools and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; and how she plans to monitor the outcome. (AQW 2124/10)

Minister of Education: Ghlac an Roinn páirt ghníomhach, i gcomhar leis an Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí san athbhreithniú i dtaca le feabhsuithe ar na seirbhísí atá beartaithe do pháistí agus do dhaoine óga a bhfuil fadhbanna sláinte mheabhrach acu. Bhí ionadaithe ón Roinn ar ghrúpaí oibre a bhí freagrach as gnéithe ábhartha d'Athbhreithniú Bamford a chur i bhfeidhm, bhí baint ag an Roinn le freagra an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin ar an athbhreithniú agus bhí baint aici leis an phlean gníomhaíochta ina dhiaidh sin.

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Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education if teacher training incorporates knowledge on mental health and wellbeing. (AQW 2125/10)

Minister of Education: Tá Clár um Fholláine agus Leas Mothúcháinach na nDaltaí, a dhíreofar ar earnáil na hiarbhunscolaíochta i dtosach, á fhorbairt go fóill. Nuair a bheas an clár i bhfeidhm, táthar ag dúil leis go gcuirfidh an clár go mór leis na straitéisí níos leithne maidir le sláinte mheabhrach a fheabhsú inár bpobal.

The Pupils' Emotional Health and Well-Being Programme, which will focus on the post-primary sector initially, is still in development. It is expected that the Programme, once established, will make a significant contribution to the wider strategies around improving mental health in our community.

The Working Groups established to take this work forward will address the issues such as:

- The training and support required by teachers and other schools' staff in promoting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing to supplement that provided for implementing the personal development elements of the Revised Curriculum; and
- Current services and sources of support available to schools' pupils and how these might be accessed.

Members of the Working groups comprise a very wide range of experience and expertise drawn from the education sector, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and a number of voluntary organisations with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.

A review session with all partners is planned for November at which achievements to date will be shared. The current timetable envisages that the Programme should be in place to roll out in the 2010/11 school year and once established, its effectiveness will be monitored over time.

Meetings with MLA's

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education how many requests from MLA's for a meeting with her have not taken place in the last two years. (AQW 2131/10)

Minister of Education: Le dhá bhliain anuas, bhí dhá ócáid ann nuair nár tionóladh cruinnithe a d'iarr Comhaltaí den Tionól Reachtach.

In the last two years two requests from MLA's for a meeting with me have not taken place.

Capital Programmes

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on capital programmes on property which is owned by (i) the Catholic Church; (ii) Bishops of the Catholic Church; and (iii) the public sector, in each of the past five years. (AQW 2138/10)

Minister of Education: Toisc nach bhfuil aon scoil faoi uinéireacht na hEaglaise Caitlicí ná Easpag na hEaglaise Caitlicí, níor chaith mo Roinn aon chistiú caipitil ar réadmhaoín faoi uinéireacht na bhforas seo. Is leis na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne réadmhaóin scoileanna san earnáil rialaithe agus, dá bhrí sin, tá siad faoi uinéireacht na hearnála poiblí. Cuirtear ar fáil sa tábla thíos sonraí ar an méid a caitheadh ar chlár chaipitil le haghaidh na réadmhaoine seo.

As there are no schools in the ownership of the Catholic Church or the Bishops of the Catholic Church no capital funding has been spent by my Department on properties owned by these bodies.

Properties in the Controlled School sector are owned by the Education and Library Boards and therefore are in the ownership of the public sector. The table below provides details of how much has been spent on capital programmes on these properties in each of the past five years.

	Minor Capital Spend £000s	Major Capital Spend £000s	Total
2004/05	35120	12102	47222
2005/06	22674	26967	49641
2006/07	14844	19752	34596
2007/08	23331	19673	43004
2008/09	28870	23379	52249

Swine Flu

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education (i) what immediate action; and (ii) what follow up action has been taken in relation to staff in schools who have been working with pupils or staff who have suspected or confirmed cases of swine flu. (AQW 2164/10)

Minister of Education: My Department works closely with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Public Health Agency (PHA) to provide schools and the wider education sector with up-to-date advice and guidance. The current advice from the PHA is that if staff have been in contact with someone with a suspected or confirmed case of swine flu, that as long as they are well and not suffering from flu-like symptoms, they can continue with their normal duties. Good hygiene throughout the school remains key.

Tairgfear an vacsaín an tseachtain seo d'fhoireann a thugann cúram pearsanta do pháistí leochaileacha i Scoileanna Speisialta.

Staff that provide personal care to vulnerable children in Special Schools will be offered the vaccine in the coming week.

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Education if her Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government. (AQW 2166/10)

Minister of Education: Ní dheachaigh mo Roinn díreach i gcomhairle leis an gCoiste um Athrú Aeráide. Is eol dom mo dhualgais i dtaca le hathrú aeráide, áfach, agus deimhním gur chuir mo Roinn athruithe i bhfeidhm ar gach conradh mhórshaothar tógála scoile atá ceaptha chun astuithe carbóin a laghdú trí chorprú phrionsabal na forbartha inchothaithe agus bearta chun rátáil ‘thar barr’ ó Mhodh Measúnaithe Thimpeallacht Bunaíochta an Taighde Forgníochta a bhaint amach le haghaidh scéimeanna nua agus rátáil ‘iontach maith’ a bhaint amach le haghaidh scéimeanna athchóirithe.

My Department has not sought advice directly from the Committee on Climate Change.

However, I am aware of my obligations under the Programme for Government in regard to climate change and confirm that my Department has implemented changes to all major works school building contracts aimed at reducing carbon emissions by incorporating the principles of sustainable development and measures to achieve a Building Research Establishment Environment Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of “excellent” for new schemes or “very good” for refurbishment schemes.

The implementation of the revised curriculum is also an important indicator in this regard and will help educate, inform and involve more of our young people in dealing with issues such as climate change, both now and in the future

Temporary or Portable Classrooms

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many children are being taught in temporary or portable classrooms. (AQW 2176/10)

Minister of Education: Ní choinníonn mo Roinn eolas ar líon na bpáistí a theagasctar i seomraí ranga soghluaiste agus bheadh costas míréireach i gceist leis an eolas seo a fháil. Go háirithe, bheadh sé dodhéanta a fháil amach cá mhéad páiste in iarbhunscoileanna a bhíonn sna seomraí ranga soghluaiste ag am áirithe mar go mbíonn an figiúr seo ag brath ar an ábhar atá á theagasc sna seomraí seo.

My Department does not hold information on the number of children taught in mobile classrooms and to have this collected could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. In particular, in post primary schools it would be impossible to establish how many children use the classrooms at any given time depending on the subject the classroom is used for.

Swimming Lessons

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to ensure that swimming lessons continue for primary school and secondary school pupils in the Magherafelt and Maghera areas, following the closure of the swimming pool in Maghera High School and the planned two-year closure of the swimming pool in Magherafelt leisure centre. (AQW 2229/10)

Minister of Education: Tá an Snámh ina ghné reachtúil de Chorpoideachas ar Eocharchéimeanna 2 agus 3. Is faoin scoil agus an Bhord ábhartha Gobharnóirí socrú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar an churaclaim i dtaca leis an íosmhéid a chlúdaítear, agus bíonn comhairle ar fáil ón Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne áitiúil. Thuairiscigh Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt, tar éis an chinnidh ar Ardscoil Mhachaire Rátha a dhúnadh, gur iarr sé ar na bunscoileanna sin a bhain úsáid as an linn snámha a riachtanais snámha a aithint.

Swimming is a statutory area of Physical Education at Key Stages 2 and 3. Delivery of the curriculum in terms of meeting the minimum content is a matter for the school and the relevant Board of governors, with advice available from the local Education and Library Board.

The North Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that, following the decision to close Maghera High School, the Board invited those primary schools that made use of the swimming pool at the school to identify their swimming needs.

On receipt of this information the Board contacted Magherafelt and Ballymoney Councils to arrange alternative provision at Council owned pools. All but one of the schools affected expressed a preference to make use of the Greenvale Leisure Centre in Magherafelt which will close at the end of December for a 2-year refurbishment. According to the NEELB the school which opted to use the Ballymoney pool is hopeful of finalising a slot.

In relation to post-primary schools in the area, the NEELB has advised that it is not aware of any issues in this regard.

In view of the geographical and time constraints involved and the difficulties experienced in terms of securing slots at other leisure centres, the Department appreciates that the provision of swimming lessons from January 2010 will be difficult. However, it will now be necessary for all the schools affected to investigate all of the options available to them in liaison with the NEELB. The Department will be writing to the NEELB to ask it to facilitate such discussions.

Early Years Strategy

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education when the Early Years Strategy will be published.

(AQW 2274/10)

Minister of Education: Foilseofar Straitéis na Luathblianta (0-6) le haghaidh comhairlithe phoiblí go luath sa bhliain 2010.

The Early Years (0-6) Strategy will be published for public consultation early in 2010.

Post-Primary Transfer

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education if she will reissue a Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment paper for post-primary transfer in order to avoid uncertainty for P6 pupils and parents next year.

(AQW 2287/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir mé mo sheasamh ar an ábhar seo in iúl go soiléir ar roinnt ócáidí agus sa Tionól ar 5 Deireadh Fómhair 2009. Tá an Teist Aistrithe imithe agus ní bheidh sí ag teacht ar ais i bhfoirm ar bith. Is próiseas teipthe é roghnú acadúil agus níl áit ar bith dó inár gcóras oideachais. Sonraíonn polasaí mo Roinne go soiléir nár chóir go mbeadh tástáil acadúil mar chuid d'aistriú iarbhunscoile. Ní mholaim, mar sin, scrúdú CCEA a choimisiúnú, mar go gcuirfeadh sé seo leis na míchothromaíochtaí a bhí bainteach leis an iar-Theist Aistrithe.

I have made my position on this matter clear on a number of occasions, most recently in the Assembly on 5 October 2009. The 11 plus is gone and will not be coming back in any form. Academic selection is a failed process and there is no place for it in our education system. My Department's policy clearly states that post-primary transfer should not involve academic testing. I do not therefore propose commissioning a CCEA test, as this would merely serve to perpetuate the inequalities associated with the former Transfer Test.

Education Bill

Rev Dr R Coulter asked the Minister of Education what contingency plan she has in place in the event that the Education Bill does not gain Royal Assent before 1 January 2010.

(AQO 280/10)

Minister of Education: Mar a dúirt mé, tá mé tiomanta don dáta comhaontaithe forfheidhmithe den chéad lá de mhí Eanáir a bhaint amach agus níor mhian liom tuairimíocht a dhéanamh ar chásanna hipitéiseacha. Sin an jab atá ag aon Aire.

As I have indicated I am focussed on the agreed implementation date of 1 January not speculating on hypothetical situations. That is my job as Minister.

The Education Bill will move to Consideration Stage as soon as possible, so that it completes its Assembly passage early next month and becomes law before Christmas.

The reforms that it will bring are vital for our education system. We need to raise standards, closing the attainment gap between good schools and those under-performing. We need to tackle bureaucracy and generate efficiencies to allow more resources to go to front-line services.

That is why the RPA reforms will be implemented on 1st January 2010. We cannot afford not to. The children we serve their parents and communities deserve no less and I have no intention of letting them down. I trust that Members on all sides of the House agree with me, we need to enact this legislation and we need to make these reforms. I have asked the Executive to prioritise this issue to ensure that we send a clear message to the sector. This work is important. It is urgent and it cannot be delayed.

Capital Schemes

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Education what action she has taken to accelerate the procurement of capital schemes. (AQO 281/10)

Minister of Education: Nuair a rinneadh agóid dhlíthiúil i gcoinne conartha do chreat móroibreacha mo Roinne, cuireadh an creat i leataobh i mí na Nollag 2008. Dá thoradh sin, glacadh bearta le soláthairtí tionscadal aonair a thabhairt isteach le móroibreacha caipitiúla a sheachadadh.

Following a legal challenge to my Department's major works framework contract that led to the setting aside of the framework in December 2008, steps have been taken to introduce single project procurements for the delivery of major capital works.

In 2008/09 my Department's capital spend was in excess of £203million and represents 99% of the gross capital budget allocated.

Through a Strategic Partnering Agreement with the Belfast Education and Library Board, we have seen the delivery of four new schools in the greater Belfast area with three further new schools in construction. This includes one primary school, two nursery schools and four post primary schools, with capital values in the region of £126million.

There are currently 19 major schools' capital works projects on site, with construction costs totalling around £145million.

I have commissioned a review of current capital works projects to ensure that they are all consistent with the overall policy framework and that will be viable and sustainable in the long term. It is not intended to be a protracted exercise but you will appreciate that a capital investment of some £718 on school and youth services in the current budgetary period of 2008-2011 must be based on robust, defensible decisions which are consistent, and able to support important areas such as raising standards for all, closing the gap in achievement by improving access and equity and improving the learning environment through targeted investment.

Primary Schools: Underachievement

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Education to outline her timeframe for resolving the educational underachievement of primary school pupils. (AQO 282/10)

Minister of Education: Tá mé go hiomlán tiomanta do chaighdeán a ardú agus do thabhairt faoi thearecghnóthachtáil oideachasúil, ag leibhéal na bunscolaíochta agus ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscolaíochta araon. Ba mhaith liom dul chun cinn a dhéanamh ar an cheist seo go gasta, ach aithním go nglacfar am leis an bhearna gnóthachtála a laghdú, go háirithe idir na daltaí sin is mó atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste agus na daltaí sin is lú atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste.

I am fully committed to raising standards and tackling educational underachievement, both at primary and at post-primary level. I am anxious to make swift progress on this, but I also recognise that it will take time to close the achievement gap, especially between the most and least disadvantaged pupils.

On 30th April, I launched 'Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement'. This is a pupil-centred policy with equality and improvement at its heart. It will be supported by other key reforms aimed at raising standards including, Transfer 2010, the revised curriculum and a revised literacy and numeracy strategy.

The policy sets out long term, ambitious targets, to the year 2020, for improving educational outcomes and closing the gap in achievement at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE.

In the interim, the Department has agreed challenging and important Public Service Agreement targets for the period 2008 - 2011.

Of course these are targets for the system as a whole and not ceilings. It is important that we are not complacent and that every school continues to strive for continuing improvement.

The implementation of this policy will be the number one priority for the new Education and Skills Authority. I have made it clear to the chair Sean Hogan and Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive, that I expect them to set the pace, working with schools to ensure there is a sustained focus on improving outcomes for every child.

Interactive Computerised Assessment System

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Education what steps her Department has taken to rectify the mistakes made in relation to the 'Interactive Computerised Assessment System' outcomes. (AQO 283/10)

Minister of Education: My Department was made aware on Tuesday, 13 October, of a fault in the computer systems at the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring in the University of Durham, which operates the InCAS diagnostic assessment tool. This fault resulted in incorrect information about pupils' General Maths scores being reported to schools and, in some cases, to parents.

Tháinig an Chomhairle Curaclaim, Scrúdúcháin agus Measúnaithe ar an fhadhb an deireadh seachtaine roimhe sin agus ceartaíodh an fhadhb láithreach. Mar sin de, ar an Chéadaoin, 14 Deireadh Fómhair, fuair na scoileanna ar fad a raibh tionchar ag an fhadhb orthu, fuair siad an t-eolas ceart maidir le dul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa mhatamaitic ginearálta. Deimhníodh dom nach raibh tionchar ar bith ag an earráid seo ar thorthaí daltaí maidir le Léitheoireacht.

That problem had been discovered by CCEA over the preceding weekend and was immediately corrected so that, from Wednesday, 14 October, all affected schools were in receipt of the correct information about the progress of all pupils in general maths.

The first priority for me was to ensure that the schools affected were contacted by CCEA and given full explanations. That process was completed promptly. In addition, my officials led a briefing with the main teacher unions, and guidance was issued to the affected schools.

Naturally, I was extremely concerned and I asked CCEA for a full report on the circumstances that led to this problem and for assurances that such errors would not happen again. I was therefore disappointed that, despite assurances obtained from the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University, my Department was made aware, late on Friday, 23 October, that a further error had been discovered as a result of monitoring by CCEA and feedback from certain of our principals and teachers.

This was a technical error relating to additional standardised statistical data on InCAS which may be used by some primary schools. This data is over and above the information which needs to be reported parents, and does not affect that information.

Immediate action was taken to ensure that this error was rectified, and the correct information has been available to schools from Wednesday, 28 October. My officials have briefed the main teacher unions: schools have been advised of the position: and, where necessary, support will be available to schools affected by the errors. The Assembly Education Committee has been advised of the position.

It is essential that information used by schools to assess the progress of pupils is accurate and reliable.

I have therefore asked CCEA to commission an immediate audit by an independent third party to determine exactly what went wrong and how any recurrence might be prevented. In addition, to ensure that there is continued confidence in diagnostic assessment I intend to set up a working group to consider how best to address this and to support schools in using diagnostic assessment to inform teaching and learning.

More generally, although InCAS has been developed over a number of years and was piloted in a number of schools prior to rolling out, problems have still emerged. These incidents should highlight to all schools the danger of trying to implement a system of testing young children using breakaway tests that have not been validated or trialled.

Area-based Planning

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on Area Planning Working Groups. (AQO 284/10)

Minister of Education: Rinneadh dul chun cinn maith i dtaca le Pleanáil de réir Ceantair agus i dtaca leis an gcleachtadh iarbhunscoile ar Pleanáil de réir Ceantair araon. Nuair a críochnaíodh mo bheartas ar Phleanáil de

r  r Ceantair le haghaidh an  dar is um Oideachas agus Scileanna, n s luaithe i mbliana, dr achta odh for alacha i dtaca leis seo le haghaidh an dara Bille Oideachais. T  an dr acht-Bhille   mheas ag Coiste Oideachais an Tion il faoi l thair.

Good progress has been made in relation to both Area Based planning and the Post-primary exercise on area based planning. Following the finalisation of my policy on area-based planning for the Education and Skills Authority, earlier this year, clauses relating to this have been drafted for the second Education Bill. The draft Bill is currently being considered by the Assembly Committee for Education.

Progress has also been made in the post-primary exercise which focused on the efficient and effective delivery of the Entitlement Framework on an area basis. The work of the central and area groups is complete and I received the report "Together Towards Entitlement" in July 2009. I indicated on 15 October 2009 that I will publish the report in the near future to coincide with a series of seminars across the north, at which, Adeline Dinsmore, Joe Martin and their colleagues will be giving detailed presentations to ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to hear the messages from their report and to engage in discussion with them.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Education if the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority is still on schedule. (AQO 285/10)

Minister of Education: Mar a d irt m , t  m  tiomanta don d ta comhaontaithe forfheidhmithe den ch ad l  de mh  Ean ir a bhaint amach agus n r mhian liom tuairim ocht a dh anamh ar ch asanna hipit iseacha. Sin an jab at  ag aon Aire.

As I have indicated I am focussed on the agreed implementation date of 1 January not speculating on hypothetical situations. That is my job as Minister.

The Education Bill will move to Consideration Stage as soon as possible, so that it completes its Assembly passage early next month and becomes law before Christmas.

The reforms that it will bring are vital for our education system . We need to raise standards, closing the attainment gap between good schools and those under-performing. We need to tackle bureaucracy and generate efficiencies to allow more resources to go to front-line services.

That is why the RPA reforms will be implemented on 1st January 2010. We cannot afford not to. The children we serve their parents and communities deserve no less and I have no intention of letting them down. I trust that Members on all sides of the House agree with me, we need to enact this legislation and we need to make these reforms. I have asked the Executive to prioritise this issue to ensure that we send a clear message to the sector. This work is important. It is urgent and it cannot be delayed.

