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# OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 15 January 2010

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### Investing for Health Strategy

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what targets their Department set within the Investing for Health strategy; and what progress has been made to date against these targets. (AQW 3509/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):** Lead responsibility for the Investing for Health Strategy lies with the Minister of Health Social Services and Public Safety. The strategy focuses on high level targets that are intended to measure progress towards reducing health inequalities. The objective most closely linked to OFDMFM is “to reduce poverty in families with children”. A target was not set at the time of publication as it was intended that this would “be formulated when baseline data was available”.

Work has been progressing in our department to tackle child poverty. We have sought legislative consent from the Assembly that the UK Child Poverty Bill would extend here. The Bill contains challenging targets on poverty in relation to absolute income, relative income, material deprivation and relative income, and persistent poverty; the intention is clearly to reduce, and indeed eradicate, child poverty by 2020.

We have also been developing an action plan to implement Lifetime Opportunities, the Executive’s Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy, and a monitoring framework that will allow us to measure progress against a range of measures over time. This work is contributing to meeting objectives in the strategy to reduce health inequalities.

We brought forward the Financial Assistance Act and this facilitated additional winter fuel payments to be paid and this will contribute to meeting targets around fuel poverty in the strategy. We recently received the Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability and with Executive colleagues will be considering how best to implement its findings. Work on disability and promoting social inclusion generally is also contributing to work that will reduce health inequalities.

#### ‘Big Bully’ Publication

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much was spent by the Children and Young People’s Unit on (i) producing; and (ii) distributing the ‘Big Bully’ publication. (AQW 3575/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:** In its October 2008 Concluding Observations on the UK State Party’s report on progress against the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Committee recommended that government should intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools.

During the summer months, OFMDFM carried out a programme of workshops with children and young people to seek their views on the children and young people’s strategy action plan with particular consideration of the concluding observations issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. During the workshops ‘bullying’ was also identified by children and young people as a high priority issue for them.

To help to tackle this problem, the Children and Young People’s Unit spent £33,222 to date in producing and distributing the ‘Big Bully’ comic to all primary school children here. This cost includes the compiling, translation and printing.

The comic provided the children and their parents with information on what bullying is; how to deal with it; how to protect themselves; who to tell when they are being bullied; why people become bullies; and bullying in schools.

### Economically Inactive People

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many people were economically inactive in each of the last five years, broken down by religious background. (AQW 3603/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The table below shows the numbers of people aged sixteen years and over economically inactive in each of the last five years for which data is available broken down by religion.

Date	Economically Inactive Persons Aged 16+							
	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Other religion / non determined		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2005	282000	52.5	228000	42.3	28000	5.2	538000	100
2006	293000	54.3	209000	38.8	37000	6.9	539000	100
2007	286000	53.3	211000	39.4	39000	7.3	536000	100
2008	291000	52.6	225000	40.6	37000	6.8	553000	100
2009 <sup>1</sup>	303000	52.8	239000	41.7	32000	5.5	573000	100

Source Labour Force Survey

Note 1. Data for 2009 relates to the July – September period

The table below shows the numbers of people of working age economically inactive in each of the last five years for which data is available broken down by religion.

Data is presented for both persons aged sixteen years plus and those of working age (16 - retirement age). This distinction is made as persons aged over retirement age are predominantly economically inactive.

Date	Economically Inactive Persons of Working Age							
	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Other religion / non determined		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2005	126000	42.9	148000	50.2	20000	6.9	294000	100
2006	131000	44.7	138000	47.0	25000	8.3	294000	100
2007	125000	43.5	135000	47.1	27000	9.4	288000	100
2008	127000	42.8	144000	48.4	26000	8.8	298000	100
2009 <sup>1</sup>	130000	41.9	155000	50.1	25000	8.0	310000	100

Source Labour Force Survey

Note 1. Data for 2009 relates to the July – September period

### Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags

**Dr S Farry** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the current review of the Inter-Agency Joint Protocol on Flags, and for a list of the participants in the review. (AQW 3615/10)

**First Minister and deputy First Minister:** The working group set up to look at the current Flags Protocol and to review it has met on two occasions on 7th October and 23rd November 2009.

## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

### Elite Facilities Programme

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1814/10, to detail the reasons for the delay in announcing successful applications to Stage Two of the Elite Facilities Programme; and when he expects this announcement to be made. (AQW 3622/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland):** The Department in conjunction with Sport NI are considering draft Outline Business Cases for the associated projects, which it is expected will require modification.

It is expected that this consideration will largely be completed by the end of January with a view to notifying applicants as soon as possible thereafter.

### Relocation of PRONI

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if at any stage of the procurement process for the relocation of PRONI another site was identified as being more suitable than the Titanic Quarter. (AQW 3689/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The category of 'site suitability' was one of several factors included in evaluation criteria of the expressions of interest from developers to provide a site and build a new public record office. 2 of the 5 shortlisted developer's sites – both at the Gasworks, Belfast – scored marginally higher than the Titanic Quarter site in relation to the 'site suitability' element. However, all 5 of the shortlisted sites satisfied the key criteria of being physically accessible to the public and staff, close to a main transport corridor, serviced by public transport routes and located within a radius of 2 miles of the City Hall. All 5 were invited to tender and the Titanic Quarter submission was assessed to be the most economically advantageous in terms of quality and price.

### Relocation of PRONI

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure on what basis the Titanic Quarter was selected as the new site for PRONI. (AQW 3690/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** An 'Official Journal of the European Union' (OJEU) competition was launched in October 2006 to secure a developer to provide both a site and build a new Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The procurement process followed the Restricted Procedure as set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2006, with a pre-qualification stage being followed by a competitive tender. Assessment criteria included site suitability, outline design proposals and site and construction cost.

Following evaluation of the tender submissions, Titanic Quarter Limited (TQL) was determined to be the most economically advantageous in terms of both quality and price.

TQL was subsequently appointed as the preferred bidder in August 2007 and construction of the new record office in Titanic Quarter commenced in November 2008.

### Relocation of PRONI

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a detailed synopsis of the events leading to the decision to move PRONI to the Titanic Quarter. (AQW 3728/10)

**Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The events leading to the decision to move PRONI to the Titanic Quarter are shown in the table below.

Date	Event
April 2005	Business case for new accommodation for PRONI commissioned

Date	Event
November 2005	Minister – David Hanson MP – approved the preferred option to develop a purpose built building, fully compliant with BS5454:2000 (Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents), with an element of third party storage.
January 2006	DFP Approved the business case.
September 2006	Secretary of State – Peter Hain – approved the finance for the project.
October 2006	The Contract Notice to procure, from a developer, a site and building specifically designed for PRONI was placed in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).
November 2006	Return date for Pre Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs) from Developers.
April 2007	Following evaluation of the PQQs tender documents issued to 5 shortlisted Developers.
June 2007	Tender submissions returned from 2 Developers
August 2007	Following evaluation of the tender submissions a letter of appointment as preferred bidder was issued to Titanic Quarter Ltd.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### C2K Provision for Schools

**Mr J O’Dowd** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to modernise the C2K provision for schools and if the plans include the opportunity to update the system with the latest technology, such as the next generation of internet provision known as ‘cloud’. (AQW 1858/10)

**Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane):** Tá ról lárnach ag úsáid éifeachtach na Teicneolaíochta Eolais agus Cumarsáide sna príomhpholasaithe oideachais ar fad atá á gcur i bhfeidhm ag an Roinn Oideachais, lena n-áirítear an curaclam athbhreithnithe agus an fócas atá againn ar thorthaí oideachais a fheabhsú do gach duine óg. Tá sé ríthábhachtach go bhfaigheann daoine óga na scileanna le Teicneolaíocht Eolais agus Chumarsáide a úsáid go héifeachtach, go muiníneach agus go sábháilte agus go mbíonn rochtain éasca ag ceannairí scoile ar an eolas atá de dhíth orthu le teagasc agus foghlaim a éascú agus lena scoileanna a bhainistiú.