Down High School

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on the new Down High School complex. (AQO 286/10)

Minister of Education: Bh  Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt ag obair chun su omh f irsteanach  rnua a fh il do Down High School. Tuigim go bhfuil su omh faighte anois agus gur taisceadh iarratas plean la. T  an Bord ag obair ar Bhreithmheas Eacnama ochta le scoil ionaid a chur ar an su omh nua, faoi r ir faofa plean la, agus breithneoidh mo Roinn ina ioml ine go pras   nuair a bheidh s  acu.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board has been involved in a protracted search for a suitable green field site for Down High School. I understand that a site has now been identified and that a planning application has been lodged. The board is currently working on an Economic Appraisal to allow for a replacement school on the new site, subject to planning approval, and my Department will give it prompt and full consideration when it is received.

Area-based Planning

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education for a progress report on Area Based Planning. (AQO 287/10)

Minister of Education: Rinneadh dul chun cinn maith i dtaca le Pleanáil de réir Ceantair agus i dtaca leis an gcleachtadh iarbhunscoile ar Pleanáil de réir Ceantair araon. Nuair a críochnaíodh mo bheartas ar Phleanáil de réir Ceantair le haghaidh an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna, níos luaithe i mbliana, dréachtaíodh forálacha i dtaca leis seo le haghaidh an dara Bille Oideachais. Tá an dréacht-Bhille á mheas ag Coiste Oideachais an Tionóil faoi láthair.

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DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Staffing in School of Biomedical Sciences in Coleraine

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why the University of Ulster plans to reduce staffing, space and funding in the school of Biomedical Sciences in Coleraine, given that the University has been ranked number one in the UK for ‘research power’ across all subject areas. (AQW 1826/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The University has informed me that research funding reflects performance in the UK-wide Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). In the most recent RAE (2008), the University recorded its best ever performance and its overall research funding increased as a result of this. However, because the RAE 2008 outputs were produced as a quality profile rather than a fixed point scale, research funding generated in the RAE by Biomedical Sciences at the University fell by some 25% (from £3.9M to £2.9M). The University’s internal resource allocation system reflects this objectively assessed external performance of research quality and quantity in each of its subject areas, with those subject areas that generated the income receiving proportionate university funding.

Rental Space Charges in the Science Innovation Centre

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) why rental space charges for start-up companies in the Science Innovation Centre have increased; and (ii) to detail how these charges compare to other science park or university campus incubation facilities. (AQW 1829/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The University of Ulster has indicated that the increase in charges for fully serviced accommodation at the Science Innovation Centre is due to the need to recover the full costs involved.

The charges for the Science Innovation Centre accommodation compared to other science park and university campus incubation facilities are as follows:

Science Innovation Centre	Magee Campus
£24.00 per sq ft per annum	£28.25 per sq ft per annum

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has indicated that the Northern Ireland Science Park provides a range of accommodation solutions at its Queens Island Belfast site from “hot desk” and single desk solutions on monthly contracts, to 400sq ft to 50,000 sq ft space leased on a fully serviced basis from £22.50 per sq ft per annum.

Maternity Leave

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what financial support his Department provides to small businesses to cover maternity leave. (AQW 1833/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: For clarity I should point out initially that, while statutory maternity leave falls within the remit of my Department, policy responsibility for Statutory Maternity Pay rests with the Department for Social Development.

Employers who are liable to pay Statutory Maternity Pay to a mother taking maternity leave may claim reimbursement for 92% of the statutory payment. In the case of small employers, the amount that may be claimed back is 104.5% of the statutory payment. A small employer, for this purpose, is one who is liable to pay gross Class 1 National Insurance Contributions of £45,000 or less in the individual employee's qualifying tax year.

My Department is not involved in the administration of these payments. Payments are administered on a UK-wide basis by HM Revenue and Customs.

Staff Travel Costs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much was spent by his Department on staff travel cost claims in the last financial year. (AQW 1864/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In Financial year 2008-2009, my Department has recorded travel expenditure of £1,005,114.80.

Mobile Workers Scheme

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he has consulted with HM Revenue and Customs on the legalities and quality issues arising from agencies supplying Government Departments, Trusts, Agencies or Non-Departmental Public Bodies using the Mobile Workers Scheme for agency nurses. (AQW 1916/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I have not consulted with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on this matter. However I understand that HMRC is aware that some temporary workers are engaged through Employment Businesses or umbrella companies which operate Mobile Worker Schemes, and that HMRC has confirmed it is currently looking at these to determine whether or not they are legally compliant. HMRC has published a briefing on this matter which is available at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/briefs/income-tax/brief5009.htm>

My officials meet regularly with their counterparts in HMRC and discussed the Mobile Workers Scheme in general terms at their last meeting in September. Departmental officials plan to meet with HMRC officials in November and will discuss the point raised in respect of agency nurses.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially sighted people. (AQW 1930/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department continues to give priority to promoting equality of opportunity. Much of what the Department does addresses the needs of those who are most disadvantaged in society, including those who are blind or partially sighted. The Department offers to make its printed material available in different formats on request. This is stated on all printed material that the Department issues and is intended to make information accessible to all. Material can be provided in Braille, large print or audio format on request. Other internet facilities such as the Careers Service website provide the "BrowseAloud" technology and the facility to enlarge font size if the client wishes.

University of Ulster's Magee Campus

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 1328/10, whether he intends to make a bid to the Executive for resources to support the development of the University of Ulster's Magee Campus as described in the University's Development Plan. (AQW 1947/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: As I stated in my answer to AQW 1328/10, if resources were to be made available by the Executive in the future to support developments in the North West, I would consider submitting a bid for Higher Education development.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department has taken, or intends to take, to provide a level of service to blind and partially-sighted people equal to that of fully-sighted people. (AQW 1989/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department continues to give priority to promoting equality of opportunity and to good relations, and ensuring fair and inclusive delivery of all its programmes and services. This is in keeping with its responsibilities in implementing equality and good relations duties.

The Department provides a range of support for blind and partially sighted people to allow them to make use of the Department's services.

This range includes:-

Careers Service – Advisers who are trained in disability awareness to support all clients to help them make effective career decisions.

Disability Advisory Service - provides a range of employment and pre-employment programmes to meet the needs of disabled people. These include Access to Work(NI), Workable(NI), New Deal for Disabled People and the Job Introduction scheme.

Steps to Work and Pathways to Work - seek to tailor services and remove barriers to work for each individual

Further Education and Higher Education Institutions – provide a range of services through pastoral care to help individual students with disabilities to access courses. Funding is made available for students with a disability, including those who are blind and partially sighted to help pay the extra costs which may be incurred as a direct result of a disability.

The Harbour, York Road and Cathedral Quarter Areas of North Belfast

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) to outline any proposals to locate services or develop facilities in (a) the Harbour; (b) York Road; and (c) the Cathedral Quarter areas of north Belfast; and (ii) if he has had any discussions with Executive colleagues or their officials regarding their plans for these areas. (AQW 2015/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department, in partnership with the Social Security Agency, is taking forward plans for the development of a Jobs & Benefits office in the North Belfast area to ensure that clients benefit from the same enhanced, joint, work-focused service which is available elsewhere in Northern Ireland. A number of options are currently being considered which include: the demolition of the existing Corporation Street Social Security Office and redevelopment of part, or all, of the site to deliver the new office; or the development of the Jobs & Benefits office in a refurbished Northland House on Frederick Street.

Turning to higher education, as the Member will be aware, the University of Ulster announced earlier this year a proposed strategic development plan for the university's four campuses over the next decade. A key element of the plan is a major development of the University's Belfast campus in York Street to facilitate the move of the vast majority of course provision from the Jordanstown campus.

In support of the proposal, the university has submitted an economic appraisal to the Department which is currently the subject of discussion between officials.

However, I should point out that funding for the proposed development of the Belfast campus has not been agreed by my Department and I will not be taking any formal decisions about any capital contributions until the economic appraisal has been approved fully.

I have not had any discussions with Executive colleagues regarding their plans for the areas outlined in the question.

Northwin Construction Contract

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how much has been paid to Northwin Construction to date, since it completed the Belfast Metropolitan College at Millfield, under the Private Finance Initiative contract; (ii) how much is outstanding to Northwin Construction under this contract; and (iii) how many years are left on the contract. (AQW 2023/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: BMC's Millfield Building has been in service since Aug 2002 and since that date a total of £22m plus VAT has been paid to Northwin. The unitary payment is currently £3.4m plus VAT per annum and the contract runs to Aug 2027. The unitary payment is subject to an annual re-indexation, based on changes in the retail price index, so a further £61m plus VAT and re-indexation could be paid to Northwin.

The unitary payment pays for the design, building, financing and operation (which includes security, cleaning, portering, caretaking, general and lifecycle maintenance, etc) of the facility to specified standards for the term of the contract. At the end of the contract ownership of the facility reverts to the College.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail Belfast Metropolitan College's strategy for further education in the Belfast region, for the next five years. (AQW 2025/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has set the strategic direction for Further Education in Northern Ireland, in 'FE Means Business', and provides funding to colleges on that basis.

The Governing Body of Belfast Metropolitan College is responsible for determining the college's response to that strategy. As part of that process, the college prepares and agrees an annual College Development Plan (CDP) with the Department, and is funded accordingly. Further information about the contents of its annual Plan may be obtained from the College.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much his Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2053/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The table below provides information on the total amount spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years:

Year	Total Expenditure
2004/05	Nil
2005/06	Nil
2006/07	£510
2007/08	Nil
2008/09	£2185

Recruitment for the Titanic Quarter Project

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department has agreed a recruitment strategy for the Titanic Quarter Project, and if so, to indicate how, where and when jobs will be advertised. (AQW 2068/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department is working closely with the East Belfast Partnership Board and has participated fully in the “Employability” sub group to develop an action plan that aims to ensure that the job opportunities arising in Titanic Quarter, and indeed in other developments in East Belfast, are accessible across Northern Ireland.

The skills and needs of all of the potential investors in the Titanic Quarter are not yet known, therefore a specific recruitment strategy has not been developed for this project at this stage. Once these needs have been established, the Department will be in a better position to gauge its response to specific employers.

Ultimately it will be the employer’s choice as to how they will advertise future vacancies. However, to try to ensure that these vacancies are as widely advertised as possible, my officials will be encouraging employers in the project to avail of the JobCentre Online system, which can be accessed by jobseekers through Jobpoint terminals in our network of offices throughout Northern Ireland. Officials have already secured agreement that JobCentre Online will be the tool for advertising the Titanic Signature Project vacancies themselves. The Department has recently agreed that an official will shortly be seconded to Belfast City Council to take this work forward.

Recruitment for the Titanic Quarter Project

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if a recruitment policy is in place for the Titanic Quarter Project, and if so, how she will this ensure that construction jobs are advertised across Northern Ireland. (AQW 2070/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department is working closely with the East Belfast Partnership Board and has participated fully in the “Employability” sub group to develop an action plan that aims to ensure that the job opportunities arising in Titanic Quarter, and indeed in other developments in East Belfast, are accessible across Northern Ireland.

The skills and needs of all of the potential investors in the Titanic Quarter are not yet known, therefore a specific recruitment strategy has not been developed for this project at this stage. Once these needs have been established, the Department will be in a better position to gauge its response to specific employers.

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Training Provided to Personal Advisors

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the training provided to personal advisors on mitigating potential negative impacts of the implementation of the Lone Parent Regulations, particularly in relation to the issue of lack of childcare provision. (AQW 2108/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: All Department Advisers receive a comprehensive training programme that includes knowledge of the products designed to support clients back into work (eg Steps to Work), labour market information, interviewing skills, signposting clients to other sources of assistance and awareness of welfare benefits. Advisers have been provided with extensive online guidance and briefing on the changes introduced by the Lone Parent Regulations. They have also received e-learning packages on provision designed specifically to support lone parents as they move back into work.

Lone parents who are affected by the changes in regulations are contacted in advance of any potential cessation of Income Support. They are invited to meet an Adviser and a member of Social Security Agency staff who will explain their options for claiming benefit in future and the support that will be made available if and when they make a claim to Jobseeker’s Allowance.

The regulations for Jobseeker’s Allowance have been amended in Northern Ireland to allow more flexibility for all persons with childcare responsibilities, not just lone parents. For example a lone parent who is claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance, as a direct result of the new regulations, has an option to engage by post if they do not have a reasonable chance of gaining employment due to a lack of affordable and available childcare.

To support Lone Parents in returning to work, the Department has introduced the Return to Work Credit for Lone Parents and the In Work Emergency Fund. Return to Work Credit pays a Lone Parents £40 per week for the first 52 weeks they are in employment. The In Work Emergency Fund allows an Adviser to make one off discretionary payments of up to £300 to Lone Parents to enable them to retain employment.

Advisers are provided with lists of available childcare providers in their area and contact details for Early Years Teams in their local HSS Trusts which is made available to lone parents.

‘Steps to Work’

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many lone parents participating in ‘Steps to Work’ have transferred from (i) Income Support; and (ii) Jobseekers Allowance into work. (AQW 2112/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The ‘Steps to Work’ programme was introduced on 29 September 2008.

To date 79 lone parents have transferred from Income Support/Jobseeker’s Allowance into work after having participated in Steps to Work. It is not currently possible to provide a separate figure for Income Support and Jobseeker’s Allowance.

Swine Flu

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) what immediate action; and (ii) what follow up action has been taken with staff in colleges who have suspected or confirmed cases of swine flu. (AQW 2165/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In line with published official guidance, Colleges have confirmed that any member of staff with suspected swine flu will be advised to stay at home and seek medical advice, as appropriate.

Each College has its own Continuity Plan in place for the Swine Flu Pandemic, which is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to reflect official guidance.

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

(AQW 2168/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: DEL has not sought advice directly from the Committee on Climate Change.

My Department is not in direct control of energy policies in the Government estate and its contribution relates largely to its commitment to relevant more general aspects of Sustainable Development. However, I can confirm that the Department has been instrumental in encouraging Further and Higher Education institutions to move towards carbon neutral buildings .

I acknowledge the importance in principle of reducing NI’s carbon footprint and contribution to meeting the UK’s climate change targets and my Department will continue to do what it can in support of this agenda.

University of Ulster’s Magee Campus

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide an assessment of the ‘Magee Strategic Development Plan’ submitted to his Department on 1 June 2009; and to detail what steps his Department is taking to implement this plan and to relax the ‘Maximum Aggregate Student Number’ cap as requested by the University. (AQO 294/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: At the outset, I must stress that it is for the University of Ulster to determine how its Maximum Student Number allocation is divided across the various campuses. My Department cannot intervene in this process. I would also point out that there is no restriction on part-time places at the university.

Members will be aware that finances are particularly difficult at this time. There are many pressures on the public purse and, while I am a strong advocate for the Higher Education sector, I am also mindful of the poor record that Northern Ireland has in essential skills. There is a need to grow apprenticeships to ensure a ready supply of technicians and advanced technicians and, therefore, a need to maintain a balance of provision and funding.

In responding to the Strategic Development Plan for Magee, my Department has indicated that there is no additional money available to support an expansion in student numbers at this time. The Department is, however, prepared to consider developing funding bids as part of the next CSR round.

Until future funding settlements are known, the priority of my Department is to protect, as far as possible, funding for the current Maximum Student Number allocation in Northern Ireland.

Further and Higher Education: Courses

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures his Department is taking to encourage Further and Higher Education Institutes to provide courses relevant to the development of a new green economy. (AQO 295/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department issued guidance to the Further Education Sector on the promotion of Sustainable Development in January 2009. This guidance encouraged Colleges to develop curricula that enabled students to develop the skills and knowledge which would contribute to sustainable development.

In allocating the quality related research funding to the universities, this year I have specifically directed 5% (£2m) of the funding to focus on new projects which encompass the theme of sustainability and alternative/renewable energy sources.

In addition, £3.5 million is being provided to the universities to support similar “green economy” issues, through other research programmes.

Student Fees

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the report on student fees will be made available. (AQO 296/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Joanne Stuart, independent chairperson of the review of variable fees and student finance arrangements, is currently finalising her interim report following extensive engagement with stakeholders, including the Northern Ireland political parties.

I expect to receive her report very soon and I will then bring it before the Employment and Learning Committee prior to a public consultation scheduled for later in the year.

Titanic Quarter

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the community in East Belfast is participating in, and benefiting from, the Titanic Quarter development, particularly in terms of training, apprenticeships and employment. (AQO 297/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department continues to be in discussion with Harcourt Construction, the Titanic Quarter developer, individual companies based in the Titanic Quarter and InvestNI regarding their current and future skills needs, to ensure that employers are helped to recruit people with the specific skills they require.

The Department encourages those companies choosing to use its recruitment services to actively consider Employment Service clients who may be unemployed and/or are deemed economically inactive, including those who reside in the local area.

My Department has participated fully in the “Employability” sub-group of the East Belfast Partnership Board. Officials have contributed to the development of an action plan to ensure that job opportunities arising in Titanic Quarter and indeed in other developments in East Belfast are accessible to the local community.

South Eastern Regional College: Courses

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why the Bachelor of Sciences Honours degree in Social Work has been withdrawn from the South Eastern Regional College, Newtownards.

(AQO 298/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The University of Ulster delivers its three-year Bachelor of Science Honours Social Work programme at its Magee Campus and in collaboration with four Regional Further Education Colleges. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has undertaken two major reviews which will impact on the future delivery and content of the degree, including a future requirement for a part time route to qualification.

The decision to withdraw provision from the South Eastern Regional College was prompted by a reconfiguration of the existing overall numbers to ensure a more equitable geographical spread of places across Northern Ireland, to widen participation and to prioritise the centres with the highest level of applications. This approach has been agreed with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

Student Loans

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he has taken to assist those students who were affected by the delays in student loan payments; and to detail any discussions he has held with the Student Loans Company to ensure that payments are made on time in future.

(AQO 299/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department is not aware of any Northern Ireland domiciled students being affected by the delays in payments by the Student Loans Company that have been recently reported in the media.

It is my understanding that these delays are primarily the result of a change in the arrangements for processing applications for new English domiciled students and an increase in applications from English domiciled students. There has been no change in arrangements for Northern Ireland domiciled students. Applications will continue to be processed by the Education and Library Boards, with payments made by the Student Loans Company.

There is regular liaison between my Department, the Education and Library Boards and the Student Loans Company to ensure that Northern Ireland domiciled students receive an effective service.

Employment Dispute Resolution System

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide an update on the Review of the Northern Ireland Employment Dispute Resolution System.

(AQO 301/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Public consultation on the review ran for a period of 13 weeks, ending on 4th September 2009. The consultation sought to gather views on a range of topics relevant to employment dispute resolution, and I am delighted to say that there has been a healthy response, with 38 formal submissions received. I would like to thank consultees for their valuable contributions to what has been a very worthwhile and informative process.

Officials from my Department recently gave a presentation to the Employment and Learning Committee outlining progress to date, and I welcome the Committee's offer of further engagement before policy proposals are finalised.

Officials are currently working to analyse responses on behalf of the Consultation Steering Group, representative of the key stakeholder organisations, which I established in May 2008. I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Steering Group, which is due to report on the consultation process in November 2009. I then hope to be in a position to bring a paper to the Executive Committee setting out policy recommendations by the end of the year.

Apprenticeships

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people are currently taking part in Programme-Led Apprenticeships. (AQO 302/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Between the introduction on 7 September until 6 October 2009 there are 2,666 people taking part in Programme-Led apprenticeships.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Staff Travel Costs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much was spent by her Department on staff travel cost claims in the last financial year. (AQW 1970/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): During 2008/09 DETI paid £271,662 in respect of staff travel claims which included £86,484 paid to staff working in Health and Safety Executive for NI.

During the same period the following amounts were paid by DETI's Non Department Public Bodies in respect of staff travel claims: Invest NI £672,694; Northern Ireland Tourist Board £97,423; and Consumer Council for NI £14,538

Rose Energy Proposal

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which part of the Rose Energy proposal meets the 'additionality' criterion required in Invest Northern Ireland's client selection process. (AQW 1997/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest Northern Ireland applies the additionality criterion each time that support is offered including the potential of support for the Rose Energy project.

The question that must be satisfied is that the project would not or could not proceed without Invest NI financial support.

In each case the criterion is applied to a project as a whole, not discrete parts.

Invest NI publishes a brochure entitled "Assistance for your Business" that contains an explanation of project eligibility criteria and approval process.

Waste Management Facilities

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 325/10, if she intends to undertake a formal procurement process to source waste management facilities or solutions for the disposal of chicken litter, to ensure best value is achieved. (AQW 2001/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department has no plans to undertake a formal procurement process to source waste management facilities or solutions for the disposal of chicken litter at this time.

Invest NI Funding

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to confirm if every possible effort is being made to ensure that Invest NI funding in new enterprise is subject to financial scrutiny to ensure public money is well spent. (AQW 2006/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI supports new enterprise in Northern Ireland in a variety of ways including direct financial support to new Northern Ireland start-up companies, the expansions of Northern Ireland businesses and also inward investment projects. Invest also runs a number of programmes to stimulate enterprise and entrepreneurship across the region.

All Invest NI funding, whether offered directly to businesses or committed to the delivery of enterprise programmes, is subject to proportionate appraisal (often independent of Invest NI) which must conclude that the proposed funding offers value for money.

Depending on the scale of funding proposed towards an initiative, commitment of Invest NI's funds may, in addition to its own internal approval mechanisms, require the consent from DETI's Minister or that of the Department of Finance and Personnel.

All companies in receipt of financial support are monitored over the lifetime of a project's implementation both in respect of the individual project's progress and the company's financial health. Further, financial support packages to companies and Invest NI enterprise programmes are subject to post project evaluation to determine whether or not value for money was achieved and to learn and disseminate any important lessons for the future.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what provision is made by her Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people. (AQW 2044/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: All DETI documents which are published in hard copy and made available for download on the Department's website include the following or similar message:

"This publication can be made available in alternative formats. To receive copies in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille or audio cassette, or in another language, please contact XXX to discuss your requirements".

Demand for alternative formats has been relatively low to date but any requests received are actioned as quickly as possible. A recent request for an information pack in Braille was delivered within two working days and requests for large print are usually delivered within one day. DETI also gives consideration to proactively producing certain key documents in more accessible formats for people with visual impairments. The Department's current Disability Action Plan has been produced, for example, in a larger print (font 14).

The Department would be happy to discuss these issues with members of the Right to Read alliance.

Employment-Related Projects

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why her Department spent £116.71 million to assist employment-related projects in Belfast in the past five years, compared to £30.82 million in Craigavon and £2.10 million spent in Banbridge, from an overall total of £377.42 million. (AQW 2054/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: DETI, through Invest NI, spent the sums outlined in the question because the financially supported-businesses in these areas submitted eligible grant claims that were then duly vouched and paid.

The geographical pattern of expenditure outturn is a direct function of draw down of grants from eligible businesses with active Financial Assistance Agreements with Invest NI.

In addition, higher levels of financial assistance paid are in areas where there are a large number of Invest NI clients. On this point Invest NI has limited scope for 'directing' new investment, including foreign direct investment, to specific areas. In the case of established businesses, reinvestment patterns will almost exclusively be determined by the existing location of the business.

District Council Areas are not self-contained labour markets and a project assisted in a particular location has the potential to create benefits across a much wider area. Northern Ireland is a relatively small place and evidence indicates that many investments draw their workforce from areas beyond constituency and council area boundaries.

In terms of foreign investment, Invest NI's role is to promote Northern Ireland as a whole as an attractive and viable location, capable of providing solutions to the business needs of new investors wishing to establish here in Northern Ireland. Invest NI does not determine locations for visits for a potential investor and the location for an investment project; this decision is taken solely by the investor.

Titanic Centenary

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's plans to maximise the tourist potential of the Titanic centenary. (AQW 2055/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: One of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) five signature projects, identified in its Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007, is the Titanic Signature Project (TSP). This project will maximise the tourist potential of all Titanic related attractions, including existing authentic heritage sites and the forthcoming Titanic Signature Building (TSB) due to be completed in 2012 to coincide with and commemorate the Titanic centenary. The Signature Building will be a catalyst to the whole theme of the maritime heritage of the city. It will be the focus of tourism in the Titanic Quarter and complement proposals for industrial and maritime heritage trails.

NITB is working closely with Belfast City Council to support and promote events to commemorate the centenary, which will encourage tourists to visit from all over the world. The draft events programme builds from May 2011, when Titanic was launched in Belfast, to ensure that the full life of Titanic is celebrated and appropriate momentum is built up.

Belfast City Council has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with other cities with Titanic links such as Southampton, Cherbourg and Cobh. NITB is actively supporting this MOU which encourages 'Titanic cities' to reap the benefits of partnership working in terms of creating a fitting commemorative programme for the centenary, economies of scale in marketing and promotion.

NITB are also in the final stages of developing a Titanic focused marketing and communications strategy, to ensure that the tourist potential of the centenary and beyond is captured. It is vital that the world is made fully aware that Titanic was built in Belfast – to encourage them to visit not only to commemorate the historical past but to also take an innovative look at how the past informed the present and is driving our future.

Tourism Ireland (TIL) also features Northern Ireland prominently across all markets in its extensive destination marketing programme. TIL will work closely with NITB and the industry in Northern Ireland to maximise the tourism potential of the Titanic centenary. TIL has identified a range of overseas promotional opportunities for Titanic in Belfast in the lead up to the Titanic centenary, including, for example, a mobile exhibition, a feature in the Tourism Ireland market books and a series of broadcasts to mark the centenary itself. These will be implemented in accordance with the communications strategy currently being finalised by NITB.

International Visitors for Titanic Related Tourism

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any market research undertaken by her Department or its agencies in relation to the demand from international visitors for Titanic related tourism. (AQW 2056/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In 2006 NITB commissioned market research which revealed a considerable level of interest in the Titanic Signature Project among potential international visitors from the Republic of Ireland and GB. Their expectations of the concept were high, particularly the attraction of the proposed building and the way it would relay the Titanic story through interactive elements and the story being told from the real-life perspectives of those involved. The research concluded that there is definite potential for the project to encourage Republic of Ireland residents to make more frequent visits to Belfast and that it could play a key role in attracting visitors from GB to Belfast.

This market research involved testing the initial concepts for the Titanic Signature Project through focus groups, carried out by an independent market research agency. This research included focus groups in the Northern Ireland market and has not been implemented among potential international visitors beyond GB and Republic of Ireland.

This research enabled the design team to further develop concepts for the overall project and the exhibition galleries taking consumer perceptions into account and assisted in the development of the marketing strategy for the project.

NITB also commissioned an independent external provider to develop projected visitor numbers to the Titanic Signature Project. This was based on forecasts for growth of domestic and international visitors to Northern Ireland and their potential levels of visitation to the project. This projected that up to 400,000 domestic and international visitors will come to see the Titanic attraction element within the Titanic Signature Building. The

building will be capable of handling around 900,000 visitors per annum including those who will be availing of the banqueting facilities.

Productivity of the International Offices

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assess the relative productivity of the international offices operated (i) directly by her Department and (ii) by external local agencies.

(AQW 2057/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) My Department operates no international offices.
- (ii) External Local Agencies – Invest NI – See Below:

International offices and representatives

Invest NI currently has a network of 11 offices located outside Northern Ireland:

- Invest NI has a network of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) offices located in North America (Boston, New York, San Jose), Europe (London, Brussels, Dublin) and South Asia (Mumbai). These offices focus on promoting Northern Ireland as a location capable of providing solutions to the business needs of new investors.
- Invest NI operates Trade Development Centres in Boston, Dubai, Mumbai, Dusseldorf, Taipei and Shanghai which provide practical assistance to Northern Ireland companies seeking to develop and secure new business and strategic business partnerships in those markets. These offices are responsible for developing trade opportunities for Northern Ireland companies and strengthen R&D technology link. FDI is outside the scope of these offices.
- The above offices are directly managed by Invest NI and staffed by a combination of Invest NI staff, locally engaged staff and service providers/contractors.

Invest NI also has a part-time representative in Tokyo who focuses on promotional activities.

In Seoul, Invest NI has a part-time representative who focuses on promoting technology development and university links. Again, FDI is outside the scope of this representative.

Inward investment

Inward investment is the culmination of a process involving the participation of many Invest NI teams, often from across different offices. As such, it is not possible to align each investment with a particular office. The tables below detail the number of jobs promoted and planned investment in the last five financial years by source region.

2004-05

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	6	181	133	11.86
Great Britain	8	1,154	12	36.56
North America	17	1,044	785	123.36
Republic of Ireland	16	238	382	22.61
India	2	850	0	15.22
Asia Pacific	2	0	0	0.06
Total	51	3,467	1,312	209.67

2005-06

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	3	641	278	73.26

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Great Britain	11	670	33	27.12
North America	10	1,412	2,812	211.53
Republic of Ireland	5	179	95	32.98
India	1	158	0	7.43
Asia Pacific	1	40	63	9.88
Total	31	3,100	3,281	362.20

2006-07

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	3	398	90	15.66
Great Britain	4	93	0	5.90
North America	8	885	93	60.89
Republic of Ireland	8	818	21	47.42
India	3	1,227	0	42.70
Asia Pacific	1	30	0	3.23
Total	27	3,451	204	175.80

2007-08

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	3	298	276	35.70
Great Britain	7	308	67	12.32
North America	14	422	1,102	119.56
Republic of Ireland	7	324	30	41.09
India	2	834	0	19.96
Asia Pacific	2	552	0	27.50
Total	35	2,738	1,475	256.13

2008-09

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	6	775	2	85.67
Great Britain	12	262	3	17.02
North America	11	1,667	0	574.81
Republic of Ireland	13	1,345	152	107.38
India	0	0	0	0
Asia Pacific	1	6	0	0.39
Total	43	4,055	157	785.27

TOTAL 2004/05 - 2008/09

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Continental Europe	21	2,293	779	222.14

	Offers	New Jobs Promoted	Safeguarded Jobs	Planned Investment £'m
Great Britain	42	2,487	115	98.91
North America	60	5,430	4,792	1,090.15
Republic of Ireland	49	2,904	680	251.48
India	8	3,069	0	85.31
Asia Pacific	7	628	63	41.07
Total	187	16,811	6,429	1,789.06

Notes:

1. Figures include offers of assistance towards both first-time inward investments and reinvestments by existing externally-owned clients.
2. New jobs promoted represent the number of jobs expected to be promoted by the project.
3. Safeguarded jobs represent the number jobs that would have been lost if the project was not supported.
4. Total planned investment includes planned investment by the client and total assistance offered by Invest NI.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps have been, or will be, taken by her Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 2085/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In line with the Department's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, DETI is committed to providing a high quality service to all customers, including those with disabilities. Key customer-facing areas of DETI have met with disability organisations to discuss the provision of information and services to people with a disability, including those with a visual impairment. DETI's Consumer Affairs Branch officials have, for example, met with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and with a number of local groups for the blind in Belfast, Banbridge, Bangor and Newtownards to provide information on basic consumer rights and the work of Trading Standards Service (TSS) and to offer TSS assistance to help resolve any consumer complaints.

Information packs relating to public appointments, in addition to stating that alternative formats can be made available upon request, state that "All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability". Appropriate assistance was made available to an applicant with a visual impairment who attended for interview earlier this year.

The potential for further action will be explored, in liaison with the local disability organisations, including members of the Right to Read alliance, as part of the development of future DETI Disability Action Plans.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board's New Corporate Campaign

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's new corporate campaign, to detail (i) above and below the line promotional and advertising costs; (ii) the estimated benefits to the economy; and (iii) the estimated number of visitors expected from each target market. (AQW 2094/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has recently launched an autumn consumer marketing campaign in both the Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) markets. This campaign aims to improve perceptions of NI as a place to visit for a short break or day trip and ultimately increase visitor numbers and revenue to NI, from these key markets for which NITB has responsibility. The campaign expenditure has been projected at £1,337,205. The campaign activity is primarily above the line, although there are also crucial below the line elements designed to underpin the core activity. The projected split in activity is as follows: c£1.265million above the line and c£72k below the line. The above the line activity includes TV, Radio, Press, Outdoor and Online advertising, while our below the line activity includes shopping centre promotions, direct mail (on & offline) and promotional collateral. This media mix has been

selected and developed using Target Group Index (TGI) planning software to identify those media platforms most relevant to our core audiences.

This expenditure forms part of an annual marketing campaigns budget of £4m across both markets. In addition this campaign activity is supplemented by a rolling programme of below the line PR activity in both NI and ROI aimed at addressing lingering perception issues.

[Note the split between above and below the line is an estimate, as some costs associated with the campaign cut across all platforms.]

- (ii) A full evaluation of the campaign will be produced upon completion of the activity. This will provide a detailed insight into the impact of the campaign both in terms of perception change, visitors and revenue generated as well as an overall estimate of return on investment.

Evaluation of NITB's recent marketing activity shows encouraging results, the spring 2009 campaign (also targeting both NI & ROI residents) generated £18.4million revenue, which represented a return of £7.92 for each £1 of investment based on an expenditure of £2.327million. The summer 2009 campaign which focused on ROI residents generated £10.6million revenue, which represented a return of £13 for each £1 of investment based on an expenditure of £820,000.

- (iii) The campaign forms part of NITB's ongoing efforts to contribute to growth in the Northern Ireland and ROI markets. A rolling programme of market activity is implemented across the year. Following very positive growth in 2008, NITB has set targets to increase the number of holiday visitors from the Republic of Ireland by 25% in 2009. Domestic holidays are targeted to recover from recent declines and grow by 5% in 2009.

NITB also carries out 'Gateway' marketing campaigns aimed at influencing those visitors from GB and overseas entering the island of Ireland via the Republic of Ireland to travel to Northern Ireland during their stay. This activity takes place at key tourist sites and points of entry and is concentrated around the summer months which is the key period for these visitors.

'Go for It' Programme

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the 'Go for It' programme, to detail (i) the estimated uptake in the next 18 months, by constituency; and (ii) the anticipated return to the economy. (AQW 2097/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The table below shows the projected uptake of lead in assessment meetings by parliamentary constituency for the Go For It programme until March 2011 (programme end date).

All programme participants who wish to proceed with a business start idea receive an initial assessment with a business advisor to determine their needs and develop an appropriate programme path.

As the programme only commenced in April 2009, the projected outturns are based on trends to date and take account of seasonal factors where relevant.

The projections below take account of the number of lead-in assessment meetings only as the programme is still not embedded enough to have visibility on conversion right through to start-up. However, KPMG and Oxford Economics as part of their Monitoring Agent role, are currently examining this area in more depth for Invest NI.

Parliamentary constituency	Apr – Sep 09	Oct 09 – March 2011	Total Apr 09 – March 2011	% of Northern Ireland
Belfast East	269	1,061	1,330	5.51%
Belfast North	237	575	812	3.36%
Belfast South	199	1,370	1,569	6.51%
Belfast West	495	1,238	1,733	7.18%
East Antrim	236	1,149	1,385	5.74%
East Londonderry	261	840	1,101	4.56%
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	351	1,304	1,655	6.86%

Parliamentary constituency	Apr – Sep 09	Oct 09 – March 2011	Total Apr 09 – March 2011	% of Northern Ireland
Foyle	294	928	1,222	5.07%
Lagan Valley	241	707	948	3.93%
Mid Ulster	257	1,149	1,406	5.83%
Newry & Armagh	398	1,591	1,989	8.25%
North Antrim	251	818	1,069	4.43%
North Down	202	464	666	2.76%
South Antrim	336	1,017	1,353	5.61%
South Down	218	641	859	3.56%
Strangford	431	1,326	1,757	7.28%
Upper Bann	399	1,216	1,615	6.69%
West Tyrone	328	1,326	1,654	6.86%
Northern Ireland	5,403	18,719	24,122	100.00%

Whilst it is too early to report on any of the economic impacts of the programme, its key target will be the creation of 3,800 new business starts that will lead to the creation of 4,940 new jobs for the local economy. The programme will also provide support to 800 existing businesses to aid growth potential. This growth drive will be in both home and export markets leading to increased employment and sales.

A key focus is on the development of the skills and capacity of business owners in Northern Ireland as well as promoting social inclusion and equality of access to underrepresented or disadvantaged groups. This Pre-Start stage will offer specific support to over 5,000 individuals to improve confidence, capability and drive to take a business idea forward, which will contribute to stimulating economic growth in deprived areas.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2128/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The amounts spent by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment including its NDPBs in each of the last five financial years on media training is as follows:

2008/09	£ 6,761
2007/08	£ 7,873
2006/07	£ 7,724
2005/06	£ 705
2004/05	£12,250

Proof of Concept Programme

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what proportion of its overall budget has Invest NI spent on the Proof of Concept programme in the last three years. (AQW 2143/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Summary of Proof of Concept programme budget/expenditure as compared to the overall Invest NI budget/expenditure is as follows:

Year	Overall INI budget/expenditure	PoC budget/expenditure	
2007/08	£130M (expenditure)	£1.435M (expenditure)	1.10%

Year	Overall INI budget/expenditure	PoC budget/expenditure	
2008/09	£129M (expenditure)	£0.549M (expenditure)	0.40%
2009//10	£179M (budget)	£2.5M (budget)	1.14%

Proof of Concept Programme

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs were created in the 57 firms supported by Invest NI's Proof of Concept programme in the last 2 years. (AQW 2144/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The objective of the Proof of Concept programme is to increase the level and quality of commercialisation of research carried out within Northern Ireland's Universities and Research Institutes through the provision of funding for early stage development activity. It is not a job creation programme and is not open to businesses.

Employment-Related Projects

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Invest NI spent only 1.8% of its budget on assistance to employment-related projects in Banbridge, which is the fastest growing town in Northern Ireland. (AQW 2146/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has limited scope for 'directing' investment to specific areas and assistance patterns are demand-led by businesses wishing to improve their competitiveness and gain a larger share of international markets. In the case of established businesses, reinvestment patterns will usually be determined by the existing location of the business.

Individual cities and towns are not self-contained labour markets and a project assisted in a particular location has the potential to create benefits across a much wider area. Northern Ireland is a relatively small place and evidence indicates that many investments draw their workforce from areas beyond their immediate location.

In terms of foreign investment, Invest NI's role is to promote Northern Ireland as a whole as an attractive and viable location, capable of providing solutions to the business needs of new investors wishing to establish here in Northern Ireland. Invest NI does not determine locations for visits for a potential investor and the location for an investment project; this decision is taken solely by the investor. Invest NI does, however, work closely with the company when preparing a draft visit programme to ensure that the locations to be visited meet their requirements and also provide the best opportunity for Invest NI to sell the Northern Ireland proposition.

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government. (AQW 2169/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of the Environment has lead policy responsibility for Climate Change and is the primary point of contact with the Committee on Climate Change.

To date, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has not sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

Renewable Energy Targets

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on his Department's progress in relation to achieving renewable energy targets. (AQO 344/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Our renewable energy target is that, by 2012, 12% of our electricity consumption will come from indigenous renewable sources and that, of that renewable element, 15%

will be from non-wind sources. By the end of September 2009 we had reached 8.9% on the main target with a 2.4% non-wind contribution.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) on what date did the Financial Services Authority inspect and audit the Presbyterian Mutual Society; and (ii) to detail the results. (AQW 2384/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Financial Services Authority's (FSA) normal practice is neither to confirm nor deny that it is investigating a particular firm or individual. However, in the light of the information already in the public domain about the FSA's involvement and the public interest in the Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS), the FSA confirmed in a statement in April of this year that it had investigated the activities of PMS to consider if it was conducting regulated activities without the necessary authorisation or exemption.