The effective use of ICT plays a central role in all the key education policies being taken forward by the Department of Education, including the revised curriculum and our focus on improving educational outcomes for all young people. Ensuring that young people acquire the skills to use ICT effectively, confidently and safely and that our school leaders have easy access to the information they need to inform teaching and learning and manage their schools are key priorities.

The Classroom 2000 (C2k) service provides every grant-aided school with a modern, connected ICT infrastructure. C2k is a managed ICT service sponsored by the Western Education and Library Board on behalf of the other education and library boards and the Department, and includes:

- networked computers;
- administration and management systems for school staff;
- a high speed managed learning environment called LearningNI; and
- full service support via the C2k help desk..

Since 2000, the Department of Education has invested significantly in the C2k service, making the north an internationally recognised leader in the use of ICT in education. I remain committed to ensuring that schools have the modern ICT infrastructure that they need to reduce unnecessary administration and provide high quality teaching and learning for young people.

A new contract, referred to as Lot 7, designed to update the equipment and networks available to post-primary and special schools will shortly be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union. Although many of the details will be worked out during the procurement process, Lot 7 will introduce state of the art technology into classrooms. The design for Lot 7 will fully utilise cloud technologies (the cloud is the use of large commercial data centres, not necessarily located locally, that will house data, resources and software that can be accessed

from any location on a range of devices) to make teaching and learning resources more widely available anytime, anywhere, while still being able to provide a safe secure environment for our pupils using these technologies.

The networks and equipment in primary schools were replaced and upgraded in 2007/08.

### School Swimming Lessons

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to ensure that all children are taught to swim through their local schools. (AQW 3666/10)

**Minister of Education:** I believe that it is very important that children have the opportunity to learn to swim and, most importantly, to learn how to be safe in and near water. In recognition of its importance, swimming is a statutory area of Physical Education at Key Stage 2 (Years 5, 6 and 7) and Key Stage 3 (Years 8, 9 and 10). The focus in Key Stage 2 is on helping pupils to develop basic swimming and personal survival skills and on developing their confidence and competence in being able to swim without the use of swimming aids using recognised swimming strokes. In Key Stage 3, pupils should be given opportunities to participate frequently and regularly in a balanced programme of physical activity that specifically includes swimming.

Tá sé de dhualgas ar an scoil agus ar an Bhord Gobharnóirí ábhartha soláthar an churaclaim a bhaint amach i dtaca le híosábhair, le comhairle ar fáil ón Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne áitiúil.

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.

### Compulsory School Starting Age

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to deal with the issue of children starting primary school before the compulsory starting age of four years. (AQW 3667/10)

**Minister of Education:** Éilíonn an reachtaíocht reatha ar an pháiste tús a chur le scoil ag tús na céad scoilbhliana eile, sna cásanna sin nuair a bhaineann sé ceithre bliana d'aois amach idir 1 Meán Fómhair agus 1 Iúil sa scoilbhliain chéanna, nuair atá sé 4 bliana d'aois agus nuair nach bhfuil sé 5 bliana d'aois go fóill.

Current legislation requires that, where a child reaches the age of 4 on or between 1 September and 1 July in the same school year, the child has to start school at the beginning of the following school year, when s/he is 4 but not yet 5 years of age.

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.

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 introduction of the Foundation Stage in the primary school as part of the revised curriculum is designed to build on children's earlier learning experiences by providing an appropriate play-based learning programme to develop their disposition to learn, and to help to introduce them to more formal learning in a way and at a pace that takes account of their age and level of development.

My Department is aware that a number of primary schools offer reception places for children who are under the starting age of compulsory education. However, one of the aims of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP) was the replacement of reception provision with alternative provision in either the statutory nursery sector or private/voluntary playgroups sector. As a result, the number of reception places has significantly decreased from that prior to the implementation of the PSEEP. In 2008/09 there were only 606 reception places compared with 2600 in 1997/98.

My Department is currently preparing the Early Years (0-6) Strategy, which will be published for consultation early in 2010. The Strategy will consider how this issue will be dealt with in future.

### Early Year Places

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to address the issue of children missing out on early year places. (AQW 3668/10)

**Minister of Education:** Is é is aidhm don Chlár Fairsingithe Oideachais Réamhscoile bliain amháin d'ardchaighdeán cistithe oideachais réamhscoile a sholáthar, sa bhliain roimh oideachas éigeantach, do gach páiste ar mhian lena thuismitheoirí é.

The aim of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme is to provide one year of high quality funded pre-school education, in the year before compulsory education, for every child whose parents wish it.

The Early Years Team in the Department liaises closely with each Education and Library Board's Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) on an ongoing basis to ensure that shortfalls are identified and dealt with. As a result, in the current school year, funding for over 200 additional places was secured and allocated to the Education and Library Boards in response to identified demand.

The school based projection figure for September 2009 in respect of P1 pupils was 22,861. This would indicate that the pre-school phase overall level of provision is running at 93%. The pre-school phase of education is non compulsory. Research has shown that some 10% of parents do not wish to avail of a pre-school place for their child. However, it should be noted that it is not possible for demand to be geographically exactly matched to supply.

### Pupils Excluded or Expelled from School for Being Under the Influence of Alcohol

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary school; and (ii) secondary school pupils were excluded or expelled from school for being under the influence of alcohol on school premises in each of the last five years. (AQW 3673/10)

**Minister of Education:** Léiríonn an tábla thíos líon na ndaltaí ar cuireadh ar fionraí iad nuair ba é mí-úsáid alcóil an fáth a tugadh don fhionraí. Níl aon sonraí ar fáil áfach, maidir le cé acu a bhí na daltaí a bhí i gceist faoi thionchar an óil ar áitreabh scoile:-

The table below shows the number of pupils suspended where the reason given was alcohol abuse, however no details are available on whether the pupils involved were under the influence of alcohol on school premises:-

School Year	Primary	Post-Primary
2003/04	0	49
2004/05	0	69
2005/06	0	84
2006/07	0	87
2007/08	0	71

**Notes:**

1. Figures include pupils in Key Stage 1-4 at primary and post-primary schools.
2. The data refers to the number of pupils suspended. The number of suspensions could be higher since a pupil can be suspended more than once for the same reason.

The following table shows the number of pupils expelled where the reason given was alcohol abuse, however no details are available on whether the pupils involved were under the influence of alcohol on school premises:-

School Year	Primary	Post-Primary
2003/04	0	N/A*
2004/05	0	2
2005/06	0	0
2006/07	0	0
2007/08	0	0

**Notes:**

1. Figures include pupils in Key Stage 1-4 at primary and post-primary schools.

\* Reasons for pupil expulsions were first collected in 2003/04, and alcohol abuse was combined with data on substance abuse in that year.

Suspension and expulsion statistics in relation to the 2008/09 school year will be published in the coming weeks.

### Availability of Teaching Positions

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Education how many university graduates with qualified teacher status since 2000 have (i) not taken up or (ii) failed to find a teaching position. (AQW 3674/10)

**Minister of Education:** Níor theagasc 1171 céimí, a bhfuil Stádas Múinteora Cáilithe faighte acu ón bhliain 2000 i leith, i scoileanna deontaschúnta a fhaigheann airgead ón Roinn.

1171 graduates who have obtained Qualified Teaching Status since 2000 have not taught in grant-aided schools paid by the Department.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Education when her Department was notified of the removal of Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites; and for her assessment of the decision to remove these Educators. (AQW 3682/10)

**Minister of Education:** Cuireadh cinneadh Roinn na Timpeallachta in iúl do mo Roinn i mí Mhárta 2009 nach ndéanfaí athnuachan ar chonarthaí na n-Oifigeach Oideachais ar shuíomhanna Ghníomhaireacht na Timpeallachta i ndiaidh 31 Márta 2010. Ag an am sin, chomhairligh Roinn na Timpeallachta gur ghlac sí leis agus í ag déanamh an chinnidh seo go raibh an-mheas ag na scoileanna a ghlac páirt agus a thug cuairt ar pháirceanna agus suímhanna sa scéim, ach nár úsáid ach céatadán beag scoileanna an tseirbhís seo agus, mar gheall ar an easpa éilimh seo, bhain sí de thátal as nach raibh sé indéanta leanúint ar aghaidh leis an tseirbhís

My Department became aware in March 2009 of the Department of the Environment's (DOE) decision not to renew the contracts of Education Officers at Environmental Agency sites after 31 March 2010. At that time the DOE advised that, in taking this decision, it took account of the fact that whilst the education service programme was highly valued by those schools which participated and visited parks and sites, only a very small percentage of schools have availed of this service and, given its limited application to schools, the Environment Agency concluded that it was no longer feasible to continue with the service.

I am conscious that the service provided by the Education Officers is valued by those schools that have visited parks and sites and participated in the education programme, and, while it is disappointing that their contracts are not being extended, I recognise that we all face difficult decisions when it comes to budgets in the current climate. As the employment of Education Officers in the Environment Agency is the responsibility of DOE it would be inappropriate for the Department of Education to intervene.

My focus is on ensuring that children have opportunities to learn about environmental issues and the revised curriculum provides for this. For example environmental issues are included, at primary stage, in The World Around Us (Geography, Science and Technology) and ,at post primary stage, in Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship, Employability), and Environment and Society (Geography and History) and Science and Technology.

### School Uniform Grants

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Education how much her Department has spent on school uniform grants in each of the last three years. (AQW 3687/10)

**Minister of Education:** Seo a leanas an caiteachas a chaith gach ceann de na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ar dheontais éide scoile don tréimhse a iarradh:-

The expenditure by each of the Education and Library Boards on school uniform grants for the period requested is detailed below:-

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10* (1 April – 31 December 2009)
BELB	£480k	£457k	£460k	£687k
NEELB	£218k	£292k	£311k	£511k
SEELB	£274k	£276k	£275k	£419k

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10* (1 April – 31 December 2009)
SELB	£372k	£357k	£382k	£642k
WELB	£500k	£466k	£476k	£752k
TOTAL	£1,844k	£1,848k	£1,904k	£3,011k

The figures have been supplied by the Education and Library Boards.

\* Figures for the period 1 April – 31 December 2009 include expenditure on the new Primary School Uniform Grant which was awarded to eligible pupils for the first time in the 2009/10 academic year.

## DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

### ‘Dark Sky’ Tourism

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if any assessment has been made of the potential for ‘dark sky’ tourism, following the example of Dumfries and Galloway Council. (AQW 3626/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster):** ‘Dark Sky’ tourism has not been listed as a potential economic driver or a priority for Northern Ireland tourism and no data exists on the current market demand for astronomy based holidays. However, NITB will ensure that it receives any relevant statistics on the impact that the recently established ‘Dark Sky Park’ in Galloway Forest Park has on tourism in the area so that an assessment can be made as to its value, this will help inform future discussion on the subject.

### ‘Dark Sky’ Tourism

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if any geographical areas have been assessed on the Bortle Scale as being suitable for ‘dark sky’ tourism. (AQW 3627/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has not undertaken any work in this area as it is not within its remit to do so.

‘Dark Sky’ tourism has not been listed as a potential economic driver or a priority for Northern Ireland tourism and no data exists on the current market demand for astronomy based holidays. However, NITB will ensure that it receives any relevant statistics on the impact that the recently established ‘Dark Sky Park’ in Galloway Forest Park has on tourism in the area so that an assessment can be made as to its value to which will help inform future discussion on the subject.

### ‘Dark Sky’ Areas

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if any geographical areas, particularly remote areas, have been assessed under the Sky Quality Meter scale readings to identify ‘dark sky’ areas. (AQW 3628/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has not undertaken any work in this area as it is not within its remit to do so.

‘Dark Sky’ tourism has not been listed as a potential economic driver or a priority for Northern Ireland tourism and no data exists on the current market demand for astronomy based holidays. However, NITB will ensure that it receives any relevant statistics on the impact that the recently established ‘Dark Sky Park’ in Galloway Forest Park has on tourism in the area so that an assessment can be made as to its value to which will help inform future discussion on the subject.

## Tourism

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the measures in place within her Department to manage tourism. (AQW 3629/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) is the lead Department for tourism in Northern Ireland. The Department, under my supervision, delivers its tourism responsibilities through two of its sponsor bodies, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland Ltd (TIL). Targets are set for NITB and TIL via their respective Corporate and Operating Plans and these are monitored by DETI through regular oversight and liaison meetings.

DETI, supported by NITB and TIL, is currently leading on the development of a new Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland which will be issued for public consultation shortly. This Strategy, and its associated action plan, will provide a clear and inspiring vision for the development of Northern Ireland's tourism experience through to the year 2020.

## Tourism Opportunities

**Mr S Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what pro-active arrangements are in place within her Department to identify tourism opportunities, as opposed to reacting to initiatives from councils and other local bodies. (AQW 3630/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) has responsibility for funding the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and is co-sponsor of Tourism Ireland Ltd (TIL). Both these organisations are proactive in identifying tourism opportunities, some of which I will detail here.

In December 2009, I launched Tourism Ireland's marketing plans for 2010. TIL will be investing heavily in tactical and co-operative marketing with industry partners to drive a value-for-money message and will focus on getting the best offers to overseas trade and consumers. Stand-alone Northern Ireland campaigns in the marketplace will be implemented and Tourism Ireland will focus on the signature projects, Northern Ireland's spectacular scenery, Belfast as the 'City of Music' and 'Titanic, 100 Years On' to differentiate Northern Ireland from other holiday destinations, and to promote its uniqueness, particularly versus domestic holidays in Great Britain.

The Northern Ireland Tourist board has been engaged in developing a series of business insight papers articulating the evolving demands and interests of today's visitors. Insights produced in 2009 include:

- Getting the most of the short breaks market
- Maximising Northern Ireland's fabulous food
- Maximising the growing interest in learning while on holiday

Planned insights for the first quarter of 2010 include:

- Creating the authentic Northern Ireland visitor experience
- Music tourism

In addition to this NITB has developed a successful Industry Development Programme which aims to motivate tourism practitioners by benchmarking against recognised international experts and learning from local tourism experts. The programme includes a Masterclass series as well as Learning journeys

Alongside this ongoing work, Officials in my Department have been working closely with both these organisations to develop a new Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland due to launch for consultation shortly. This will identify opportunities, providing a clear and inspiring vision for the development of the tourism experience through to 2020.

## People Registered as Unemployed

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people were registered as unemployed in (i) January 2008; and (ii) October 2009. (AQW 3679/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** The total number of Claimant Count unemployed persons and the corresponding percentage of the resident working age population in Northern Ireland at January 2008 and October 2009 are shown in the table below.

Sex	January 2008		October 2009	
	number	rate	number	rate
Male	18,733	3.3	40,794	7.2
Female	5,378	1.0	11,940	2.3
Total	24,111	2.2	52,734	4.8

The figures in the above table are not seasonally adjusted.

### School Leavers Registered as Unemployed

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment the number of school leavers registered as unemployed (i) in January 2008; (ii) in January 2009; and (iii) at the latest available date. (AQW 3680/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** It is not possible to provide the exact information requested, as the Claimant Count does not separately identify 'school leavers'. However for information, the number of Claimant Count unemployed persons aged 16 to 19 and the corresponding percentage of total claimants in Northern Ireland at January 2008, January 2009 and November 2009 are shown in the table below.

Claimant Count for 16 to 19	Male		Female		Total	
	Number of claimants	Percentage of total claimants	Number of claimants	Percentage of total claimants	Number of claimants	Percentage of total claimants
January 2008	1,730	9.3	840	15.8	2,575	10.7
January 2009	2,875	9.2	1,225	15.4	4,100	10.4
November 2009	3,395	8.4	1,500	13.0	4,895	9.4

**Note** the numbers of claimants in age groups are rounded to the nearest 5, while the total for all ages is not rounded, hence figures may not sum.