The FSA concluded its investigation and decided that the PMS was conducting regulated activities without the necessary authorisation or exemption. However, on the basis of the information available to it, and applying the criteria in the Code for Crown Prosecutors, the FSA decided that it would not be right to take a case against any of those involved in running the PMS. However, the FSA remains in touch with the administrator and, if further information comes to light relating to the issues investigated, the FSA will look into it.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Advertising

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the NI Tourist Board plans to carry out a public opinion poll on the effectiveness of its new television campaign, to determine public perception, relevance and enthusiasm. (AQO 305/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board evaluates marketing campaign activity on an ongoing basis. As such the autumn campaign, which features a series of new television advertisements, will be evaluated through detailed surveys within the key target markets of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This evaluation will determine both people's perceptions and awareness of the marketing and also the return on investment that it has generated. This evaluation will be carried out independently by a professional research agency.

The evaluation of NITB's most recent campaign in summer 2009 in the Republic of Ireland market identified:

- High levels of recall of promotional activity, with 86% of ROI population recalling at least one advert from the Summer 2009 campaign
- Adverts were reported to be appealing, believable and 2/3 of those surveyed felt that they provided new information about Northern Ireland and 55% felt that they changed the way they thought about Northern Ireland.
- The large majority (89%) felt that the campaign demonstrated that Northern Ireland was 'worth a visit' and that Northern Ireland 'offers a unique and distinctive experience' (63%)
- Those ROI residents who took or planned a short break or day trip as a result of the campaign generated an estimated £10.6 million
- With a total cost of £820,000, this represents a return on investment of £1:£13

Electricity Costs

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the 40% renewable energy target will have on the cost of electricity for businesses and consumers. (AQO 311/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: When the Strategic Energy Framework issued for consultation in July 2009, it indicated the estimated cost of the proposed 40% renewable electricity target could be in the region of £99 per household per annum.

However, I am now pleased to be able to report that further detailed analysis of the work on the cost of the renewable electricity target has indicated that the figure is more likely to be around £50 per household per annum.

There still remain issues about how the most vulnerable customers and those in fuel poverty can be helped to deal with increasing fuel costs – and my officials continue to work with DSD counterparts on this matter.

It is more difficult to forecast the impact of increased renewables on business consumers as it is harder to define the average business energy user, but clearly there will be increased costs from increasing the renewables contribution.

However, we should be aware that oil and gas prices are likely to increase in the future as demand continues to increase globally and stocks dwindle. So reducing our dependence on these fuels and increasing our use of renewables should help protect Northern Ireland consumers, across all sectors, from global price fluctuations.

Natural Gas

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to extend the availability of natural gas. (AQO 312/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department, in co-operation with the Utility Regulator, has engaged consultants to carry out a study into the technical and economic feasibility of extending the natural gas network to the west and remaining areas of the north-west of Northern Ireland. The consultants report is expected by the end of December 2009.

Additionally, the Department has agreed with the gas industry to establish a Natural Gas Strategic Development Group to consider issues relating to development of the natural gas industry in Northern Ireland.

The Department will continue to consider any application received to extend the natural gas network, and is likely to be supportive of proposals which are economically viable.

Economic Policy

Mr A Bresland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if any of the recommendations of the Independent Review of Economic Policy build on work being done by Invest NI, and if so, to outline them. (AQO 313/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I commissioned the Independent Review of Economic Policy to undertake a root and branch assessment of how we support business in Northern Ireland. The report was published at the end of September 2009, with 58 wide-ranging recommendations.

The report requires careful consideration, and it is for this reason that I have issued the report for a short period of consultation, ending on 16 November 2009.

Now it is important to recognise that the Review Panel states that, while it is possible that performance could and should be improved, DETI and Invest NI are on the right policy path.

Invest NI's primary aim in its 2008-11 Corporate Plan has shifted, in line with the Programme for Government, towards an explicit focus on improving business productivity. The agency has committed to increasing the focus on, and budget directed at, Innovation & R&D and encouraging the development of higher value-added sectors.

Indeed, the Review Panel recognised in their report that the pattern of offers is moving toward these priority areas. In particular, they pointed to the fact that assistance for Innovation and R&D projects in 2008/09 – the first year of the current Corporate Plan – was 20% higher than the preceding years.

However, as I said earlier it is important that the report is given detailed consideration and that we do not jump to any early conclusions.

Short-term Aid Scheme

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many companies have been assisted since the introduction of the Short Term Assistance Scheme. (AQO 314/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Short Term Aid Scheme was launched in June to assist businesses to retain key staff while they plan, and where necessary, restructure for the future so that they are ready to take advantage of improved economic circumstances.

The scheme is due to run until 31 December 2010 and to date a total of 23 applications have been approved with financial support totalling £3.3 million.

The Short Term Aid Scheme is designed to assist those businesses that are most in need and that can deliver the greatest return to the NI economy for the support provided. Therefore, the scheme is not just open to Invest NI Clients but to all businesses within the manufacturing and tradable services sectors who can meet, or have the potential to meet by 31 December 2010, the criteria of a minimum of £100,000 annual turnover, of which 25% (or greater than £250,000) are sales external to Northern Ireland

Invest NI continues to work closely with businesses in investigating the potential options available to address their current needs and has deployed a number of programmes to specifically assist companies through the current economic conditions. These include the Accelerated Support Fund which has offered £3.2 million of support for 101 companies since its launch in September 2008.

Over 100 businesses have also been supported by the Business Improvement through Training Programme in the current financial year, representing a 26% increase when compared to the same period last year.

Fourteen Navigating Challenging Times seminars were held across Northern Ireland for client companies resulting in over 700 businesses registering for free diagnostic support. A further 10 events were also held which targeted the wider business base and which attracted 700 people representing 400 companies.

Saint Patrick Signature Project

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on the Saint Patrick's Signature Project and the development of the Saint Patrick's trail. (AQO 315/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Saint Patrick's Trail is a signed driving route from Bangor to Armagh. The route ties together several key Patrician sites which form the basis of the St Patrick's Signature Project. 23 applications for financial assistance to improve access, interpretation and visitor servicing are currently being assessed by NITB who hope to issue Letters of Offer to successful applicants in early 2010.

Renewable Energy

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to make investment in renewable energy viable in comparison to other fossil fuels. (AQO 316/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) continues to be the primary support mechanism for encouraging the generation of electricity from renewable sources. It has successfully helped to double the amount of renewable electricity generated in Northern Ireland over the past 4 years and I am confident that it will continue to enable renewables generation to compete with conventional generation.

My Department is currently consulting on some proposed changes to the NIRO from 2010. That consultation is inviting comments on, among other things, possible alternative methods of supporting the viability of smaller scale renewables generation.

DETI is simultaneously initiating a study into the options for a future support regime – including the NIRO – as we aim to meet challenging 2020 renewables targets.

The main renewables focus has, until now, been on the generation of electricity from renewable sources but my Department is currently also initiating research into the potential for the development of a renewable heat market in Northern Ireland. This research will look into all types of renewable heat and will consider how best a renewable heat market in NI may be encouraged. This work will also help to inform a strategy for developing a renewable heat market in NI.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when a resolution is likely to be agreed with the Treasury concerning the Presbyterian Mutual Society. (AQO 317/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: As a member of the Ministerial Working Group, I together with my Executive colleagues met with our Westminster counterparts at the Treasury on 14 October 2009 to review progress on finding a solution to help PMS members and to receive an update from officials on progress. The Northern Ireland Executive members of the Group emphasised the need to find an acceptable resolution as quickly as possible. Initial discussions at official level have begun with the local banks and it was highlighted that it would be necessary to progress those talks further.

The outcome of the discussions should be known shortly and I am expecting a full paper on the options open to resolve the PMS problem to be presented to the Ministerial Working Group by early November.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Community Planning

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his vision for community planning.

(AQW 2082/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): The Executive's vision for local government is one of a strong, dynamic local government creating communities that are vibrant, healthy, prosperous, safe, sustainable and have the needs of all citizens at their core. Community Planning will provide a framework whereby Councils, central government Departments, statutory bodies and other relevant agencies and sectors can work together to develop and implement a shared vision for promoting the well-being of their area based on effective engagement with the community.

Our aim is to put community leadership at the heart of every council, and in the hands of every councillor, bringing together public agencies and key stakeholders to act in partnership to secure excellent and efficient services and to address local problems.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 2129/10)

Minister of the Environment: The table below gives details of my Department's expenditure on media training for staff for each of the last 5 years.

Media Training	2004/05 £	2005/06 £	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
Total	4,218	600	1,469	970	4,741

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister of the Environment if his Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

(AQW 2187/10)

Minister of the Environment: No advice has been sought from the Committee on Climate Change by my Department with regard to the Programme for Government.

Current Populations of Plant Species

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment what measures are in place to monitor the current populations of plant species listed in Schedule 8, Part 1 of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.

(AQW 2210/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) does not routinely monitor all populations of Schedule 8 species. However, many of the species on the current Schedule 8 occur within Areas of Special Scientific interest (ASSI). The selection features for these sites are monitored during the six-yearly ASSI monitoring cycle. Of the 55 species listed in the current Schedule, 49 occur on ASSIs and are monitored as part of this process. Only 6 species do not occur on ASSIs and of these, at least 2 are believed to be extinct. Further ASSI declarations are planned and these will include additional sites for Schedule 8 species.

Many of the plant species listed in Schedule 8 are included in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and their recording is encouraged by NIEA through its relationship with various voluntary plant recorders and its partnership with CEDaR, the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Children Missing from Care

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children have gone missing from care in each Health and Social Care Trust area, in the last six months. (AQW 1785/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The information requested is not collected centrally.

Recruitment or Retention Difficulties within the Pharmacy Profession

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any recruitment or retention difficulties within the pharmacy profession, and if so, what steps his Department intends to take to rectify these difficulties. (AQW 1806/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department is not aware of any widespread regional recruitment or retention difficulties within the Pharmacy profession in the HSC at this time.

Patients in Muckamore Abbey Hospital

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients resident in Muckamore Abbey Hospital are ready for discharge into the community. (AQW 1813/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 20 patients who have received treatment and are now awaiting discharge.

In addition there are 174 patients in long term wards currently awaiting resettlement to ensure that by 2013 no-one with a learning disability remains unnecessarily in hospital.

Province of Ulster Air Ambulance Helicopter

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will sanction the Ambulance Service Trust opening discussions with regard to the use of the Province of Ulster Air Ambulance helicopter. (AQW 1819/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is entirely a matter for the ambulance service to decide if a meeting with any organisation is necessary or appropriate. I understand that senior NIAS managers have already met representatives of the Province of Ulster Air Ambulance.

Hospital Beds

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hospital beds there are in the Health Service. (AQW 1823/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Data relating to the number of available hospital beds is published annually and can be found online at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/hospital_statistics.htm.

Flu Vaccination

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the percentage uptake of the flu vaccination by Health Service staff last year. (AQW 1824/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The 2008 percentage uptake of the seasonal flu vaccination by Health Service staff was 8.27% as at 31 December 2008. While the figures for 2009 are not yet available early indications suggest the 2009 seasonal flu vaccination programme uptake will be higher this year.

Funding for Home Start

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 841/10, for his assessment of the adequacy of funding allocated by the Health and Social Care Board for Home Start in (i) Ards; (ii) the Peninsula; and (iii) Comber, in each of the next three years. (AQW 1828/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is committed to providing project funding to Home Start Ards, Comber and the Peninsula Area at its current level until 31st March 2011. However, any allocation of funds beyond March 2011 is dependent on the outcome of the new Comprehensive Spending Review, work on which will get under way in the early part of next year.

Contracted Costs

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what was the anticipated contracted cost for (i) clinical chemistry tests (analysers and consumables only); and (ii) immunoassay tests (analysers and consumables only) in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2004/5; (b) 2005/6; (c) 2006/7; (d) 2007/8; and (e) 2008/9. (AQW 1834/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

Clinical Chemistry and Immunoassay Tests

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) clinical chemistry; and (ii) immunoassay tests were conducted in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2004/5; (b) 2005/6; (c) 2006/7; (d) 2007/8; and (e) 2008/9. (AQW 1835/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information for 2007/08 and 2008/09 is provided in the table below. Information for the three earlier years, which pre-date the formation of the Northern Trust, is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

	2007/08	2008/09
Clinical Chemistry Tests	4,819,000	5,281,000
Immunoassay Tests	349,000	404,500

Clinical Chemistry and Immunoassay Tests

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) clinical chemistry; and (ii) immunoassay tests were anticipated in pre-agreed contracts for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2004/5; (b) 2005/6; (c) 2006/7; (d) 2007/8; and (e) 2008/9. (AQW 1837/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

Clinical Chemistry and Immunoassay Tests

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what was the actual contractual spend for (i) clinical chemistry tests (analysers and consumables only); and (ii) immunoassay tests (analysers and consumables only) in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (a) 2004/5; (b) 2005/6; (c) 2006/7; (d) 2007/8; and (e) 2008/9. (AQW 1838/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not available.

Equality Impact Assessment Responses

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the Equality Impact Assessment responses that each Health and Social Care Trust completed on proposed new budgets; and (ii) if he can give assurances that resources will be targeted to meet need. (AQW 1843/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In compliance with statutory equality duties all Health and Social Care Trusts are required to routinely equality screen proposed policies to determine if they are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity and should therefore be subject to equality impact assessments. All such assessments are included as part of the trusts' publication schemes and are available on the Trust websites or directly from the Trusts.

Resources are targeted to meet need by my Department through the use of a statistical tool known as the Capitation formula. This formula is updated periodically following research to reflect the latest need variables of the 9 main health and social services programmes of care. The Health & Social Care Board then use the formula, which is updated annually for factors such as deaths, births, changes in population numbers and age profiles, to target their available resources across geographic areas and services. The periodic capitation formula updates also undergo an Equality Impact Assessment.

My Department has a clear strategy to address any over or under funding that exists within the province. This helps to ensure that resources are targeted to where they are needed most.

Call-outs Received for the Emergency Ambulance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of call-outs received for the emergency ambulance in Limavady in the last two years; and (ii) the number of these call-outs that were outside the Limavady Council area. (AQW 1846/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Emergency Ambulance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans for the replacement of the emergency ambulance serving the Limavady area. (AQW 1847/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) has no plans to replace the emergency ambulance based in Limavady Ambulance Station.

Emergency Ambulance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the criteria that establish the ‘Platinum 10 Minutes’ on emergency ambulance call-outs. (AQW 1848/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The “platinum ten minutes” is a concept and not an accepted performance standard for emergency ambulance response.

EU Interreg IVA

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the delivery of EU Interreg IVA, Priority 2, Theme 1 ‘Putting Patients, Clients and their Families First’; and to identify the projects (a) funded (b) agreed; and the time scale for delivery. (AQW 1852/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Last year, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in partnership with the Department of Health and Children, successfully secured funding through the INTERREG IVA Programme for its Putting Patients, Clients and Families First project.

The project, which covers a range of activities, will be delivered on behalf of both Departments by Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT). A small number of voluntary groups will also be involved in the delivery of some of the strands of activity.

Implementation of the project has just got under way, and it is envisaged that it will take around three years to roll out in full.

Emergency Call-outs

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of emergency call-outs in the Limavady Council area where a rapid response vehicle was the first response vehicle mobilised, in each of the last three years. (AQW 1856/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The speed with which an emergency response is mobilised is recorded as an activation time by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. The table below shows the number of occasions when an RRV achieved the best activation time.

Year	RRVs achieving quickest activation
2006/07	18
2007/08	62
2008/09	77

It should be noted that NIAS does not deploy a RRV in Limavady and that RRV responses in the area will, therefore, have come from other stations, most likely Altnagelvin.

Fireworks Injuries

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people (i) under the age of 20; and (ii) aged 20 and over, were injured as a result of fireworks in each of the last five years. (AQW 1857/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of patients reporting to A&E Departments and Minor Injuries Units with injuries from fireworks, since 2004, over a selected 4-5 week period covering the end of October and start of November (Halloween period) is available in the Annual Northern Ireland Fireworks Injuries Statistics at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-activity_stats-2/firework_statistics.htm

Multiple Sclerosis

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the number of people in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis broken down by area; and (ii) how many of these cases would be regarded as severe. (AQW 1868/10)

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

Prescription Charges

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the financial constraints within the Health Service, if he has any plans to review his decision to abolish prescription charges in 2010. (AQW 1869/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have no plans to review my decision to abolish prescription charges from next year.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinics

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hospitals have Inflammatory Bowel Disease clinics. (AQW 1870/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of hospitals that have Inflammatory Bowel Disease clinics is not available.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease. (AQW 1871/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of people, who are currently diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease is not available.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. (AQW 1873/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of people, who are currently diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Syndrome is not available.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many specialist nurses are trained in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. (AQW 1874/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW 1706/10

Sign Language Interpreting Services

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department will take to ensure that spending by Health and Social Care Trusts on sign language interpreting services is used to provide interpreters qualified to 'Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters' standard. (AQW 1878/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Four of the five Health and Social Care Trusts, as well as the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust, already ensure that any interpreters they employ are

Members of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters. In most cases, interpreting services are contracted through organisations such as the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) and 'Hands That Talk'.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust currently has a service level agreement with 'Hands That Talk', who employ 11 interpreters who are Members of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters, and an additional 5 who have recently completed the Junior Training Interpreting course (one step away from MRSLI). 'Hands That Talk' aim to have a further 12 interpreters qualified to MRSLI standards by 2012.

Care Matters in Northern Ireland – A Bridge to a Better Future' Consultation

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will publish the findings of the 'Care Matters in Northern Ireland – A Bridge to a Better Future' consultation, which opened in March 2007. (AQW 1879/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following endorsement of the Care Matters in Northern Ireland strategy at a meeting of the Executive on 10th September, my Department intends to publish the findings of the Care Matters in Northern Ireland consultation shortly.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Plan

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the spending profile for the additional £2.02 million allocated to the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Plan; and (ii) the total funding available for implementation of the plan. (AQW 1882/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: An additional £2.02m has been secured specifically for autism services over the next three years. This additional funding will support Trusts in the implementation of the actions outlined in the ASD Strategic Action Plan.

This funding is part of the £17 million secured as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review allocation for learning disability services. This £17m includes general investment in areas such as respite care which will also benefit those affected by autism.

Call-outs Received for the Emergency Ambulance

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of call-outs received for the emergency ambulance in Limavady in the last three years; (ii) the number of these call-outs that were within the Limavady Council area; and (iii) the number of these calls within the City of Londonderry. (AQW 1885/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Abortion Guidelines

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the circumstances, under current guidelines, in which a hospital can refuse to perform an abortion. (AQW 1891/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In Northern Ireland, the only grounds for a termination of pregnancy are where the continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, or would adversely affect her physical or mental health. In any other circumstances, where an abortion is sought, hospitals in Northern Ireland must refuse to perform the termination. The adverse effect on her physical or mental health must be 'real and serious', and must also be 'permanent or long term'.

Abortion Guidelines

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision there is within recently published guidelines for doctors to refuse to perform an abortion on the grounds of conscientious objection. (AQW 1892/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In Northern Ireland, there is no legal right to refuse to take part in a termination of pregnancy. However, my Department recognises that no-one should compel staff to actively participate in a termination of pregnancy and section 4 of the Guidance provides guidance to HSC Trusts and staff on conscientious objection in these circumstances.

Abortion Guidelines

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that the current abortion guidelines do not widen the use of abortion. (AQW 1893/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In Northern Ireland, the only grounds for a termination of pregnancy are where the continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, or would adversely affect her physical or mental health. The adverse effect on her physical or mental health must be 'real and serious', and must also be 'permanent or long term'.

My Department's Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy: The Law and Clinical Practice in Northern Ireland does not, nor can it, change the law relating to the termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland.

Abortion Guidelines

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision exists in the current abortion guidelines to ensure the protection of vulnerable disabled babies. (AQW 1894/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In Northern Ireland, the only grounds for a termination of pregnancy are where the continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, or would adversely affect her physical or mental health. The adverse effect on her physical or mental health must be 'real and serious', and must also be 'permanent or long term'.

Fetal abnormality is not recognised as a ground for termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland. It will only be lawful to terminate a pregnancy in the case of actual or possible fetal abnormality if the continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life of the woman, or would adversely affect her physical or mental health. As in other cases, the adverse effect on the woman's physical or mental health must be a real and serious one, and must also be permanent or long term.

Acts or Threats of Violence and Abuse

Mr G Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to protect patients and staff in hospitals against acts or threats of violence and abuse from members of the public. (AQW 1897/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: All Hospital Trusts operate a robust Zero Tolerance policy to protect both patients and staff against acts of violence or abusive behaviour. This includes dedicated staff training and provision of personal protection alarms. In addition there is also a dedicated senior director in each health and social care organisation who has responsibility for staff safety.

New legislation is being introduced which will allow the removal of individuals who create a nuisance or disturbance from hospital premises.

Cost of Staff Surveys

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on staff surveys by his Department and in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 1901/10)

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

Artworks

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) total amount spent by his Department; and (ii) the amount spent in each Health and Social Care Trust, on artworks in each of the last five years.

(AQW 1902/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Nothing has been spent by my Department on artworks in the last five years.

Information on expenditure on artworks by Health and Social Care Trusts is not held centrally.

Heroin Replacement Drugs

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's policy on prescribing heroin replacement drugs.

(AQW 1905/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's policy is outlined in The Drug Misuse and Dependence: UK Guidelines on Clinical Management developed for the four UK Health Departments in September 2007. These 2007 Clinical Guidelines provide guidance for all clinicians on the effective management of drug misuse, and are especially intended for those clinicians providing pharmacological interventions for drug misusers as part of their overall treatment for opiate dependence. The guidelines are based on the best available evidence and professional consensus on minimising the harm caused by drug misuse to the person, their family and the public.

Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many residential places are available for (i) alcohol; and (ii) drug, rehabilitation, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 1910/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of residential places available for (i) alcohol; and (ii) drug, rehabilitation, in each Health and Social Care Trust area is not collected centrally.

Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many non-residential places are available for community based (i) alcohol; and (ii) drug rehabilitation, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 1911/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of non-residential places available for community based (i) alcohol; and (ii) drug rehabilitation, in each Health and Social Care Trust area is not collected centrally.

Assistance Provided to Carers

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1196/10, how his Department determines the support, advice and assistance provided to carers in the Upper Bann constituency in the absence of any statistical information. (AQW 1919/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: At regional level, the Health and Social Care Board is responsible, through its Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs), for assessing the health and social care needs of local populations.

At individual level, the Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 imposed a duty on Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to inform carers of their right to an assessment of their own needs, and gave Trusts power to supply services directly to carers. This holistic assessment identifies what information, training or services are required to support the carer in their caring role.

Carers

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1196/10, if his Department holds any statistical information on carers in any of the 18 Assembly constituencies. (AQW 1920/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Statistical information on carers is not available in the format requested.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to partially sighted and blind people. (AQW 1923/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Documents can be made available on request in alternative formats for partially sighted and blind people, for example, Braille, Large Print, Moon, Makaton, Easy Read and audio CD/cassette and, if required, in an alternative language. In addition, this information can also be supplied electronically via email as appropriate.

Cost of Drugs

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with pharmaceutical companies in relation to reducing the cost of drugs, particularly drugs to treat HIV. (AQW 1927/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In December 2008 the Department of Health, acting on behalf of the Health Departments of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, agreed with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry a new Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS). The PPRS is the UK-wide price regulation scheme for branded prescription medicines supplied to the NHS and applies to all four nations in the UK. The PPRS introduced a price cut of 3.9% from 1 February 2009 with a further cut of 1.9% scheduled for 1 January 2010.

Trusts will take advantage of available discounts when purchasing prescribed medicines including HIV drugs.

Contracts

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many contracts the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has with the private sector; (ii) the total cost associated with these contracts; and (iii) why the contracted work cannot be carried out 'in house'. (AQW 1928/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is assumed that the contracts referred to are those that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have with Independent Sector healthcare providers.

(i) There are a total of 38 contracts held with Independent Sector Provider organisations.

- (ii) The total cost of these contracts in the current financial year to end August is £12.5m. This is the most recent figure currently available.
- (iii) The Elective Care Reform initiative has meant that Trusts have been asked to treat extra patients to reduce waiting times. Where Trusts have not been able to identify sufficient capacity within their own hospitals to treat all of these patients within the timescales required they have procured additional capacity from the independent sector.

Reduction of Beds in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact of the reduction of 152 beds in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on front-line care and waiting times. (AQW 1936/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The proposal for the reduction of 152 beds in Belfast HSC Trust has not been approved.

Swine Flu Vaccinations

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 786/10, what discussions he has had with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to ensure that, in prioritising swine flu vaccinations, full consideration is given to the potential impact on self-employed people and the economy from periods of absence from work. (AQW 1943/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I met with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Arlene Foster, on 14 September to discuss Swine Flu and the implications for employers.

The decision to prioritise certain groups of the population was a national decision, based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The decision was made on purely clinical grounds, as these groups are at greater risk of developing complications if infected with swine flu virus. Decisions have not been made to vaccinate on business continuity grounds and it is important that the vaccine is not seen as an alternative to robust business continuity planning.

There are no intentions at this stage to prioritise particular occupational groups or businesses for the vaccine. The UK Health Ministers are currently considering the options for extension of the programme beyond the initial priority groups. Advice has been sought from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the UK Chief Medical Officers to inform decisions.

Consultant Posts

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many consultant posts there are in the Paediatric Department in the Erne Hospital; and (ii) how many of these posts are currently filled. (AQW 1948/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

Erne Hospital Department	Number of consultant posts		Number of consultant posts currently filled	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Paediatric ¹	4	3.5	5	4.5
Obstetric & Gynaecology ²	4	4.0	4	4.0
Medical	8	8.0	8	8.0
Surgery ³	6	6.0	6	6.0
Accident & Emergency	2	2.0	2	2.0

Source: Western Health & Social Care Trust

Notes:

1. One consultant is working reduced duties and work is currently being supplemented by a full-time long-term NHS locum consultant on a temporary basis.
2. One post in Obstetrics & Gynaecology is being job shared on a trial basis by 2 consultants.
3. One consultant in Surgery is on secondment and their post is being filled by a long-term NHS locum consultant.

Consultant Posts

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many consultant posts there are in the Obstetric and Gynaecology Department in the Erne Hospital; and (ii) how many of these posts are currently filled. (AQW 1950/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

Erne Hospital Department	Number of consultant posts		Number of consultant posts currently filled	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Paediatric ¹	4	3.5	5	4.5
Obstetric & Gynaecology ²	4	4.0	4	4.0
Medical	8	8.0	8	8.0
Surgery ³	6	6.0	6	6.0
Accident & Emergency	2	2.0	2	2.0

Source: Western Health & Social Care Trust

Notes:

1. One consultant is working reduced duties and work is currently being supplemented by a full-time long-term NHS locum consultant on a temporary basis.
2. One post in Obstetrics & Gynaecology is being job shared on a trial basis by 2 consultants.
3. One consultant in Surgery is on secondment and their post is being filled by a long-term NHS locum consultant.

Consultant Posts

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many consultant posts there are in the Medical Department in the Erne Hospital; and (ii) how many of these posts are currently filled. (AQW 1951/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

Erne Hospital Department	Number of consultant posts		Number of consultant posts currently filled	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Paediatric ¹	4	3.5	5	4.5
Obstetric & Gynaecology ²	4	4.0	4	4.0
Medical	8	8.0	8	8.0
Surgery ³	6	6.0	6	6.0
Accident & Emergency	2	2.0	2	2.0

Source: Western Health & Social Care Trust

Notes:

1. One consultant is working reduced duties and work is currently being supplemented by a full-time long-term NHS locum consultant on a temporary basis.
2. One post in Obstetrics & Gynaecology is being job shared on a trial basis by 2 consultants.
3. One consultant in Surgery is on secondment and their post is being filled by a long-term NHS locum consultant.

Consultant Posts

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many consultant posts there are in the Surgery Department in the Erne Hospital; and (ii) how many of these posts are currently filled.

(AQW 1952/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

Erne Hospital Department	Number of consultant posts		Number of consultant posts currently filled	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Paediatric ¹	4	3.5	5	4.5
Obstetric & Gynaecology ²	4	4.0	4	4.0
Medical	8	8.0	8	8.0
Surgery ³	6	6.0	6	6.0
Accident & Emergency	2	2.0	2	2.0

Source: Western Health & Social Care Trust

Notes:

1. One consultant is working reduced duties and work is currently being supplemented by a full-time long-term NHS locum consultant on a temporary basis.
2. One post in Obstetrics & Gynaecology is being job shared on a trial basis by 2 consultants.
3. One consultant in Surgery is on secondment and their post is being filled by a long-term NHS locum consultant.

Consultant Posts

Dr K Deeny asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many consultant posts there are in the Accident and Emergency Department in the Erne Hospital; and (ii) how many of these posts are currently filled.

(AQW 1953/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The requested information is provided in the table below.

Erne Hospital Department	Number of consultant posts		Number of consultant posts currently filled	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Paediatric ¹	4	3.5	5	4.5
Obstetric & Gynaecology ²	4	4.0	4	4.0
Medical	8	8.0	8	8.0
Surgery ³	6	6.0	6	6.0
Accident & Emergency	2	2.0	2	2.0

Source: Western Health & Social Care Trust

Notes:

1. One consultant is working reduced duties and work is currently being supplemented by a full-time long-term NHS locum consultant on a temporary basis.
2. One post in Obstetrics & Gynaecology is being job shared on a trial basis by 2 consultants.
3. One consultant in Surgery is on secondment and their post is being filled by a long-term NHS locum consultant.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what arrangements are in place for blind or partially-sighted people who are unable to read appointment cards or letters from hospitals.

(AQW 1972/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts are engaged in ongoing work with the Patient Administration System to provide appointment information in the most accessible

and suitable format to meet the needs and preferences of patients who are known to be visually impaired. This includes: direct telephone contact with the patient; the provision of appointment cards in large print, Braille or Moon; the transcription of appointments and letters onto audio CD/cassette; or the use of email.

Discharged from Hospital

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been discharged from hospital and then re-admitted, with the same condition, having been discharged too soon, in each of the last three years. (AQW 1973/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Information requested is not available.

Surgical Site Infections

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been re-admitted to hospital with surgical site infections in each of the last five years. (AQW 1974/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of patients that have been re-admitted to hospital with surgical site infections in each of the last five years is not available.

Anti-Social Behavior

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 941/10, to detail the role played by his Department when a minor has been involved in anti-social behavior and cannot be dealt with by the PSNI. (AQW 1979/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The PSNI, Public Prosecution Services and the Courts are the agencies with primary responsibility for dealing directly with young people who engage in anti-social behaviour. I am not aware of any circumstances in which anti-social behaviour cannot be responded to by the PSNI.

Ambulance and Rapid Response Vehicle Provision

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the ambulance; and (ii) rapid response vehicle provision throughout west Belfast, including Falls, Anderstown and Colin; and including details of where they are stationed. (AQW 1980/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) deploys its emergency response resources using a dynamic tactical deployment plan to ensure that the nearest resource responds to an emergency call. This means that the response to an emergency call in particular areas might not necessarily be provided by the emergency response resource based in those areas.

While the nearest ambulance stations to the west Belfast area are at Ardoyne, with 3 A&E ambulances and 2 rapid response vehicles (RRVs), and Broadway, with 5 A&E ambulances and 2 RRVs, responses may also originate from other Belfast ambulance stations at Purdysburn or Bridge End (Ballymacarrett) and deployment points at Ballyowen Health Centre, Forster Green Hospital and Carryduff. In addition, responses might also originate from stations and deployment points in the adjacent South Eastern and Northern Health and Social Care Trust areas.

M.E./Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with M.E. or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in each Health and Social Care Trust area in each of the last ten years. (AQW 1982/10)

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

Tracheotomy Beds

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many tracheotomy beds there are in the head injuries unit of Thompson House Hospital in Lisburn; and if these beds are divided amongst the Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 1987/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Thompson House Hospital currently has three beds used for tracheotomy patient care within the severe brain injury unit in the hospital.

The beds are not divided amongst the Health and Social Care Trusts but are allocated on the basis of a comprehensive application and screening assessment process, based on the patients assessed needs and multi-professional decision making.

Lifting Patients

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) nurses; and (ii) other Trust employees have sustained an injury while lifting patients, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years. (AQW 1996/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of injuries sustained by HSC staff while lifting patients is not collected centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Lifting Patients

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) nurses; and (ii) other Trust employees, have left the Trust due to long-term injuries sustained whilst lifting patients, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years. (AQW 1998/10)

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

Lifting Patients

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many working days were lost in each Health and Social Care Trust through staff absence as a result of injuries sustained whilst lifting patients, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2000/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on number of sick days taken by HSC staff with regard to specific work related injuries is not collected centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Delays for Ambulances: A6

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what evaluations his Department has undertaken on delays for ambulances bound for Antrim Area Hospital along the A6 between Toome and the M2. (AQW 2005/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The evaluation of traffic conditions affecting emergency ambulance response is a matter for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Termination of Pregnancies

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many terminations of pregnancies have been carried out in the last five years broken down by the reasons for the terminations. (AQW 2010/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of terminations of pregnancies (medical abortion) carried out in each of the last five years are;

Year	Terminations
2003/04	67
2004/05	64
2005/06	80
2006/07	79
2007/08	92

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Information is not available on the reasons for the terminations.

Staff Employed in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many staff are currently employed in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by grade and department; (ii) the number of staff that will lose their job as a result of proposed cuts; and (iii) the professional areas and areas of service where he expects the cuts to be implemented. (AQW 2017/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: (i) I would refer the member to my response to AQW 1934/2010. (ii) My Department will be monitoring the progress of the Trust's proposals to ensure that staff changes are consistent with the service's strategic direction. It is my intention that any reductions in staff numbers will be managed through normal staff turnover and accordingly I am confident that these reductions will be achieved with no compulsory redundancies. (iii) I will not compromise on safety or quality and I will ensure that Trusts have the right numbers of staff, in the right place, at the right time, to deliver the care that is required.

Mater Hospital

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what front-line services will be cut in the Mater Hospital in north Belfast; and (ii) will these cuts be subject to an equality impact assessment. (AQW 2022/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently no approved proposals to cut front-line services in the Mater Hospital.

Nursing Agency Staff

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any qualitative evaluation has been carried out on the efficiency and effectiveness of nursing agency staff as compared to nurses employed directly by the Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQW 2024/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As part of an ongoing programme of Value for Money audits, I have commissioned a review of the Use of Temporary Staff in the HSC to be undertaken during 2009/10.

Mobile Workers' Scheme

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any legal issues involved in using the mobile workers' scheme for the provision of nurses. (AQW 2026/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Mobile Worker Schemes which seek to gain tax or National Insurance advantage for Agency staff who would not otherwise be entitled to this tax relief are illegal.

I would encourage all Health and Social Care employers to cooperate fully with HM Revenue and Customs in the identification of Agencies operating in this way. It remains however the responsibility of HMRC to pursue non-compliant companies.

Provision of Agency Nurses

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any outstanding issues arising from the legal action by nursing recruitment agencies regarding the framework contract for the provision of agency nurses. (AQW 2027/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I understand that all of the outstanding issues have been resolved.

Building of the New Erne Hospital

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the building of the new Erne Hospital, including costs to date and the projected total cost. (AQW 2029/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Construction of the New Acute Hospital for the South West began in May 2009. The construction programme is currently focusing on the sub-structure works, piling and external works. Piling works, which started in June 2009, are now nearing completion. The construction of the frame for the main hospital building will commence in early November 2009.

To date costs of £30.8m have been incurred on this project and the total costs for the construction of the New Acute Hospital remain at £270 million. No additional unexpected costs have been incurred and the project will be managed within the contract sum. .

The new hospital remains on target for completion in 2012 as planned.

People Resident in the Republic of Ireland

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people resident in the Republic of Ireland have availed of the Health Service in each Health and Social Care Trust area, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2030/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not collected centrally. To provide this data would incur a disproportionate cost.

Building Work at the Ulster Hospital

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the building work at the Ulster Hospital. (AQW 2031/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A major capital investment programme has been ongoing at the Ulster Hospital over recent years to upgrade the hospital's clinical facilities and site infrastructure.

The redevelopment and modernisation programme at the Hospital has included a new renal unit, maternity unit, terraced car park, main stores, refurbishment of the Care of the Elderly Unit and a new Critical care Complex.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to communicate with blind and partially-sighted people in an appropriate format in relation to hospital appointments, medical conditions, and treatment. (AQW 2032/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: If a patient is known to be visually impaired, staff working in Health and Social Care Trusts make every effort to communicate with the patient in the most

accessible and suitable way to meet their individual needs and preferences. This can include: direct telephone contact with the patient; the provision of appointment cards and other medical information in large print, Braille or Moon; the transcription of appointments, letters and other documents onto audio CD/cassette; and the use of email.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many blind or partially-sighted people missed their hospital appointments in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 2033/10)

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

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department has taken to ensure partially-sighted or blind people receive notification of appointments (i) in large print; (ii) by email; and (iii) by telephone. (AQW 2034/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: If a patient is known to be visually impaired, staff working in Health and Social Care Trusts make every effort to communicate with the patient in the most accessible and suitable way to meet their individual needs and preferences. This can include: the provision of appointment cards in large print, Braille or Moon; the use of email as appropriate; direct telephone contact with the patient; and the transcription of appointment notifications onto audio CD/cassette.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the estimated annual cost to the Health Service of alcohol abuse. (AQW 2039/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A 1998 report undertaken by my Department concluded that alcohol misuse was costing Northern Ireland Society approximately £770 million per year, and of this the direct cost to the Health Service was deemed to be in the region of £25 million per year.

Bangor Hospital Site

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline any future plans for the Bangor Hospital site. (AQW 2040/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As I have stated previously I have been allocated £3.3bn across the 10 year ISNI period ending in 2017/18 against a need estimated at more than £7.8bn. In the current CSR period I received just over £700m against a bid of £1bn. I also have to manage Swine Flu pressures from within my existing resources.

In the context of these funding constraints there are no immediate plans for future developments at the Bangor Hospital site. However, as part of the Review of Capital Priorities, funding has been identified for a new Health and Care Centre in Bangor within the 10 year Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) period.

Equality Impact Assessments

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service of conducting equality impact assessments in each of the last three financial years. (AQW 2041/10)

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

Swine Flu Vaccination

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Health Service is covered for liability should members of the public experience negative side-effects after receiving the swine flu vaccination. (AQW 2042/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Most vaccinations are given without any trouble at all, but very rarely there may be problems. From 10th October, H1N1 swine flu vaccine has been included in the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme, which is managed by the Department of Work and Pensions.

This scheme is designed to help with the present and future financial burdens on the person affected and their family. It covers the routine childhood vaccines and is being extended to include swine flu vaccines. The scheme covers the use of H1N1 vaccination in Northern Ireland.

Speech and Language Therapy Task Force Report

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Speech and Language Therapy Task Force Report. (AQW 2065/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has established a Speech and Language Therapy Action Plan Project Team, which meets regularly to develop and agree an Action Plan, taking account of the recommendations in the Speech and Language Therapy Task Force Report. A number of focus group events have been held to pre-consult with health and education professionals, children with communication difficulties and their parents, to hear their views. It is anticipated that an agreed Action Plan will be launched for full public consultation before the end of 2009.

Ireland Air Ambulance

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide details of his Department's recent discussions with Ireland Air Ambulance. (AQW 2066/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: While there has been a number of telephone calls from representatives of Ireland Air Ambulance to my Department over the summer, there have been no formal discussions or meetings with the charity since March 2009.