Figures in the table are not seasonally adjusted.

### Disconnected Gas and Electricity Supplies

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many households have had their (i) gas; and (ii) electricity supplies disconnected because of unpaid bills in each of the last five years. (AQW 3683/10)

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

#### Gas

(i) firmus energy has confirmed that 4 domestic natural gas customers have been disconnected because of unpaid bills within the last five years. Phoenix Supply Limited has informed my Department that it does not record separately the number of disconnections carried out solely as a result of outstanding debt. Phoenix has confirmed that disconnections as a result of outstanding debt are only carried out as a measure of last resort and after the customer has been offered, and refused to accept, an appropriate repayment plan.

#### Electricity

(ii) NIE Energy has advised that no domestic electricity customers have been disconnected because of unpaid bills within the last five years.

The companies which supply natural gas and electricity to households in Northern Ireland offer a number of measures to assist domestic customers in managing the cost and payment of their energy bills including pre-payment meters. Each of the companies also has robust procedures in place to ensure that disconnection is a last resort in settling unpaid bills.

### Absence of Road Gritting

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department can provide an estimate of the cost to the local economy of the disruption to business due to the absence of gritting on some roads and the associated absenteeism from the workplace. (AQW 3686/10)

**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** Apart from illness, official current industry surveys do not record reasons for workplace absenteeism. It is not possible, therefore, to quantify or estimate any economic loss arising from roads not being gritted.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Pricewaterhousecooper Report

**Mr B Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the assumption that none of the options identified in the Pricewaterhousecooper Report require an equality impact assessment. (AQW 3594/10)

**Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots):** Under the original Key Outputs and Requirements of the Assessment of the Options for Local Government Service Delivery, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) were required to conduct relevant equality/regulatory/rural impact screening analyses on their proposals and recommendations.

However, I can confirm, that following engagement between the consultants and the project's Steering Groups (which consisted of central government and local government representatives) it was agreed that none of the proposals contained in the Economic Appraisal require further Equality Impact Assessment in addition to that which supported the Minister's decision to create 11 new councils in Northern Ireland.

Nevertheless, I support the view that at the next stage, i.e. detailed design, which will consider and recommend specific configuration options; that this phase will require further consideration of the need for an Equality Impact Assessment to be conducted. Those stakeholders who responded as part of the recent engagement process (including NILGA, SOLACE and LGSC) endorsed this approach.

### Belfast International Airport Car Parks

**Mr T Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail any correspondence he and his predecessors have received from Belfast International Airport about car parks operating without planning permission in the vicinity of the airport. (AQW 3611/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** There has been no correspondence from Belfast International Airport (BIA) to me or my predecessors. However, the Ballymena Divisional Planning Office has received 7 items of correspondence (1 in 2005, 5 in 2007 and 1 in 2009) from BIA drawing attention to alleged unauthorised car parks in the vicinity of the airport and asking for updates on enforcement action in relation to these.

### Belfast International Airport Car Parks

**Mr T Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment if he is aware of any car parks which have been established in green belt areas in the vicinity of Belfast International Airport without planning permission. (AQW 3612/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The Department has been aware of 11 unauthorised car park sites in the vicinity of the airport. Of these 11 sites, 1 is lawful having been deemed to be immune from enforcement action by the Planning Appeals Commission, others have been closed as a result of enforcement action by Planning Service, while the remainder are at various stages of enforcement proceedings.

### Belfast International Airport Car Parks

**Mr T Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department intends to take to shut down car parks in the vicinity of Belfast International Airport which do not have planning permission. (AQW 3613/10)

**Minister of the Environment:**

- My Department responds promptly to any breaches identified and Planning Service continues to take formal action as necessary against unauthorised car parks in this area. Recent planning appeal results have supported the Planning Service's view that this use is not acceptable in the rural area.
- As a result of enforcement action, 6 unauthorised car parks in the vicinity of the International Airport have ceased operations. One operator has been before the courts on 3 occasions, amassing a total of £40,000 in fines. The remainder are at various stages of enforcement action and investigations.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment when the removal of Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites will be implemented. (AQW 3643/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The contracts of the agency staff currently providing an education service at NIEA sites will not be renewed after 31 March 2010.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment the estimated amount his Department will save each year following the removal of Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites. (AQW 3644/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The estimated amount saved will be £260k per annum.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment if he intends to discuss the removal of Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites with any interested parties, including Ministers or officials of other Departments, in the future. (AQW 3646/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** Officials from my Department and the Department of Education have corresponded on this matter and will be meeting shortly to discuss this matter further.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he or his predecessors have had with other Ministers and Departments about the removal of Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites. (AQW 3647/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** Officials from my Department and the Department of Education have corresponded on this matter and will be meeting shortly to discuss this matter further.

### Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency Sites

**Mr T Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment how many children in each Education and Library Board have visited Educators at Northern Ireland Environment Agency sites, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3648/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** The number of children from schools in each of the Education and Library Boards visiting NIEA Educators is set out in the table below:-

	2007	2008	2009	Total
BELB	4103	5768	5727	15598
NEELB	4278	6043	6271	16592
SEELB	2747	4285	4366	11398
SELB	3736	5770	3600	13106
WELB	4052	4526	3838	12416
<b>Total</b>	<b>18916</b>	<b>26392</b>	<b>23802</b>	<b>69110</b>

### Article 31 for Sprucefield

**Mr J Shannon** asked the Minister of the Environment why the Article 31 for Sprucefield has been allowed to continue when the necessary information was not submitted in time. (AQW 3753/10)

**Minister of the Environment:** Processing of the planning application submitted on 28 August 2008 for Phase II retail development at Sprucefield has not continued.

It may be helpful if I explain that Under the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, as amended, the Planning Service requested further environmental information on 2 December 2008. The addendum was received outside the 3 month time limit as required by the legislation. The Department's view is that the 2008 application is a deemed refusal and processing of this application has therefore ceased.

The applicant submitted a duplicate application on 26 November 2009. Following consideration of this application the Planning Service recommended that it should proceed by means of a public inquiry. I agreed with this recommendation and the application has been referred to the Planning Appeals Commission.

## DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

### Deprived Areas

**Mr S Hamilton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to list (i) the highest 10%; and (ii) the next 11% to 20% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland as defined by the 2001 Noble indices. (AQW 3605/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson):** The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2001 was reported for 566 Electoral Wards where rank 1 is the most deprived ward and rank 566 is the least deprived ward.

The 10% most deprived wards (those ranked 1 to 56 in terms of multiple deprivation in 2001) and the 11% to 20% most deprived wards (those ranked 57 to 113 in terms of multiple deprivation in 2001) are shown in the tables (i) and (ii) below.

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 was reported for 890 Super Output Areas where rank 1 is the most deprived Super Output Area and rank 890 is the least deprived Super Output Area.

The 10% most deprived Super Output Areas (those ranked 1 to 89 in terms of multiple deprivation in 2005) and the 11% to 20% most deprived Super Output Areas (those ranked 90 to 178 in terms of multiple deprivation in 2005) are shown in the tables (iii) and (iv) below.