Communication Disability

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assistance is provided by his Department to people with a communication disability. (AQW 2067/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts carry out an individual needs assessment for people diagnosed with a communication disability. This assessment, which is undertaken by a multidisciplinary team, focuses on the social, emotional, and practical needs of the person with a communication disability. Subsequently, services are provided commensurate with the individual's particular needs.

Patients Resettled into the Community

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients resettled into the community from Muckamore Abbey Hospital have been re-admitted within (i) three months; (ii) six months; and (iii) twelve months of their resettlement date, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2079/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In the period from 2005 to 2008 only 3 patients have been readmitted to Muckamore for treatment.

In 2005, one patient was readmitted within three months and one within 12 months.

No patients were readmitted in 2006 or 2007 and, in 2008 one patient was readmitted within 12 months.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps have been, or will be, taken by his Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 2087/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts make every effort to ensure that their services are provided on an equitable basis and that they are accessible to all patients and clients irrespective of whether or not they have a physical or sensory disability. Trusts can provide information in a range of accessible formats for people with a visual impairment such as large print, Braille or Moon, email, and audio CD or cassette. In addition, services are provided for people with sensory support needs, including those with a visual impairment, through Trust sensory support teams on the basis of a patient's individual needs assessment. These services include day care, supported living options, multidisciplinary team support, and the provision of sensory aids and equipment. Furthermore, my Department is currently developing a Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy, which will provide the future strategic direction of physical and sensory disability services in Northern Ireland.

Draft Disability Strategy

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the publication of a draft disability strategy. (AQW 2103/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is anticipated that my Department will publish a draft Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy for public consultation by 31 March 2010.

Consultation on a Specialist Brain Injury Action Plan

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the consultation on a specialist brain injury action plan. (AQW 2104/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The consultation on the Acquired Brain Injury Action Plan closed on 8 June 2009 and responses were received from a broad range of professional, statutory, local government and voluntary bodies, as well as a number of individuals. The responses have helped to inform work being undertaken by my officials to finalise the Acquired Brain Injury Action Plan. A summary of the consultation responses is expected to be published, together with the finalised Action Plan, by the end of 2009.

Staffing Levels in the Health Service

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has talked to the recognized trade unions about staffing levels in the Health Service, particularly in relation to the shortage of nurses. (AQW 2109/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would refer the Member to my answer to AQW 747/2010 in relation to my ongoing discussions with Trade Unions.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision is made to ensure blind and partially-sighted people receive notice of hospital or doctors appointments in an appropriate format. (AQW 2116/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts are engaged in ongoing work with the Patient Administration System to provide appointment information in the most accessible and suitable format to meet the needs and preferences of patients who are known to be visually impaired. This includes: direct telephone contact with the patient; the provision of appointment cards in large print, Braille or Moon; the transcription of appointments and letters onto audio CD/cassette; or the use of email.

Blind People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the procedures, for the sharing of data with other Departments on blind people, undertaken by his Department to ensure better tailored delivery of services. (AQW 2118/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department's Physical and Sensory Disability Unit shares such data as required by other Departments, where it is available. Data is also shared through my Department's participation at interdepartmental and interagency working groups, which deal with issues in respect of physical and sensory disability policy development, including the provision of services for blind people.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2123/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Departmental expenditure on media training is as follows:-

Year	£
2008/09	0
2007/08	1,120
2006/07	2,840
2005/06	0
2004/05	800

Staff Cuts

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there will be cuts in the numbers of (i) administrative staff; (ii) catering or domestic staff; (iii) nursing staff; and (iv) medical staff, in the Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt. (AQW 2127/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am fully aware of the concerns of staff and I would reassure them that the service changes taking place over the coming months will not lead to any compulsory redundancies for staff working on the Mid-Ulster site. Staff may however be offered redeployment to other posts on the Mid-Ulster site or to posts at Causeway or Antrim Area Hospitals.

EU Interreg IVA Program

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the spend to date of the EU Interreg IVA program, and to provide an update on the (i) Cross Border Acute Hospital Services; (ii) Cross Border Eating Disorder Network; (iii) Cross Border Outcomes for Children Project; (iv) Cross Border Disability Project; (v) Cross Border Diabetes and High Risk Clients Project; (vi) Cross Border Workforce Mobility Project; (vii) Cross Border GUM Services; (viii) Cross Border Multiagency Alcohol Harm Reduction Project; (ix) Cross Border Older People Project; (x) Cross Border Social Inclusion and Health Inequalities Project; (xi) Cross Border Obesity Project; and (xii) Cross Border Autism Project. (AQW 2132/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in partnership with the Department of Health and Children, successfully secured funding of £24 million through the INTERREG IVA Programme for its Putting Patients, Clients and Families First project.

The project aims to undertake a range of activity and, to date, has spent around £250,000 of its award, largely around the purchase of capital equipment and some small preparatory expenses.

A project manager has now been appointed for each strand of activity.

Paramedic Rapid Response

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1213/10, if he would consider introducing paramedic rapid response hours at Kircubbin, or elsewhere, to enable better ambulance provision. (AQW 2134/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW 1618/10 on 28 October 2009.

Swine Flu

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what follow up, and what action, has been taken with staff in hospitals and health centres, who have been working with patients or staff who have suspected or confirmed cases of swine flu. (AQW 2163/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, aprons and gowns) have been purchased for use by staff when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed swine flu. Training programmes are in place to ensure that all staff in Trusts, primary care and the independent sector are appropriately trained in the use of this equipment and have been fit tested for facemasks. National guidelines on infection control have been developed and are available on the DHSSPS website, www.dhsspsni.gov.uk, along with a wide range of other planning documents and letters from the Chief Medical Officer.

Antiviral medicines are available to treat the symptoms of swine flu if people become infected. In addition, the swine flu vaccination programme began on 21st October. Frontline health and social care workers will be offered vaccination through occupational health clinics. Vaccination provides longterm protection against infection.

It is important to recognise that swine flu virus is now circulating widely in the community and people can contract the swine flu infection outside healthcare settings.

Allegations of Harassment or Bullying

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many allegations of harassment or bullying have been reported by staff in his Department in each of the last five years. (AQW 2175/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below sets out the number of allegations of harassment and bullying made by DHSSPS staff in each of the last 5 years.

Calendar Year	Number of Harassment Allegations		Number of Bullying Allegations	
	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
2004	0	0	1	1
2005	0	0	0	7
2006	1	0	2	4
2007	0	0	1	1
2008	0	3	0	0

Swine Flu Vaccinations

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department has enough swine flu vaccinations. (AQW 2243/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to my response to AQW 814/10, in which this information was provided.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Horse Riders

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to increase access for horse riders on publicly owned land and roads. (AQW 1804/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I can advise the Member that responsibility for the assertion, protection and provision of bridleways lies with District Councils under the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983. Responsibility for the relevant legislation lies with the Department of the Environment. In addition, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Forest Service, manages in excess of 100 kilometres of designated pony trekking trails.

I can also advise that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle Gildernew MP MLA, recently launched a strategy to develop the recreational and social use of forests. In this, DARD committed to producing operational guidelines in relation to developing cycling and horse riding trails in forests. The strategy places greater emphasis on forest recreation provision, as part of forest management planning, and seeks to increase the accessibility of forests to the public. The provision of additional horse riding access will be considered by Forest Service where there is a demand and where additional access can be accommodated.

From a roads perspective, my Department's Roads Service is aware of powers given to local authorities in England and Wales, under the Transport Act 2000, to designate minor rural roads as 'quiet lanes', appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vehicles. I have no plans to take similar powers for here.

Staff Travel Costs

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much was spent by his Department on staff travel cost claims in the last financial year. (AQW 1865/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department (including Roads Service) spent £3,080,263 on staff travel cost claims in the 2008/09 financial year. This amount includes expenditure on all staff travel cost claims including subsistence, excess fares and overtime travel.

Parking Tickets

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development how many blue badge drivers (i) have received parking tickets; and (ii) have had their appeals upheld, since National Car Parks staff were introduced. (AQW 1883/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Officials in my Department's Roads Service have advised that information on Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is not held in a format that identifies the number of PCNs issued to Blue Badge holders, as drivers or passengers, or on the number of appeals upheld made by Blue Badge holders.

However, I can advise that 10,265 PCNs have been cancelled as a consequence of a driver making an appeal on the basis of the non or incorrect display of a Blue Badge. In all cases the appellant had to provide a copy of the valid Blue Badge in question. Roads Service's Parking Enforcement Processing Unit operates a "waive and warn" policy, whereby on the first occasion, the PCN is cancelled, but drivers are reminded of their responsibility for displaying the Blue Badge correctly.

Parking Tickets

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development how many tickets have been issued to drivers incorrectly parking in disabled parking bays since National Car Parks staff were introduced. (AQW 1884/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service became responsible for parking enforcement at the end of October 2006. Enforcement services are provided by NSL Services Group (formerly NCP). In the period since then to 30 September 2009, a total of 16,856 Penalty Charge Notices have been issued

to vehicles parked in a designated disabled persons parking place, without clearly displaying a valid disabled persons badge.

Leakage and Water Pipe Repair

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how much NI Water has spent, since its inception, on preventing leakage and water pipe repair; and to list (ii) each company involved in this work; (iii) the project each company worked on; and (iv) how much each company was paid for their services.

(AQW 1942/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it has spent around £20 million on leakage prevention and water pipe repair between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2009. A list of all the companies involved, projects each worked on and the amount each company was paid could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, the table below includes these details for each company that was paid more than £50,000 in any single year:

Supplier	Total (£)	Work Area
Biwater Treatment Ltd	169,917	Leakage Detection
Burdens	156,337	Leakage Infrastructure
Crowder & Co Ltd	474,481	Leakage Investment Programme
DRD Roads Service	139,425	Leakage Repairs
Halcrow Water Services	686,651	Leakage Investment Programme
IPL Group	345,178	Leakage Infrastructure
Meridian Utilities Ltd	6,106,808	Leakage Repairs & Infrastructure Improvements
Park Electrical Services	65,877	Leakage Electrical Installation
Primayer Ltd	258,552	Leakage Equipment
RPS Water Services Ltd	2,521,476	Leakage Detection
Technolog Ltd	64,770	Leakage Equipment
TES (NI) Ltd	89,635	Leakage Electrical Infrastructure
Vector Resourcing Ltd	57,750	Leakage Technology Projects
Vodafone	56,053	GSM/Mobile Costs
Williams Ind Services Ltd	402,421	Leakage Meter Calibration & Repairs
Total	11,595,331	

An additional £1 million was paid during the two year period on smaller contracts of less than £50,000 in any single year.

Sewage Odour at Innisowen

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development following our meeting 18 months ago, to detail (i) the reasons for the delay in addressing the sewage odour at Innisowen and the Downpatrick Road in Killyleagh; and (ii) what action he intends to take if this persists. (AQW 1944/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that in late 2007 a new chemical dosing regime was introduced at Crossgar Wastewater Pumping Station to reduce malodours in the Innisowen and Downpatrick Road areas of Killyleagh. Initial monitoring of the new dosing regime and lack of complaints from the area suggested that the new arrangements had been effective.

However, as a problem is still evident, NIW is now proposing to install a vent stack at a suitable location on the pumping main to disperse malodours. It is intended to have the vent stack installed and operational by 13 November 2009.

Car-Share Scheme

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how many civil servants have utilised the Car-Share Scheme in each year since it was introduced. (AQW 1954/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The Travelwise Car Share Scheme was introduced by my Department in 2005. Data is recorded as an accumulated figure showing the number of participants who have registered to share journeys. The following information is available in relation to members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) who have registered using NICS e-mail addresses:

Year	No of new registrations from members of NICS
2005	650
2006	334
2007	258
2008	241
2009 (to date)	93
Currently known total of NICS staff participating	1576

A further, unknown, number of Civil Servants may have chosen to register in the scheme using personal e-mail addresses.

Parking Spaces in Clarence Court

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the occupancy levels of the reserved car-share parking spaces in Clarence Court since they were created. (AQW 1955/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Whilst precise details of usage are not recorded, informal inspections have shown that occupancy levels have been in the region of 80% since the introduction of the facility.

Car- Share Scheme

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how many civil servants have (i) accessed his Department's on-line Car- Share Scheme since it was created; and (ii) arranged to car-share as a result of the scheme. (AQW 1956/10)

Minister for Regional Development:

- (i) Data in the Travelwise Car Share Scheme introduced by my Department in 2005 is recorded as an accumulated figure showing the number of participants that have registered to share journeys. Data available shows that, to date, 1576 members of the NICS have registered to share journeys using NICS e-mail addresses. It is not possible to identify how many other members of NICS accessed the scheme but chose not to register or how many accessed the scheme and chose to register with personal e-mail addresses.
- (ii) It is not possible to state how many of those who registered arranged to car share as a result of the scheme, but data on the members identified at (i) shows a journey match-rate of 68%.

Park and Share Sites

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the success of each of the free Park and Share sites set up by his Department. (AQW 1958/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service encourages higher car occupancy through the provision of Park and Share facilities to allow drivers to share journeys to common destinations, and in conjunction with transport operators to allow linkage with public transport services at Park and Ride sites.

At present some 3,800 Park and Share/Ride spaces are provided at 48 sites across the North. Approximately 1,500 of these spaces are provided at 27 Park and Ride sites at bus/rail stations. A further 21 Park and Share/Ride sites situated at strategic locations, generally at key junctions on the motorway and trunk road network, provide the remaining spaces.

Details of the usage of Park and Share/Ride sites in 2008, provided in the following tables, indicate that, generally the existing facilities are very well used and that the majority of sites operate at either full capacity, or are over-subscribed.

CURRENT PARK AND RIDE SITES AT BUS AND RAIL STATIONS WITHIN BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA

Location	No of Spaces	Usage	Utilisation
Ballyclare Bus Station	10	10	100%
Bangor Park and Ride	123	143	116%
Carnalea Rail Halt	10	10	100%
Carrickfergus Rail Station	120	130	108%
Greenisland Rail Halt	13	13	100%
Helen's Bay Rail Halt	12	12	100%
Hollywood Rail Halt	37	40	108%
Lisburn Rail Station	47	47	100%
Moira Rail Station	99	119	120%
Moira Overflow	80	Not Available	
Mossley West Rail Halt	59	79	133%
Whiteabbey Rail Halt	16	25	156%
Whitehead Rail Halt	50	45	90%
Yorkgate Park and Ride	16	17	106%
Total	692	690	100%

CURRENT PARK AND RIDE SITES AT BUS AND RAIL STATIONS OUTSIDE BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA

Location	No of Spaces	Usage	Utilisation
Antrim Park and Ride	60	60	100%
Ballymena Bus Station	135	193	143%
Ballymoney Rail Station	27	27	100%
Castlerock Rail Halt	6	Not Available	
Coleraine Bus Station	21	38	181%
Dungannon Bus Station	47	67	143%
Larne Bus Station	8	8	100%
Larne Railway Station	68	60	88%
Londonderry Rail Station	58	61	105%
Lurgan Rail Station	170	176	104%
Newry Rail Station	80	80	100%
Portadown Rail Station	110	110	100%

Location	No of Spaces	Usage	Utilisation
Strabane Bus Station	45	40	89%
Total	835	920	110%

CURRENT PARK AND RIDE/SHARE SITES ADJACENT TO THE STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK WITHIN BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA

Location	No of Spaces	Usage	Utilisation
Sprucefield Park and Ride	320	320	100%
Blacks Road Park and ride	220	179	81%
Eastside Park and Ride	297	247	83%
Northside Park and Ride	394	Not Available	
Ravenscroft Avenue	109	Not Available	
Saintfield Road M1 Lisburn/Junction 6	38	Not Available	
Shore Road Whiteabbey	73	Not Available	
Total	1451		

CURRENT PARK AND RIDE/SHARE SITES ADJACENT TO THE STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK OUTSIDE BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA

Location	No of Spaces	Usage	Utilisation
Dunsilly, A26/M22 Antrim	258	100	39%
A6 Altnagelvin, Londonderry	30	Not Available	
Ballee, Ballymena	75	Not Available	
Templepatrick Village	70	90	129%
Ballygrooby, Randalstown	35	Not Available	
A6/U105, The Elk, Castledawson	18	Not Available	
A6 Castledawson Rounaboutt	61	61	100%
A6 Craigadick (South)	70	36	51%
A6 Toome	100	100	100%
Lough Road, Lurgan	104	104	100%
A5/U1745 Bankmore Road, Omagh	10	Not Available	
A5/B46 Curr	10	Not Available	
A24 Newcastle Road/Clogh Roundabout	16	Not Available	
Maguiresbridge	10	Not Available	
Total	867		

A5 Corridor Route

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if an Environmental Impact Assessment has been commissioned on the preferred A5 Corridor route; and (ii) for his assessment of the effect this route will have on the Clogher Valley countryside. (AQW 1959/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The A5WTC has been identified as a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) project under European Directives and has accordingly been subject to an EIA process since project inception.

The detailed EIA assesses impacts on the countryside along the full length of the proposed road corridor, including the countryside of the Clogher Valley, as well as the need for mitigation in the form of landscape measures.

It is expected that the completed EIA, including the findings, will be published as an Environmental Statement by Autumn 2010.

Uneven Pavements and Footways

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development how much compensation has been paid to pedestrians who have been injured due to uneven pavements and footways, in each Roads Service section office, in each of the last five years. (AQW 1991/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The amount of compensation paid to pedestrians who have been injured due to uneven pavements and footways, in each Roads Service Section Office, in each of the last five financial years is shown in the table below.

Roads Service Section Office	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Antrim	£11,500.00	£17,889.29	£26,250.00	£16,000.00	£25,100.00
Ards	£27,906.95	£82,478.92	£43,006.82	£13,500.00	£31,362.35
Armagh	£25,000.00	£42,833.00	£7,500.00	£15,000.00	£107,657.74
Ballymena & Larne	£6,500.00	£20,250.00	£8,875.00	£1,750.00	£10,500.00
Ballymoney & Moyle	£3,750.00	£3,000.00	£10,787.50	Nil	£19,166.00
Banbridge	£5,750.00	£750.00	Nil	£21,835.00	£15,750.00
Belfast North	£239,346.48	£172,923.87	£215,315.25	£163,991.60	£310,302.81
Belfast South	£132,603.77	£160,400.88	£67,900.00	£157,149.42	£147,250.00
Castlereagh	£48,500.00	£84,000.00	£18,083.00	£33,030.33	£23,583.33
Coleraine	£19,750.00	£4,789.98	£7,000.00	£2,000.00	£1,250.00
Cookstown	£6,750.00	£17,000.00	£2,000.00	£15,000.00	Nil
Craigavon	£66,061.66	£57,500.00	£13,250.00	£26,750.00	£15,000.00
Down	£42,250.00	Nil	£16,600.00	Nil	£17,715.78
Dungannon	Nil	£8,333.33	£25,250.00	£10,750.00	£7,500.00
Fermanagh	Nil	£11,800.00	Nil	£17,000.00	£3,250.00
Limavady	Nil	£17,000.00	£6,850.00	Nil	£11,500.00
Lisburn	£34,750.00	£41,200.00	£19,166.66	£48,710.00	£78,750.00
Londonderry	£26,450.00	£57,750.00	£44,346.50	£54,750.00	£17,000.00
Magherafelt	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	£1,500.00
Newry & Mourne	£36,100.00	£12,250.00	£12,941.64	£41,333.00	£27,250.00
Newtownabbey & Carrick	£88,750.00	£37,915.66	£76,970.41	£44,062.50	£38,621.00
North Down	£31,500.00	£35,500.00	£44,670.80	£42,400.00	£14,325.02
Omagh	£3,500.00	Nil	£38,750.00	£16,250.00	£17,250.00
Strabane	£11,000.00	£23,083.33	£1,750.00	Nil	£35,000.00
Strangford Ferry	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

A6

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what research has been carried out in relation to delays in Belfast bound traffic on the A6 between Toome and the M2. (AQW 2004/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that traffic flows on the A6 between Toome and the M22 are monitored as part of the Annual Traffic Census. Analysis of traffic volumes using this route indicates that weekday volumes have increased by just over 8%, when 2008 data is compared to 2004 data. During 2008 just over 20,500 vehicles used this part of the A6 each weekday. This included 1544 vehicles during the morning peak period and 1682 vehicles during the afternoon peak period.