- (i) The 10% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland as defined by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2001

Rank (1 = most deprived)	Ward*	LGD*	Rank	Ward*	LGD*
1	Crumlin	Belfast	29	Beechmount	Belfast
2	Falls	Belfast	30	Glentaisie	Moyle
3	Whiterock	Belfast	31	Westland	Derry
4	St. Annes	Belfast	32	Blackstaff	Belfast
5	Ballymacarrett	Belfast	33	Daisy Hill	Newry and Mourne
6	Brandywell	Derry	34	Castledearg	Strabane
7	Woodvale	Belfast	35	Glencairn	Belfast
8	New Lodge	Belfast	36	Bushmills	Moyle
9	The Mount	Belfast	37	Island	Belfast
10	Shankill	Belfast	38	Collin Glen	Lisburn
11	Upper Springfield	Belfast	39	Termon	Omagh
12	Ardoyne	Belfast	40	Ballybot	Newry and Mourne
13	Creggan South	Derry	41	Court	Craigavon
14	Shaftesbury	Belfast	42	Glen	Derry
15	The Diamond	Derry	43	Rosemount	Derry
16	Water Works	Belfast	44	Fintona	Omagh
17	St. Peter's	Derry	45	Drumgask	Craigavon
18	Victoria	Derry	46	Ballysally	Coleraine
19	Duncairn	Belfast	47	Crossmaglen	Newry and Mourne
20	Clonard	Belfast	48	Glencolin	Belfast
21	East	Strabane	49	Carn Hill	Derry
22	Creggan Central	Derry	50	Drumgor	Craigavon
23	Shantallow East	Derry	51	Callan Bridge	Armagh
24	Binevenagh	Limavady	52	Beechwood	Derry
25	Flying Horse	Down	53	Tullycarnet	Castlereagh
26	Woodstock	Belfast	54	Churchland	Coleraine
27	Shantallow West	Derry	55	Ballykeel	Ballymena
28	Twinbrook	Lisburn	56	Braden	Newtownabbey

\* 1984 Ward and Local Government Districts Boundaries

## (ii) The 11% to 20% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland as defined by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2001

Rank	Ward*	LGD*	Rank	Ward*	LGD*
57	Glenderg	Strabane	85	West	Strabane
58	Corrody	Derry	86	Legoniel	Belfast
59	St. Patrick's	Newry and Mourne	87	Derrymore	Newry and Mourne
60	Dunanney	Newtownabbey	88	Caw	Derry
61	West Winds	Ards	89	Knocklayd	Moyle
62	Coolessan	Limavady	90	Coole	Newtownabbey
63	Ardboe	Cookstown	91	Cross Glebe	Coleraine
64	Ballee	Ballymena	92	Plumbridge	Strabane
65	Strand	Derry	93	Drumgullion	Newry and Mourne
66	Creggan	Newry and Mourne	94	Victoria Bridge	Strabane
67	Ballysaggart	Dungannon	95	Tullygally	Craigavon
68	Pomeroiy	Cookstown	96	Sixmilecross	Omagh
69	Rathenraw	Antrim	97	Drumnamoe	Craigavon
70	Corcraim	Craigavon	98	South	Strabane
71	Glen Road	Belfast	99	Falls Park	Belfast
72	Clare	Strabane	100	Fair Green	Ballymena
73	Owenkillew	Omagh	101	Cam'lough	Newry and Mourne
74	Armoy	Moyle	102	Abbey Park	Armagh
75	Kilwee	Lisburn	103	St. Mary's	Newry and Mourne
76	Highfield	Belfast	104	Coalisland South	Dungannon
77	Newtownstewart	Strabane	105	Northland	Carrickfergus
78	Church	Craigavon	106	Whitehouse	Newtownabbey
79	Central	Larne	107	Downs	Armagh
80	Sion Mills	Strabane	108	Newhill	Ballymoney
81	Botanic	Belfast	109	Gortalee	Carrickfergus
82	Ballysillan	Belfast	110	Bonamargy & Rathlin	Moyle
83	Dunnamanagh	Strabane	111	Dunnamore	Cookstown
84	Old Warren	Lisburn	112	Newtownhamilton	Newry and Mourne
			113	Sunnylands	Carrickfergus

\* 1984 Ward and Local Government Districts Boundaries

## (iii) The 10% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland as defined by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005

Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*	Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*
1	Whiterock_2	Belfast	45	Collin Glen_2	Lisburn
2	Shankill_2	Belfast	46	Westland	Derry
3	Falls_2	Belfast	47	Clonard_2	Belfast
4	Crumlin_2_Belfast	Belfast	48	Island_1	Belfast
5	Whiterock_3	Belfast	49	Shaftesbury_2	Belfast
6	Falls_3	Belfast	50	Water Works_2	Belfast
7	Shankill_1	Belfast	51	Twinbrook_2	Lisburn
8	New Lodge_2	Belfast	52	Culmore_2	Derry
9	New Lodge_1	Belfast	53	Shantallow East	Derry
10	Ballymacarrett_3	Belfast	54	Water Works_3	Belfast
11	Creggan Central_1	Derry	55	Creggan Central_2	Derry
12	Upper Springfield_3	Belfast	56	Twinbrook_1	Lisburn
13	Ardoyne_3	Belfast	57	Legoniel_1	Belfast
14	Falls_1	Belfast	58	Woodvale_1	Belfast
15	New Lodge_3	Belfast	59	Blackstaff_2	Belfast
16	Brandywell	Derry	60	Glencolin_2	Belfast
17	Duncairn_1	Belfast	61	Beechmount_2	Belfast
18	Woodvale_3	Belfast	62	The Mount_2	Belfast
19	Crumlin_1_Belfast	Belfast	63	Drumnamoe_1	Craigavon
20	Ardoyne_2	Belfast	64	Woodstock_2	Belfast
21	The Mount_1	Belfast	65	Corcrain_2	Craigavon
22	Water Works_1	Belfast	66	Crossmaglen	Newry & Mourne
23	Upper Springfield_2	Belfast	67	Clondermot_1	Derry
24	Shantallow West_2	Derry	68	Carn Hill_2	Derry
25	Crevagh_2	Derry	69	Glen Road_2	Belfast
26	East	Strabane	70	Altnagelvin_1	Derry
27	Ballymacarrett_1	Belfast	71	Ballycolman	Strabane
28	Ardoyne_1	Belfast	72	Beechmount_3	Belfast
29	Upper Springfield_1	Belfast	73	Shaftesbury_3	Belfast
30	Strand_1_Derry	Derry	74	Drumgor_2	Craigavon
31	Whiterock_1	Belfast	75	Drumgullion_1	Newry & Mourne
32	Shantallow West_1	Derry	76	Cliftonville_3	Belfast
33	Glencairn_1	Belfast	77	Dunanney	Newtownabbey
34	Clonard_1	Belfast	78	Greystone_Limavady	Limavady
35	Creggan South	Derry	79	Glenderg	Strabane
36	The Diamond	Derry	80	Ebrington_2	Derry
37	Ballymacarrett_2	Belfast	81	Ballysally_1	Coleraine
38	Collin Glen_3	Lisburn	82	Glen Road_1	Belfast

Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*	Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*
39	Glencolin_4	Belfast	83	Beechwood	Derry
40	Shaftesbury_1	Belfast	84	Collin Glen_1	Lisburn
41	Drumgask_2	Craigavon	85	Botanic_5	Belfast
42	Highfield_3	Belfast	86	Ballybot	Newry & Mourne
43	Woodvale_2	Belfast	87	Court_1	Craigavon
44	Duncairn_2	Belfast	88	Ballymote	Down
			89	Victoria_Derry	Derry

\* 1992 Local Government Boundaries

(iv) The 11 to 20% most deprived Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland as defined by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005

Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*	Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*
90	Glen Road_3	Belfast	134	Upper Malone_2	Belfast
91	Ladybrook_3	Belfast	135	Beechmount_1	Belfast
92	Ballysillan_1	Belfast	136	Cross Glebe	Coleraine
93	Devenish	Fermanagh	137	Ballee	Ballymena
94	Poleglass_1	Lisburn	138	Annagh_2	Craigavon
95	Castleberg	Strabane	139	Carn Hill_1	Derry
96	Enagh_1_Derry	Derry	140	Clare	Strabane
97	Coole	Newtownabbey	141	Andersonstown_3	Belfast
98	Coalisland South	Dungannon	142	Falls Park_1	Belfast
99	Blackstaff_1	Belfast	143	Springtown_1	Derry
100	Chichester Park_1	Belfast	144	Conlig_3	North Down
101	Coolessan	Limavady	145	Tullycarnet	Castlereagh
102	Kilwee_2	Lisburn	146	Daisy hill_2	Newry & Mourne
103	Valley_2	Newtownabbey	147	Bessbrook	Newry & Mourne
104	Daisy hill_1	Newry & Mourne	148	Derrymore_1	Newry & Mourne
105	Lisanelly_2	Omagh	149	South_1	Strabane
106	Northland	Carrickfergus	150	Ballykeel	Ballymena
107	Monkstown_1	Newtownabbey	151	Silver Bridge_1	Newry & Mourne
108	Glencolin_3	Belfast	152	Springfarm_2	Antrim
109	Enagh_2_Limavady	Limavady	153	Finn	Strabane
110	Newtownstewart	Strabane	154	Churchland	Coleraine
111	Rosemount	Derry	155	Culmore_3	Derry
112	Woodstock_3	Belfast	156	Castleview_1	Belfast
113	Glencairn_2	Belfast	157	Clonallan_1	Newry & Mourne
114	Bloomfield_1_Belfast	Belfast	158	Rosslea	Fermanagh
115	Andersonstown_2	Belfast	159	Ballyloran	Larne
116	Legoniel_2	Belfast	160	Scrabo_2	Ards
117	Old Warren	Lisburn	161	Ballynashallog_1	Derry

Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*	Rank	Super Output Area	LGD*
118	Woodville_1	Craigavon	162	Ardboe	Cookstown
119	Drumgask_1	Craigavon	163	Highfield_2	Belfast
120	Farranshane	Antrim	164	Love Lane	Carrickfergus
121	Cliftonville_1	Belfast	165	Mossley_2	Newtownabbey
122	Foyle Springs_2	Derry	166	Sydenham_1	Belfast
123	Ballysaggart	Dungannon	167	Taghnevan	Craigavon
124	Corcrain_1	Craigavon	168	Dunnamanagh	Strabane
125	Whitehouse	Newtownabbey	169	Kilkeel Central_2	Newry & Mourne
126	West_2	Strabane	170	Harbour_1	North Down
127	Creggan	Newry & Mourne	171	Shantallow West_3	Derry
128	Callan Bridge	Armagh	172	Ladybrook_2	Belfast
129	Woodstock_1	Belfast	173	Dunnamore	Cookstown
130	Court_2	Craigavon	174	Crevagh_3	Derry
131	Church	Craigavon	175	Hillhall_1	Lisburn
132	Falls Park_3	Belfast	176	St Mary's	Newry & Mourne
133	Island_2	Belfast	177	St Patrick's_2	Newry & Mourne
			178	Tavanagh	Craigavon

\* 1992 Local Government Boundaries

### Re-location of Public Sector Jobs

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what discussions he has had with the Executive about the decentralisation of public sector jobs; and (ii) what plans there are for 2010 regarding the re-location of public sector jobs. (AQW 3656/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** I wrote to Executive colleagues on 30 September 2009 saying that I was keen to have an early Executive discussion on the report on policy on location of public sector jobs. I subsequently mentioned the issue at an Executive meeting on 8 October. To date the matter has not been scheduled for the Executive agenda.

Any decisions on the way forward regarding the report on location will be a matter for the Executive.

### Bain Report on the Re-location of Public Sector Jobs

**Mr D McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he will implement the proposals of the Bain report in relation to the re-location of public sector jobs. (AQW 3657/10)

**Minister of Finance and Personnel:** The report on the location of public sector jobs indicated that the cost to the public purse to implement the recommendations could be around £40m. It also suggested that normal value for money considerations should be set aside.

As Finance Minister I have a responsibility to the Assembly and the taxpayers of Northern Ireland to ensure that the pressures on public spending are addressed in a realistic and effective way. Hence I am of the view that in the current economic climate and, with the significant pressures on public spending, it is not affordable to proceed to implement the recommendations of the Report, nor is this the time to set aside normal value for money principles.

However, decisions on a way forward are a matter for the Executive and I am keen, therefore for a discussion with Executive colleagues about this important matter.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### Health and Social Care Trusts: Equality Impact Assessments

**Mr F Molloy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department applies Equality Impact Assessments to the budget allocations and proposed efficiency savings of Health and Social Care Trusts. (AQO 537/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey):** I have done everything in my power to further equality in the allocation of budgets. Individual CSR bids made by the Department were subject to high level equality impact assessments. Trusts carried out screening on their efficiency proposals and carried out full Equality Impact Assessments on those that needed it. Myself and the Trusts met with the Unions and many other Stakeholders in the course of this process.

But fundamentally, there was nothing equal about imposing a blunt 3% CSR efficiency plan on all departments. No final unified equality impact assessment of the efficiencies was shown to the Executive before they made their decision.

### Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Hospital Acquired Infections

**Ms C Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on the discussions he has had with the Chief Executive of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority's report on hospital acquired infections. (AQO 538/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The unannounced hygiene inspections of hospitals are one of a range of measure that I have taken to address the issue of healthcare-associated infections. MRSA and C. difficile infections have come down by over 30% in the past 18 months.

Following the publication of the RQIA's overview report, I have set up a senior regional team to continue to drive up hygiene and cleanliness standards across all hospitals and healthcare facilities, and to monitor rigorously the implementation of the actions that are required in response to the inspections. This team will report to me. I am also providing funding for a "back to basics" environmental cleaning pilot scheme in Belfast City Hospital.

I have written to the Chairs and Chief Executives of all Trusts emphasising that they must give the highest priority to hygiene and cleanliness issues.

### Bamford Review

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford Review. (AQO 539/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** I published an Action Plan for 2009-2011 in October 2009. This followed consultation in 2008 on Delivering the Bamford Vision, which was the Executive's response to the Bamford Review.

I chair an inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability, which will co-ordinate and drive forward the actions committed to across Departments. The HSC Mental Health and Learning Disability Task Force will drive forward action within the HSC.

The actions committed to in the Action Plan are achievable within funding levels agreed as part of the CSR. Any reduction in these funding levels in 2010-11 as a result of the Executive's review of the 2010-11 spending plans will undoubtedly severely limit my Department's ability to deliver on these actions.

### Business Services Organisation

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will ensure that the proposed Business Services Organisation will not have an adverse impact on employment levels in the Southern

area, in particular Armagh City; and whether the St Luke's / Longstone site will be considered as a location for its headquarters. (AQO 540/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The Business Services Organisation is currently conducting a consultation exercise on proposals to realign and locate those legacy Board functions which became part of its organisation on 1 April 2009, these include legacy board staff located in the Southern area. No decision will be made on the relocation of legacy board staff until the consultation process has concluded and its findings considered. As the outcome of the process is not yet known I can give no assurance on the future levels of staff at this time.

I also announced in February 2009 that the permanent Head quarters of the Business Service Organisation would be sited outside Belfast. Work will begin in the near future to identify options for the location of the future Headquarters, which will consider potential sites available across Northern Ireland.

### McElhill Family Tragedy

**Mrs C McGill** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has any plans to set up a public inquiry into the McElhill family tragedy. (AQO 541/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** My priority is the protection of children and I seek to assure myself and the public that all of the recommendations of the Toner Review have been fully implemented in the WHSCT. I have therefore asked Mr Henry Toner QC to revisit the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) to ascertain the extent to which recommendations contained in the Toner report published 1 July 2008, have been implemented.

The issue of a public inquiry would not be for me alone to decide and for my part I would not support a public inquiry unless I genuinely believed it would reveal information not previously known.

### Child Protection

**Mr M Brady** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the all-island child protection measures currently in place. (AQO 542/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** Authorities in both jurisdictions co-operate on an ongoing basis in dealing with individual child protection cases. You will appreciate that the legislation and policies in both jurisdictions are significantly different and any changes to these areas are a matter for Ministers in the relevant jurisdiction. However, under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council cross-border groups of officials continue to meet on a regular basis to examine areas of mutual co-operation on a range of issues including child protection.