The existing road is approaching its capacity, and the heavy traffic volumes in the peak periods result in the traffic speed being significantly reduced. Any other events, such as right turning movements, or movements associated with the primary school on this stretch of road will, therefore, have an increasing effect on traffic progression.

The Member will be aware that The Investment Delivery Plan for Roads includes a scheme for the upgrading of the A6 between Randalstown and Castledawson to dual carriageway standard. The scheme is programmed to start 2011/2012, subject to completion of the statutory processes, and the availability of funding.

The Harbour, York Road and Cathedral Quarter Areas of North Belfast

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline any proposals his Department has for (a) the Harbour; (b) York Road; and (c) the Cathedral Quarter areas of north Belfast; and (ii) if he has had any discussions with Executive colleagues or their officials regarding their plans for these areas. (AQW 2013/10)

Minister for Regional Development:

- (i)(a) My Department has no major proposals at present for the Belfast Harbour Area. However, the impact of the NIW Belfast City Centre Watermain Rehabilitation at an estimated cost of £3.7million will benefit the Harbour, York Road and Cathedral Quarter areas.
- (i)(b) A number of improvements for pedestrians are programmed for the York Road corridor during 2009-10. The works, extending from Limestone Road to Donegall Street, will comprise the realignment of street furniture, enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities at signalised junctions, and the provision of facilities such as tactile paving and dropped kerbs.

My Department's Roads Service is currently undertaking minor road works to improve the capacity of the Westlink / York Street Junction. Roads Service has also developed preliminary proposals to provide a grade-separated junction at York Street that would improve access and provide direct links between Westlink and the M2 and M3 motorways and along York Street.

These are included in the Investment Delivery Plan for Roads, which envisages the works being delivered between 2013/14 and 2017/18. Construction will be dependent upon the successful completion of the necessary statutory procedures, a detailed economic appraisal and the availability of funding through the normal budgetary process.

As part of a Roads Service project to upgrade the Westlink/York Street junction, NIW will investigate the existing water and wastewater assets at an estimated total cost of £300,000.

- (c) Some of the projects already mentioned will also impact on the Cathedral Quarter.
 - (ii) Roads Service was a consultee with the Department for Social Development (DSD), on the Masterplan Steering Group for the North West Quarter of Belfast City Centre, which included the Cathedral Quarter. The Masterplans for both the North West, and North East Quarters were adopted by DSD in August 2005, and development briefs issued to Ewart Properties Ltd and Westfield Shoppingtowns Ltd. Roads Service's subsequent involvement in any planning applications would be as a consultee to the DOE Planning Service.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people. (AQW 2043/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has developed a Guide to Making Information Accessible to ensure that its information and services are accessible to people with physical, sensory and learning difficulties, and those whose first language is not English. This was reviewed in September 2009 and is available on my Department's website. It includes advice on communicating with blind and partially sighted people and reflects recent guidance from RNIB.

In accordance with the Guide, my Department offers to provide, on request, information and documents in accessible formats such as audio disc and Braille. All publications and documents issued state this prominently at the front, in line with best practice recommendations.

My Department's website complies with rigorous accessibility standards, which are designed to ensure users with sight or hearing impairments can effectively access information. All new websites are audited by the Delivery and Innovation Division within the Department for Finance and Personnel, to ensure that accessibility standards are maintained. The Department's website also provides access to Browsealoud software which reads web pages aloud for people who find it difficult to read on line.

The Department is currently developing a suite of new SmartPass application forms, including those for the Blind and Half Fare SmartPass. Once these are finalised large print versions will be made available to those who require this format. In addition Departmental staff will, where feasible, make reasonable adjustments to facilitate completion of forms by blind or partially sighted applicants by means of telephone calls or face-to-face visits.

Responsibility for Local Roads

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development if he can confirm that responsibility for local roads will be transferred to the new councils in 2011. (AQW 2061/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In March 2008 the Minister of the Environment announced the Executive's decision on the local government aspects of the Review of Public Administration. In the announcement, it was confirmed that responsibility for local roads and the motorway and trunk road network would remain with my Department's Roads Service, and that the new Councils would have formal and direct input to local roads decision making.

The Environment Minister also advised that a number of public realm aspects of local roads functions would transfer to the 11 new Councils to be created in 2011. The public realm functions that will transfer include alleygating, pedestrian permits, permitting local events on roads, off-street car parking and on-street parking enforcement.

Roads Service are continuing to work with local government officials to develop a mechanism that will facilitate greater input by Councils into the decision making process on local roads issues. This process will be incorporated within the proposed community planning framework.

Appeal Process: Cars Clamped

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if there is an appeal process for those who have had their car clamped. (AQW 2071/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that details of the appeal process for the owners of vehicles clamped, due to outstanding debt relating to the non-payment of Penalty Charge Notices, are contained within the Traffic Management (NI) Order 2005. Articles 25, 26 and 27 of the Order deal with representations made following the clamping of a vehicle and Article 28 provides for an appeal to an independent adjudicator in the Traffic Penalty Tribunal.

Enterprise '20 Single Journey' Concession Tickets

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Enterprise '20 single journey' concession tickets have been sold each week in the last year. (AQW 2074/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink do not hold this information in the format requested. However, the information is available on a monthly basis and is provided below. Translink have assumed that '20 single journey' concession tickets is a reference to contract tickets and have answered accordingly.

	1st Class Tickets Sold	2nd Class Tickets Sold	Total Tickets Sold
p/e 26/10/08	4,900	1,500	6,400
p/e 23/11/08	3,600	140	3,740
p/e 28/12/08	2,460	1,460	3,920
p/e 25/01/09	3,700	280	3,980
p/e 22/02/09	3,760	1,640	5,400
p/e 29/03/09	3,320	740	4,060
p/e 26/04/09	1,640	1,340	2,980
p/e 29/05/09	3,460	400	3,860
p/e 28/06/09	3,220	1,460	4,680
p/e 26/07/09	860	600	1,460
p/e 23/08/09	2,940	580	3,520
p/e 28/09/09	380	480	860

Enterprise Cross-border Weekly Tickets

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many Enterprise cross-border weekly tickets for adults, children and students departing (a) Belfast; (b) Portadown; and (c) Newry have been sold each week in the last year; and (ii) how many Enterprise cross-border weekly tickets for adults, children and students have been sold each week in the last year in (a) Northern Ireland; and (b) the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 2076/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink do not hold the NIR information in the weekly format requested. However, the information is available on a monthly basis and is provided below.

Central	Month	Cross Border Weekly Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	Oct 08	Adult Weekly	5
		Student Weekly	1
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	12
		Student Weekly 10% Discount	1
	Oct 08 Total		19
	Nov 08	Adult Weekly	11
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	1
	Nov 08 Total		12
	Dec 08	Adult Weekly	13
		Student Weekly	2
	Dec 08 Total		15

Central	Month	Cross Border Weekly Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	Jan 09	Adult Weekly	15
		Student Weekly	1
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	7
	Jan 09 Total		23
	Feb 09	Adult Weekly	14
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	5
	Feb 09 Total		19
	March	Adult Weekly	7
	March 09 Total		7
	April 09	Adult Weekly	17
		Student Weekly	2
	April 09 Total		19
		May 09	Adult Weekly
May 09 Total			14
June 09		Adult Weekly	11
		Student Weekly	2
June 09 Total			13
July 09		Adult Weekly	11
July 09 Total			11
August 09		Adult Weekly	9
August 09 Total			9
Sept 09		Adult Weekly	10
Sept 09 Total			10
Central Total			171
Newry	Oct 08	Adult Weekly	40
		Student Weekly	8
	Oct 08 Total		48
	Nov 08	Adult Weekly	46
		Student Weekly	6
	Nov 08 Total		52
	Dec 08	Adult Weekly	45
		Student Weekly	5
	Dec 08 Total		50
	Jan 09	Adult Weekly	51
		Student Weekly	1
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	1
	Jan 09 Total		53
	Feb 09	Adult Weekly	35
		Student Weekly	1

Central	Month	Cross Border Weekly Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	Feb 09 Total		36
	March	Adult Weekly	37
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	1
	March 09 Total		38
	April 09	Adult Weekly	29
	April 09 Total		29
	May 09	Adult Weekly	34
	May 09 Total		34
	June 09	Adult Weekly	43
		Child Weekly	1
	June 09 Total		44
	July 09	Adult Weekly	30
	July 09 Total		30
	August 09	Adult Weekly	30
	August 09 Total		30
	Sept 09	Adult Weekly	12
		Student Weekly	1
	Sept 09 Total		13
Newry Total			457
Portadown	Oct 08	Adult Weekly	18
		Student Weekly	5
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	1
	Oct 08 Total		24
	Nov 08	Adult Weekly	16
		Student Weekly	1
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	3
	Nov 08 Total		20
	Dec 08	Adult Weekly	11
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	2
	Dec 08 Total		13
	Jan 09	Adult Weekly	11
		Student Weekly	4
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	4
	Jan 09 Total		19
	Feb 09	Adult Weekly	11
		Student Weekly	4
		Adult Weekly 10% Discount	2
	Feb 09 Total		17

Central	Month	Cross Border Weekly Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	March	Adult Weekly	20
		Student Weekly	5
	March 09 Total		25
	April 09	Adult Weekly	13
		Student Weekly	3
	April 09 Total		16
	May 09	Adult Weekly	14
	May 09 Total		14
	June 09	Adult Weekly	12
		Student Weekly	2
	June 09 Total		14
	July 09	Adult Weekly	12
	July 09 Total		12
	August 09	Adult Weekly	9
August 09 Total		9	
Sept 09	Adult Weekly	2	
	Student Weekly	1	
Sept 09 Total		3	
Portadown Total			186
Grand Total			814

Regarding the South of Ireland information, Translink receive a hard copy print-out in the post which only provides a ticket analysis between 1st Class and Standard Class by boarding and alighting/destination stage. Translink do not have access to the reporting system to extract the specific information asked in the AQWs.

Enterprise Cross-border Monthly Tickets

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many Enterprise cross-border monthly tickets for adults, children and students departing (a) Belfast; (b) Portadown; and (c) Newry have been sold each week in the last year; and (ii) how many Enterprise cross-border monthly tickets for adults, children and students have been sold each week in the last year in (a) Northern Ireland; and (b) the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 2077/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink do not hold the NIR information in the weekly format requested. However, the information is available on a monthly basis and is provided in the table below.

Station	Month	Monthly Cross Border Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
Central	Oct 08	Adult Monthly	2
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	4
	Nov 08	Adult Monthly	5
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	1
	Dec 08	Adult Monthly	5
	Jan 09	Adult Monthly	4
Adult Monthly 10% Discount		1	

Station	Month	Monthly Cross Border Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	Feb 09	Adult Monthly	5
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	2
	March	Adult Monthly	8
	April 09	Adult Monthly	5
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	1
	May 09	Adult Monthly	10
	June 09	Adult Monthly	10
	July 09	Adult Monthly	6
	August 09	Adult Monthly	4
	Sept 09	Adult Monthly	6
Central Total			79
Newry	Oct 08	Adult Monthly	9
Portadown	Nov 08	Adult Monthly	3
	Dec 08	Adult Monthly	1
	Jan 09	Adult Monthly	8
	Feb 09	Adult Monthly	6
	March 09	Adult Monthly	3
	April 09	Adult Monthly	5
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	1
	May 09	Adult Monthly	9
	June 09	Adult Monthly	10
	July 09	Adult Monthly	7
	August 09	Adult Monthly	1
	Sept 09	Adult Monthly	1
Newry Total			64
Portadown	Oct 08	Adult Monthly	3
	Nov 08	Adult Monthly	4
	Dec 08	Adult Monthly	2
	Jan 09	Adult Monthly	3
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	2
	Feb 09	Adult Monthly	3
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	2
	March 09	Adult Monthly	4
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	3
	April 09	Adult Monthly	3
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	3
	May 09	Adult Monthly	3
		Adult Monthly 10% Discount	2
	June 09	Adult Monthly	2

Station	Month	Monthly Cross Border Ticket Type	Tickets Sold
	July 09	Adult Monthly	3
	August 09	Adult Monthly	0
	Sept 09	Adult Monthly	1
Portadown Total			43
Grand Total			186

Regarding the South of Ireland information, Translink receive a hard copy print-out in the post which only provides a ticket analysis between 1st Class and Standard Class by boarding and alighting/destination stage. Translink do not have access to the reporting system to extract the specific information asked in the AQWs.

Blind or Partially-sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps have been, or will be, taken by his Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 2088/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has taken a number of steps to ensure that blind and partially sighted people can fully access services.

My Department has developed a Guide to Making Information Accessible to ensure that its information and services are accessible to people with physical, sensory and learning difficulties, and those whose first language is not English. This was reviewed in September 2009 and is available on my Department's website. It includes advice on communicating with blind and partially sighted people and reflects recent guidance from RNIB.

In accordance with the Guide, my Department offers to provide, on request, information and documents in accessible formats such as audio disc and Braille, when required.

At present, I am glad to say that my Department is continuing to revise its Accessible Transport Strategy draft Action Plan 2009-2012. This addresses a wide range of barriers that impede use of the transport system by people with disabilities. These barriers include physical, attitudinal or psychological, the availability of information, the type of services and affordability. Public consultation on the most recent draft action plan has recently been completed and it is anticipated that this will be published towards the end of the year.

People who are registered as blind with a Health and Social Care Trust are eligible for free travel on public transport. People registered as partially sighted with a Trust are eligible for a half fare concession. SmartPass application forms are available in a number of alternative formats and Departmental staff will, where feasible, make reasonable adjustments to facilitate completion of these forms by means of telephone calls or face-to-face visits.

Translink's newer C3K train sets feature a number of measures designed to aid people with sight impairment, such as Braille signage at toilets, doors and safety notices, and audible as well as visual passenger information on board. They also feature high contrast interiors, emergency call buttons and conductors on board who can assist people with disabilities if necessary. It is hoped that all Translink trains will be equipped with these features by 2012. All main railway stations are fully accessible, and improvements have been made to ensure improved access to all railway halts. This followed consultation with Disability Action, to ensure all varieties of disability and sensory impairment are taken into consideration.

My Department is also working with Translink to develop options for the introduction of audio visual systems on Translink buses, which will aid bus usage for people with sight impairments. Work is ongoing and a business case will be developed in due course. A pilot scheme will be introduced subject to the outcome of the business case and the availability of resources.

All appropriate public transport staff, including booking centre staff for the Door-to-Door scheme, are trained in disability equality, etiquette and attitude, equal rights, passenger handling and customer services.

My Department also funds Imtac, the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee, who are the main source of independent advice to Government and others in the North on issues affecting transport and

disability. I have met regularly with Imtac and a number of other disability group representatives, including the East Belfast Sight Support Team and Guide Dogs.

My Department's website complies with rigorous accessibility standards, which are designed to ensure users with sight or hearing impairments can effectively access information. All new websites are audited by the Delivery and Innovation Division within the Department for Finance and Personnel, to ensure that accessibility standards are maintained. The Department's website also provides access to Browsealoud software which reads web pages aloud for people who find it difficult to read on line.

NI Water

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the procedures NI Water must follow when accessing private land to relay pipes. (AQW 2099/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that before accessing land which is in private ownership to alter any relevant pipes it must (under Article 220(5) (b) of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) give the owner and occupier of the land a minimum of 42 days period of notice. This notice period does not apply in the case of an emergency or when altering a service pipe.

When working on private land NIW will consult the owner and occupier of the land and, by the use of good working practice, seek to minimise damage. NIW will undertake reinstatement following the work to restore the land to its original condition and where this is not practicable it will pay compensation for any loss or damage caused by, or in consequence of, the execution of the works.

Public Hire Taxis parking Outside Official Ranks

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister for Regional Development if plans to limit traffic movement and to provide priority traffic lanes at the front of City Hall, Belfast have taken into account the current problem of blockages caused by Public Hire Taxis parking outside official ranks in the area; and whether he has plans to tackle this issue. (AQW 2113/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the developing proposals for traffic movements in Belfast city centre will make provision for public hire taxis. However, new legislation will be required in order to implement the traffic proposals for the streets around the City Hall. As with any legislation, there will be an associated enforcement role to be undertaken.

I understand that Roads Service officials meet with representatives of the taxi industry on a regular basis, to discuss issues of concern. Recently, Belfast City Centre Management has set up a Taxi forum to facilitate the taxi industry, involving representatives from Roads Service, DOE, DVA, PSNI, taxi associations and the trade union Unite. This forum discourages public hire taxi drivers from parking illegally, outside the taxi-rank at Donegall Square North.

In relation to illegally parked Public Hire Taxis, officials have advised that it can be difficult to issue PCNs to public-hire taxis, as the drivers normally stay with their vehicles and, will move off before a PCN can be issued. I am assured, however, that Traffic Attendants do engage with the drivers and attempt to provide enforcement at this location.

Recently, ten new spaces have been provided for public hire taxis in Chichester Street and ongoing works in Glengall Street will also provide further space for taxis. In addition, Roads Service has been working with representatives of the public hire taxi industry and is actively considering a number of other locations for the provision of further spaces.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2130/10)

Minister for Regional Development: DRD has spent the following amounts on media training for staff:

Year	Costs
2004/2005	£4109
2005/2006	£3102
2006/2007	£1293
2007/2008	£431
2008/2009	£7733

Road Signs

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the criteria for deciding which road signs are erected. (AQW 2140/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service provides a number of different types of traffic signs and the three most prevalent are regulatory signs, warning signs and direction signs.

Regulatory signs indicate requirements, restrictions and prohibitions and are provided whenever the Department amends or makes a new traffic regulation order. Examples include stop signs, no entry signs, speed limit signs and parking signs.

Warning signs are used to alert drivers to potential danger ahead and are generally provided along with new works or in response to requests. These signs indicate a need for special caution by road users that may require a reduction in speed or some other manoeuvre. Examples include junction ahead, bend ahead and road narrows ahead signs.

Direction signs provide direction to possible destinations and are provided with new works or as part of route improvements. These signs include the standard flag type sign, used at, or in advance of a junction, with either a chevron or an arrow indicating the direction of travel. They also include advance direction signs which, in many cases, show the junction layout ahead, and route confirmation signs. Occasionally direction signs are provided in response to requests and can also be provided to private premises, primarily tourism related. The provision of direction signs is controlled by set policy and procedure guides.

The type, size and shape of traffic signs provided are prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997, and Roads Service uses a combination of its own policy and procedure guides, the Department for Transport's Traffic Signs Manual and, to a lesser extent, the Highways Agency's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, in deciding when and where to locate signs.

Road Signs

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 795/10, how much was spent last year on road signage in new road schemes. (AQW 2142/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Expenditure on road signage in new road schemes is not recorded separately, within the overall costs of road schemes and, therefore, I am unable to provide the information requested by the Member.

Free Public Transport for People Aged 60-65

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for his assessment on the uptake of free travel on public transport for people aged 60-65 since it was introduced; (ii) to detail how many (a) bus; and (b) rail journeys have been taken by people in this age group to date; and (iii) to detail how much the introduction of free travel on public transport for people in this age group has cost to date. (AQW 2151/10)

Minister for Regional Development: There are approximately 90,000 people aged 60-64 living in the North and there are currently 56,690 valid 60+ SmartPasses in circulation. The application rate is lower but the number of journeys by SmartPass holders is greater than had been anticipated.