Work is underway to finalise a range of cross-border protocols, advice and guidance as well as to look at areas of co-operation, such as research, internet safety and monitoring of the workforce. It is planned to have some of this material finalised early this year.

### Cardiac Surgery

**Mr B Armstrong** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of cardiac surgery provision. (AQO 543/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** A highly dedicated team of cardiac surgeons at the Royal Group of Hospitals carry out all cardiac surgery in Northern Ireland. All patients should receive treatment within 13 weeks. Towards the end of 2009, around £20m was released to allow Trusts to work towards the elective care standards for all specialties, including cardiac surgery, making use, where necessary, of the independent sector.

The RGH currently has capacity for between 950 and 1,100 cardiac surgery cases per annum. However, in the period April 2009 - March 2010, demand will be for an estimated 1,250 cases, with approximately 300 cases transferred to the independent sector. Plans are being developed to increase cardiac surgery capacity (physical accommodation and staffing) to cope with the ever-increasing demand, so that Northern Ireland is self-sufficient

in the provision of cardiac surgery by 2012/2013. The success of these plans will of course be dependent on the availability of the necessary additional funding.

### Learning Disabilities

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the arrangements for discharging people with learning disabilities into community settings. (AQO 544/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** The process of resettling patients is a complex one, involving both community and hospital multi-disciplinary teams. A patient is identified for resettlement only when it is clinically appropriate and it is clear that their needs can be met and their lives could be bettered by the placement. Each placement is a bespoke design around the individual's needs.

The needs of those individuals are assessed by hospital and community staff working together with patients and families/carers, as appropriate using well established protocols.

Every person due to be discharged from a learning disability hospital will participate in the development of a person-centred discharge plan which details the wishes and needs of the individual and how their plan will be managed in their new home.

### HIV/AIDS Patients

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support services are available to assist people diagnosed with HIV and Aids. (AQO 546/10)

**Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:** A specialist clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital provides ongoing treatment and support for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. In addition a wide variety of support services are available to people diagnosed with HIV and AIDS through voluntary organisations funded by my Department. These services include: one-to-one support, counselling, complementary therapies, health promotion and healthy living seminars, group support, information services, home support service, respite, residential, social events, education and prevention, training, and advocacy services.

## DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Emergency Helplines

**Mr T Gallagher** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many emergency helplines Roads Service operated over the Christmas and New Year period and to detail the number and nature of the calls received. (AQW 3618/10)

**Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy):** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it had 18 emergency helplines in operation during the Christmas and New Year period and that over 6,000 telephone calls were received by Roads Service over the holiday period. I am also advised that approximately 90% of these calls were in relation to problems arising as a result of the adverse weather conditions, including snow, icy roads and the provision / filling of salt boxes. The remaining telephone calls related to potholes, traffic management / lights, street lighting, etc.

In addition to updating its traffic telephone information line to detail the prevailing traffic conditions, Roads Service's Traffic Information Control Centre dealt with almost 170 telephone calls during the holiday period.

### Airport Railway Links

**Mr T Burns** asked the Minister for Regional Development what visits, studies, or meetings have taken place involving his departmental officials investigating airport railway links in the past five years. (AQW 3652/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** In 2006 my Department established a Steering Group to consider options for future train services here. As well as DRD officials, there was representation from the Department of Finance and Personnel, the Strategic Investment Board, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, Translink and the Department of Transport in Dublin. The group considered an Economic Appraisal which examined various options for improvements to the railways network and as a result substantial investment is being made to fund several projects including the purchase of 20 new trains. An option to re-open the Antrim to Knockmore line, which would be necessary to establish rail links to Belfast International Airport, was considered in the appraisal but concluded that such a project did not demonstrate Value for Money.

I met with the Kilbride Community Railways Group in March 2009 and discussed their proposals to have the Antrim to Knockmore railway line re-opened in order to provide new commuter services. Given the proximity of Belfast International Airport to the line they argued for a feasibility study developing a halt or station at the airport. I indicated that if they secured local council support for a study DRD would also contribute to the cost. There has been no further contact since.

My Department commissioned a Study which was completed at the end of 2009 into the possible long term social, physical and economic developments which could be achieved through the enhancement of the Northern Railways Corridor. The report discussed the opportunity to develop rail links to airports. However, it concluded that the costs of developing the Knockmore to Antrim line (which would need to be diverted to link to the airport), or the costs of diverting the line from Templepatrick to the airport would be very high and there would need to be a significant increase in passenger numbers to justify such expenditure. With regards to the City of Derry Airport (CODA), the possible location of the passing loop near to Foyle Bridge may mean, from an operational point of view, a railway halt at CODA would not be feasible. The costs of this, in any case is projected as high because the line would have to be re-aligned.

As part of the development of a Strategic Outline Case for Rapid Transit in the Belfast Metropolitan Area, a high level review was undertaken for a possible extension to George Best Belfast City Airport along the route identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan / draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan considering both Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail options. The review concluded that the scheme would not be economically viable given existing passenger numbers.

The ongoing reviews of the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Transportation Strategy Review both acknowledge the importance of good connections to the airports and will set a long term context for such proposals to be kept under review.

### **NI Water and Roads Service**

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will initiate a review of how NI Water and Roads Service responded to interrupted water supplies and dangerous road conditions caused by freezing temperatures over the Christmas and New Year period. (AQW 3659/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I can advise the Member that I convened a review meeting with my Department's Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) last week.

As with all such significant weather events, Roads Service will examine the effectiveness of its response and take on board any lessons learned, which could be implemented to improve the service in future years.

I have been advised by NIW, that its Winter Contingency Plan is reviewed annually in advance of the winter period and a series of pre-emptive actions are implemented to mitigate any potential adverse weather situations that may occur.

### **Grit Piles and Salt Boxes**

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will locate grit piles and salt boxes in more rural and urban areas in the future to allow local communities to play their part in keeping winter traffic on the move in freezing weather conditions. (AQW 3661/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** You may be aware that a review of the winter service policy and procedures, operated by my Department's Roads Service, was carried out in 2001. One of the key outcomes of

the review, which was fully debated and accepted by the Assembly, was that the practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes should continue.

At the time of the review, it was also agreed that on roads maintained by Roads Service, which do not qualify for inclusion onto the gritting schedule, salt bins or grit piles may be provided for use by the public, on a self help basis. Providing the necessary criteria are met, there are no limits placed on the number of salt bins which may be provided, although they will not normally be provided within 100m of another bin.

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

### Traffic Calming Schemes

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister for Regional Development what thresholds of community support are used to determine whether to proceed with traffic calming schemes. (AQW 3685/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that proposed traffic calming schemes must have the support of the majority of the local residents and affected organisations.

Roads Service implements traffic calming schemes in accordance with the Roads Service Policy and Procedure Guide E027 "Road Safety Engineering Procedures", which highlights the objectives of the procedure and the consultation process.

The first phase of the consultation process is informal, whereby Roads Service will do a letter drop or undertake a survey, to advise residents of the proposals and gauge the level of public support for such a scheme. Roads Service will consider all representations at this stage and, if necessary, make changes to the scheme design.

The second phase of the consultation process is the formal phase, where residents are given the opportunity to view a detailed map or plan of the area outlining the proposed scheme. For larger, more complex schemes, it may be appropriate to meet with local residents' groups and/or hold public exhibitions.

Roads Service will consider any objection to a scheme on an individual basis, and where possible, will negotiate to resolve any disagreement. However, if an objection remains unresolved, Roads Service will consider the matter in full and may decide to either:

- proceed with the scheme without recourse to a public inquiry;
- hold a public enquiry; or
- abandon the scheme.

I can advise that objections to any scheme are taken seriously and considered on an individual basis, although it must be acknowledged that the overriding priority is Road Safety.

### Easy Bus Service in Bangor

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development when Bloomfield Shopping Centre withdrew funding for the Easy Bus service in Bangor. (AQW 3710/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Translink has advised me that tenants of Bloomfield Shopping Centre withdrew financial support for Easibus services in Bangor in January 2005.