Since the introduction of 60+ free travel to the end of September 2009, concessionaires have made (a) 2,427,550 bus and (b) 396,992 rail journeys. The cost of reimbursement to transport operators for this travel has been £4.3 million. In addition the cost of producing 60+ SmartPasses was approximately £340,000.

Speed Restrictions

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how many miles of (i) motorway; and (ii) dual carriageway are currently under (a) temporary; and (b) permanent speed restrictions lower than the national speed limit; and to outline what percentage of the total motorway and dual carriageway network this represents. (AQW 2152/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that they do not maintain details of the number of miles of motorway or dual carriageway under temporary or permanent speed restrictions, therefore I am unable to provide the information requested by the Member.

Speed Limit at Mallusk Primary School

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the speed limit at Mallusk primary school; and if plans exist to lower the limit. (AQW 2167/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the current speed limit on the B95 Mallusk Road, outside Mallusk Primary School, is 40 mph. This speed limit was last reviewed in 2006, when it was confirmed as still being appropriate to the road environment. However, my officials are currently carrying out a further review and I have asked the Divisional Roads Manager, Mr Tom McCourt, to advise you directly of the outcome.

Coverage by Traffic Attendants

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of how comprehensive the coverage by traffic attendants of Belfast city centre is. (AQW 2170/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are currently adequate levels of Traffic Attendants deployed in Belfast City Centre, to provide an effective parking enforcement service in that area.

Public Hire Taxi Ranks

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development to list (i) the location of each Public Hire Taxi rank in Belfast; and (ii) the maximum number of vehicles each rank holds. (AQW 2171/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of the locations of Public Hire Taxi ranks in Belfast and the maximum number of vehicles each rank holds are provided in the table below.

Location	Operating Times	Number of spaces
Amelia Street	At all times	7
Bedford Street	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	6
Bradbury Place (East) (1)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	1
Bradbury Place (East) (2)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	3
Bradbury Pace (West)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	4
Brunswick Street	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	4
Chichester Street	At all times	10
Corporation Square (North) (1)	At all times	4

Location	Operating Times	Number of spaces
Corporation Square (North) (2)	At all times	3
Donegall Street	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	3
Donegall Quay (West)	At all times	1
Donegall Square East	At all times	8
Donegall Square North	At all times	6
Dublin Road (Elbow)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	3
Dublin Road (Cinema)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	8
Fisherwick Place	At all times	3
Glengall Street (North)	At all times	2
Glengall Street (South)	At all times	5
Great Victoria Street (West)	At all times	3
Great Victoria Street (East)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	3
Lisburn Road - Kings Hall	At all times	3
Malone Road (West)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	4
Malone Road (East)	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	2
May's Meadow	At all times	16
University Road	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	5
University Street	6:00 pm to 8:00 am	4
Waring Street	7:00 pm to 7:00 am	6

Parking Tickets

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking tickets have been issued in Donegall Square North in Belfast, in each of the last 24 months. (AQW 2172/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Details of the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued in Donegall Square North, Belfast, in each of the last 24 months to the end of September 2009, are provided in the table below.

Month	Penalty Charge Notices issued	Month	Penalty Charge Notices issued
October 2007	6	October 2008	1
November 2007	5	November 2008	2
December 2007	4	December 2008	1
January 2008	7	January 2009	4
February 2008	2	February 2009	1
March 2008	2	March 2009	3
April 2008	2	April 2009	1
May 2008	7	May 2009	8
June 2008	3	June 2009	3
July 2008	2	July 2009	3
August 2008	3	August 2009	4
September 2008	1	September 2009	2

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government.

(AQW 2188/10)

Minister for Regional Development: In line with the Executive's Programme for Government target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2025 I have set out my commitment through the review of the Regional Transportation Strategy to ensure more sustainable transport arrangements which provide for a proper balance between the needs of people, business and the environment. To inform the review in this regard, my Department has taken forward work to establish the greenhouse gas emissions of road transport arrangements in the North of Ireland, with a view to identifying and costing an appropriate policy and strategy response. The first stage of that work has now been completed, and a report prepared setting out the 1990 baseline and 2006 position on greenhouse gas emissions from road transport here. This will shortly be updated to reflect the release of 2007 data. To ensure a robust assessment, the findings of the baseline report have been independently validated by the Sustainable Development Commission.

Drawing on the findings of the baseline report, I have initiated further studies to identify and cost a range of options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road transport locally. That work will draw on a range of sources of expertise and in that context, my officials have confirmed, through DOE, that as we progress we would wish to look at the potential to engage the Committee for Climate Change. In the interim, my Department has requested that we be kept informed of any work the Committee is undertaking in relation to transport and sustainability.

Parking Tickets

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has considered having Traffic Attendants issue automatic parking tickets to Public Hire Taxis parked outside official taxi ranks. (AQW 2191/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, in relation to parking enforcement, the same rules and policies apply to illegally parked taxis, as apply to other vehicles that may be parked illegally. If a Traffic Attendant detects any illegally parked vehicle he/she will attempt to take the necessary enforcement action and issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). There are currently no plans for this to change.

Roads Service has also advised that it can be difficult to issue a PCN to a public-hire taxi, as the driver normally stays with the vehicle and, if it is parked illegally, will move off before a PCN can be issued. However, Traffic Attendants do engage with taxi drivers and attempt to provide enforcement at these locations.

In addition, Roads Service officials meet regularly with representatives of the taxi industry to discuss issues of concern. Recently, Belfast City Centre Management has set up a Taxi forum to facilitate the taxi industry involving representatives from Roads Service, DOE, DVA, PSNI, taxi associations and the trade union Unite. This forum encourages public hire taxi drivers not to park illegally outside taxi-ranks.

Draft Rathlin Island Policy

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an update on the action plan for the draft Rathlin Island policy. (AQW 2196/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Public consultation on the draft Rathlin Island Policy closed on 18 September this year. A total of 14 responses were received and a consultation workshop was held on the Island. In light of the responses received, amendments to the draft Policy are now being considered.

It is my intention to bring a final version of this Executive Policy back to the Executive before the end of the year.

The Action Plan to implement the policy will be completed within six months of the publication of the final Rathlin Island Policy document.

Road Resurfacing Schemes in the North Down Area

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development which groups Roads Service intends to consult before deciding on the timing of road resurfacing schemes in the North Down area. (AQW 2199/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service advises all statutory undertakers, such as NI Water, NIE and BT, on an annual basis, as an integral part of the planning process associated with the implementation of the annual resurfacing and reconstruction works programme. Roads Service's Divisional Roads Managers are also responsible for informing the various Councils, on a six-monthly basis, of scheme proposals and details of their completion.

During the planning of any major resurfacing schemes, including those within the North Down area, considerable effort is made by Roads Service, to consult with the PSNI and to liaise with members of the public and business community, if it is considered that they may be affected by the scheme.

In addition, any associated road closures are supported by the publication of advance press releases, in the media and local newspapers.

Non-domestic Water Charges

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development which organisations are exempt from non-domestic water charges. (AQW 2208/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that there are no exemptions from non domestic water charges. All non domestic premises are subject to water and sewerage charges and trade effluent charges where applicable. This includes farms; small medium and large businesses; industrial users; voluntary organisations; charities; public bodies and places of worship, as well as any property not intended for permanent household use.

Phoenix Gas

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development how many road openings have been facilitated for Phoenix Gas in each constituency in the past 12 months. (AQW 2221/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not hold the requested information on a Constituency basis. However, I enclose details of the number of road openings carried out by Phoenix Natural Gas, by Roads Service Section Office, for the period 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2009. This information is taken from the NI Streetworks Registration and Notification System (NISRANS), and represents all areas covered by Phoenix Natural Gas's operating licence.

Section Office	Number of Openings
Ards	397
Ballymena and Larne	123
Belfast North	1017
Belfast South	1383
Castlereagh	402
Lisburn	497
Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus	652
North Down	605
Total	5076

Phoenix Gas

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development to list any incidences when Phoenix Gas opened newly constructed roads within 12 months of the road being completed. (AQW 2222/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that road openings, carried out by Phoenix Gas, in newly constructed roads were included in the figures I quoted in my answer to his recent question AQW 2221/09. Unfortunately, incidences of openings, carried out within 12 months of the road being completed, are not recorded separately from other street works on the NI Streetworks Registration and Notification System (NISRANS). Therefore, I am not in a position to provide a list of such incidences.

My Department's Roads Service works closely with utilities to ensure that, as far as possible, appropriate provision is made for utilities' apparatus in advance of substantial road works, or as part of construction of new roads. This provision includes any necessary diversion or upgrade of utilities' apparatus.

I can further advise that the Department has powers to place restrictions on street works following substantial road works. However, street works relating to emergency works, or providing new customer connections, where those connections had not been requested in time to be incorporated in the new road, are exempt from these restrictions.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Disabled Facilities for NI Housing Executive Tenants

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to address the lack of disabled facilities for NI Housing Executive tenants in the Ards area. (AQW 1907/10)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): Upon recommendation of an adaptation by an Occupational Therapist (OT), the Housing Executive will, in relation to any individual, carry out such works of adaptation to his/her home as are necessary to meet any duty which is owed to that person by the DHSS&PS within the relevant legislation.

As the disabled adaptation service is a demand led service the budget is allocated on an area basis and not by District Office. Details of the Housing Executive's programme of disabled adaptations for the Ards Council Area for the current financial year 2009/10 to date are detailed below.

ADAPTATIONS SPEND

Ards Council Area	2009/10 Spend (k)
Extensions	406
Lifts	0
Heating	26
Showers	82
Others	51
Total	565,000

The Harbour, York Road and Cathedral Quarter areas of North Belfast

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to outline any proposals to locate services or develop facilities in (a) the Harbour; (b) York Road; and (c) the Cathedral Quarter areas of north Belfast; and (ii) if she has had any discussions with Executive colleagues or their officials regarding their plans for these areas. (AQW 2020/10)

Minister for Social Development:

- (i) The Social Security Agency in partnership with the Department for Employment & Learning is taking forward plans for the development of a Jobs & Benefits office in the North Belfast area to ensure that clients benefit from the same enhanced work focused service which is available elsewhere in Northern Ireland. A number of options are currently being considered which include the demolition of the existing Corporation Street Social Security Office and redevelopment of part, or all, of the site to deliver the new office; or the development of the Jobs & Benefits office in a refurbished Northland House, on Frederick Street.
- (a) My Department and the Strategic Investment Board are currently developing a draft physical regeneration masterplan for the Greater Clarendon/Sailortown area of Belfast which will set out proposals for development and land use to promote the regeneration of the area. When completed the draft masterplan will be issued for public consultation and as part of this consultation other Northern Ireland Departments will be invited to comment on the draft masterplan.
- (b) On 29 October 2009 my Department published for public consultation the 'York Road/Shore Road Draft Physical Regeneration Concept Masterplan' which sets out proposals for the physical regeneration of this area. The Department of the Environment and the Department for Regional Development were represented at official level on the project steering group for this draft masterplan. Northern Ireland Departments will be invited to comment on the draft masterplan as part of the public consultation.
- (c) My Department has no new proposals for further physical regeneration in Cathedral Quarter over and above those projects which transferred from the former Laganside Corporation to my Department in 2007. These included the 'Four Corners' development, St. Anne's Square and 'The MAC' performing arts centre. The Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure is the lead Department for 'The MAC' and my Department is represented at official level on the project management board.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what provision is made by her Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people. (AQW 2038/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department is committed to ensuring that the information it provides is accessible to all Section 75 groups. My Department has mechanisms in place for providing information in alternative formats such as Braille and large print and is currently producing guidance for staff on issues relating to accessibility and information. This guide, which includes advice on communicating with those with sensory disabilities, will promote best practice throughout my Department and help to ensure that we provide our diverse customer base with their information requirements as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Blind or Partially-Sighted People

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development what steps have been, or will be, taken by her Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 2089/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department is committed to providing a service to all customers throughout Northern Ireland and a range of steps have been taken to ensure that the service provided to blind and partially sighted customers is equal to that provided to fully sighted customers. My Department has:

- ensured that buildings where customers are provided with a face to face service are universally accessible in accordance with legislation, that all signage conforms to Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) standards and that the availability of assistance for those who may experience difficulties accessing our services is highlighted at the Welcome desk;
- put in place systems to allow customers to be visited in their own homes to assist with the completion of application forms and answer queries on complex or difficult cases;
- consulted and worked with a wide range of voluntary organisations throughout Northern Ireland, including the Royal National Institute for the Blind, when taking forward projects and promoting benefit entitlement; and
- put in place mechanisms for providing information in alternative formats and is currently producing guidance for staff on issues relating to accessibility and information. This guide will promote best practice throughout

my Department and help to ensure that we provide our diverse customer base with their information requirements as quickly and efficiently as possible.

My Department will continue to meet its Section 75 obligations in relation to the level of service provided to our customers.

Commissioners of the Charity Commission

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the remuneration for Commissioners of the Charity Commission. (AQW 2101/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established 1 June 2009. I have appointed six Commissioners to date and they will receive the following annual remuneration:

Chief Commissioner	£5,000
Deputy Chief Commissioner	£3,000
Commissioners	£2,000

Charity Commission

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of establishing the Charity Commission. (AQW 2102/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established on 1 June 2009 and total expenditure to date in 2009/10 amounts to £101k. The Commission is an NDPB sponsored by DSD and has an annual budget of £800k.

Programme Protection Unit

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how many Disability Living Allowance reviews carried out by Programme Protection Unit have resulted in (i) reductions; and (ii) increases in DLA payments in each of the last two years. (AQW 2135/10)

Minister for Social Development: The number of Disability Living Allowance cases reviewed by Programme Protection Unit which have resulted in a reduction or increase in payment is set out in the table below.

Year	Number of DLA Cases Reduced	Number of DLA Cases Increased
2007/2008	696	1113
2008/2009	1141	1569

Programme Protection Unit

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many Disability Living Allowance reviews have been carried out by Programme Protection Unit; and (ii) how many additional staff have been recruited to PPU, in each of the last two years. (AQW 2136/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the number reviews carried out by Programme Protection Unit (PPU) in Disability and Carers Service (DCS) in the last two years and the number of staff engaged on these reviews. However, as no staff have been recruited specifically for PPU activity within DCS it is not possible to address part (ii) of the question directly.

Year	Number of Reviews	Staff in PPU
2007/2008	3847	21

Year	Number of Reviews	Staff in PPU
2008/2009	5407	25

Disability Living Allowance Expenditure

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the increase or decrease in the amount of Disability Living Allowance expenditure, following DLA reviews by Programme Protection Unit, in each constituency, in each of the last two years. (AQW 2137/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested as it is not possible to determine the exact amount of increases or decreases in Disability Living Allowance (DLA) expenditure that are attributable to reviews under the Programme Protection process. The table below however, details the number of increases or decreases in the amount of DLA paid to individual customers following reviews under the Programme Protection process, in each constituency, in each of the last two years.

Parliamentary Constituency	2007/08		2008/09	
	Increase	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
Belfast East	42	35	75	50
Belfast North	95	46	134	63
Belfast South	44	29	70	49
Belfast West	109	69	147	104
East Antrim	42	21	48	67
East Londonderry	36	32	63	77
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	53	20	70	41
Foyle	98	79	114	106
Lagan Valley	48	27	72	66
Mid Ulster	73	30	80	52
Newry and Armagh	67	49	105	62
North Antrim	57	35	70	56
North Down	27	22	52	31
South Antrim	47	31	55	60
South Down	61	40	94	56
Strangford	55	35	80	58
Upper Bann	67	47	120	59
West Tyrone	81	37	110	79
Unallocated Post Code*	11	12	10	5
Total	1113	696	1569	1141

Small Pockets of Deprivation Funding

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development if she intends to expand the Small Pockets of Deprivation funding for the Rathgill area of North Down after April 2010. (AQW 2147/10)

Minister for Social Development: Funding of the Small Pockets of Deprivation Programme will continue until 31 March 2010 with funding of £640,000 allocated for 2009/10. An independent evaluation report of the first three years of the Programme (up to 31 March 2009) received by my Department is currently under consideration. I will make a decision on the future of the Programme before the end of this year.

‘Areas at Risk’ Programme

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the ‘areas at risk’ programme for the Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee. (AQW 2179/10)

Minister for Social Development: A community survey, to help identify local needs and inform the development of an area based action plan, was carried out by the NIHE Research Unit over the summer.

The findings were sent to the NIHE local District Office and my Department’s Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) on 1 October 2009 and then forwarded to Beechfield Residents Association for consideration.

A meeting between the Residents Association, NIHE and my Department has been arranged for 5 November to discuss the findings and agree the next steps.

Queens Parade Project

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Queens Parade project in Bangor. (AQW 2180/10)

Minister for Social Development: The findings from the consultation exercise on the proposed Queen’s Parade development were presented to North Down Borough Council on 22 September 2009. A report detailing the consultation findings and the department’s response to the issues identified will be published in November 2009. I will take my decision on whether the department should support the scheme after that report is published.

Land Sales by the NI Housing Executive

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on land sales by the NI Housing Executive in the North Down area. (AQW 2181/10)

Minister for Social Development: The position in relation to land sales in the North Down area (including the Newtownards and Bangor Districts) is;

Sites on market for sale;

- Ballycrochan Road, Bangor
- Main Street, Greyabbey

Sites agreed for sale (no contract signed);

- Old Belfast Road, Bangor
- Ashfield Drive, Donaghadee
- Cypress Park, Donaghadee

Contract signed;

- Cuan Avenue, Portaferry

Sites sold;

- Loughries, Ballywatticock, Newtownards
- Kathleen Drive, Newtownards

Committee on Climate Change

Mr D Ford asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department has sought advice from the Committee on Climate Change with regard to its obligations under the Programme for Government. (AQW 2186/10)

Minister for Social Development: As Minister for Social Development I have not sought advice from the United Kingdom Committee for Climate Change. However, we have been very active in advancing our sustainability agenda across the Department.

Media Training

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development how much her Department has spent on media training for staff in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 2189/10)

Minister for Social Development: In the last five years Department for Social Development expenditure on media training for staff is as follows:

Year	Costs
2004/05	Nil
2005/06	Nil
2006/07	Nil
2007/08	£600
2008/09	£3300

Credit Unions

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development if she has had discussions with Credit Unions in the past twelve months in relation to housing; and to detail the outcomes of these discussions. (AQW 2217/10)

Minister for Social Development: I met with the President of the Irish League of Credit Unions and an ICLU Board member on 8 June 2009. This discussion centred on the impact of proposed legislation on credit unions and how credit unions can contribute to social development initiatives including issues regarding housing.

Following on from this meeting officials from Housing Division met with representatives of the Credit Union movement on 25 June.

Whilst the Credit Union movement was keen to explore how it could invest in a range of social projects across the North, including housing, no detailed proposals were tabled.

The issue here is that any borrowing would need to be guaranteed by the Department and would score as public expenditure. This would ultimately mean the Departmental Expenditure Limit for my Department would exceed that set by the Northern Ireland Executive.

NI Housing Executive Homes

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development how many NI Housing Executive homes in the Banbridge district were unoccupied in each day of the last six months. (AQW 2220/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. However, at 30 September 2009 there were twenty six Housing Executive properties vacant for more than 26 weeks, the majority of which were held vacant for major repairs/improvements or decant purposes.

REVISED WRITTEN ANSWERS

Friday 6 November 2009

(AQW 1896/10)

I hosted a joint reception with the DOE Minister Edwin Poots MLA in Parliament Buildings on 30th October 2009 to acknowledge the success of Colin Turkington in winning the 2009 British Touring Car Championship.

I have also agreed to host a reception for the Northern Ireland Olympic Skeet Shooting team to mark their recent achievement of winning the home international tournament in August 2009. A date has not yet been arranged for this event.

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