### Grit Boxes

**Mrs C Hanna** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many grit boxes are currently in operation. (AQW 3774/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it maintains approximately 3,500 salt bins on public roads across the North.

## Belfast Sewers Project

**Mr P Butler** asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress is being made by NI Water on the Belfast Sewer Project, and when it will be operational. (AQO 553/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the Belfast Sewers Project is progressing on programme and final testing and commissioning is expected to commence in February 2010.

## Footpaths

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the merits of salting footpaths in town centres and pedestrian precincts during periods of freezing temperatures; and what is the potential liability to traders who clear footpaths of ice and snow from the front of their premises. (AQO 554/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** There is no statutory duty on my Department's Roads Service to salt or clear snow and ice from footways.

The Member may recall that the whole issue of winter service, including treatment of footways, was reviewed and subsequently debated by the Assembly in July 2001. At that time it was recognised that the cost of salting footways was prohibitive and that the basic logistics of introducing such a service, which is largely a manual task, make it impractical.

However, following the 2001 Review, the then Minister proposed that, in periods of prolonged lying snow, he would be seeking to enlist the help of other agencies, such as district councils to assist in clearing busy town centre footways.

It was in this context that he wrote to each council outlining proposals for partnering arrangements for the removal of snow and ice from town centre footways and pedestrian areas. Roads Service followed up this initial contact by writing to each council to explain the proposals in detail and enclosing a proposed model agreement.

In consultation with Northern Ireland Local Government Association Roads Service drew up a draft legal agreement. However, only a small number of councils signed up to the agreement and, as such, the resources available to treat snow and ice on footways are somewhat limited.

With regard to the potential liability to traders who clear footways of ice and snow from the front of their premises, the Department can only clarify that liability may potentially arise if clearance actions negligently create traps, hazards or obstructions on footways or the adjoining carriageway for passing pedestrians or motorists. Individual traders would need to consider their own particular situations and proposed actions in conjunction with their own legal advice.

## Rural Public Transport

**Mrs M O'Neill** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to maximise social mobility and to reduce isolation in rural communities through the provision of public transport. (AQO 555/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** Under the Rural Transport Fund, which has a primary objective of reducing social exclusion in rural areas by improving or providing new transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility, my department currently provides support to 16 Rural Community Transport Partnerships to offer a range of specialised services to their members. These services complement the existing conventional public transport and provide transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility living in rural areas throughout the North.

Following a review of the Fund, my Department introduced a voucher based scheme in April 2009 which now allows groups of 16 or more members to avail of RTF services previously unavailable due to the limited carrying capacity of partnerships' vehicles. In addition new Dial-A-Lift and Assisted Rural Travel Pilot Schemes were introduced on 1 December 2009. The Dial-A-Lift scheme aims to ensure that transport services supported by the RTF and provided by the partnerships are made available to individual rural dwellers who need them most. The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme has been introduced as a pilot scheme, until March 2011, with the assistance of the

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The scheme allows individual members of the partnerships who hold valid Smart Passes to travel free or for half fare on Dial a Lift services.

My department also supports Translink to maintain a network of rural routes across the North that would otherwise be uneconomic to run.

### Regional Development Strategy: Airports

**Mr M McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Regional Development the extent to which local airports will feature as economic gateways in the revised Regional Development Strategy. (AQO 556/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department recognises the importance of local airports as economic gateways for regional development. In reviewing the Regional Development Strategy I am giving consideration to the way in which all our gateways can contribute to economic growth. It will also be important to consider the connections to and from them.

### Public Transport Reform

**Mr J O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide an update on his Department's consultation on the Reform of Public Transport, and to outline the key proposals. (AQO 557/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's consultation on the reform of public transport was launched on 9 November 2009 and will conclude on 5 February 2010. As part of the consultation process, my Department is holding eleven public meetings across the North. Five of these meetings took place in December and a further six are to take place in January.

The main proposal of the reform is the establishment of a public transport agency within the Department for Regional Development. The agency would be responsible for designing and managing public transport services and securing their provision from public transport operators, including Translink. In addition, the agency would regulate public transport, including fares, and control public transport service permits. It would designate bus and rail stations as shared facilities so that they can be used by the passengers of all licensed operators. The agency would also develop and agree local transport plans in consultation with the planned new local authorities.

### Easibus Service, Bangor

**Mr P Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in reconsidering the provision of an Easibus service for Bangor. (AQO 558/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** I understand that of the two buses currently operating, one bus will be withdrawn on 1 February 2010 and the other will continue to operate Easibus services by serving two routes on three days per week and the other two routes on the remaining two days per week. However, from the end of June when the Department's funding ends, all Easibus services will cease.

Translink has informed me that it will continue to look at its services to see whether changes could be made to mitigate the effects of the Easibus withdrawal.

### A5 Dual Carriageway: Socio-economic Benefits

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the expected socio-economic benefits of the A5 project, apart from the road itself. (AQO 559/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** The socio-economic benefits expected of the proposed A5 Western Transport Corridor project include: the bypassing of towns and villages, improved and more reliable journey times and safer roads. In turn, this will assist the operation and development of existing businesses, and make local areas more attractive for inward investment.

Based on my Department's Roads Service's current traffic models, which are to be refined later this year, it is expected that these benefits will accrue over £1.1 billion to the economy, over the standard 60 year assessment

period. It is also expected that over 250 jobs, associated with new businesses, will be created in addition to those jobs created during the construction stage of the project.

### Roads: Salt and Grit levels

**Mr G Savage** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the levels of salt and grit deposits currently available to Roads Service. (AQO 560/10)

**Minister for Regional Development:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that, as of 5 January 2010, it was holding 10,331 tonnes of salt.

Roads Service has a contract with Salt Sales in Carrickfergus for the supply of salt, and is currently replenishing its stocks.

## DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Benefit Appeal Tribunals

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total amount paid to panel members of benefit appeal tribunals in 2009, broken down by constituency. (AQW 3607/10)

**Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie):** The information requested is not available on a calendar year or constituency basis. The table below provides the total amount payable to panel members of benefit appeal tribunals by financial year to November 2009, the latest date for which figures are available.

Total Cost 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009	£2,147,822.25 (gross)
Total Cost 1 April 2009 – November 2009	£1,450,964.42 (gross)

### Benefit Appeal Tribunals

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Social Development how much each panel member is paid for each benefit appeal tribunal hearing. (AQW 3608/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** Panel members are paid on a half day sessional basis, with each session comprising a minimum of two and up to a maximum of four hearings, depending on complexity. The current fees payable to panel members are detailed below.

	Fee per session £
Legal Member (Chairman where more than one member on the panel)	206
Medical Member (GP)	151
Medical Consultant	185.50
Financial Member	151
Member with experience of disability	96

### Cold Weather Payments

**Mr A Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development if people who are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance qualify for cold weather payments. (AQW 3670/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** To qualify for Cold Weather Payment a person must be receiving State Pension Credit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-based) or Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) and, in addition, have one of the following:

- A relevant pensioner or disability premium;
- Child Tax Credit which includes a disability or severe disability element;
- A child under the age of 5 years;
- An applicable amount of Employment and Support Allowance which includes either the support component or the work-related activity component.

Those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Disability Benefit only would not qualify for a payment.

### **DSD Expenditure: North Antrim**

**Mr I Paisley Jnr** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on departmental expenditure in North Antrim during the current financial year. (AQO 562/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** In the financial year to date, projects have been approved totalling –

- £404,847 in respect of the Community Development Programme;
- £1,396,300 in respect of Urban Regeneration; and
- £15m in respect of Housing.

This amounts to a total of £16,801,147 for the North Antrim constituency. This does not include expenditure on Warm Homes as it is not possible to disaggregate such expenditure by parliamentary constituency, but I have no doubt North Antrim had its share. While I appreciate that the Member has a particular interest in his North Antrim constituency, it remains a fact that the vast bulk of my Department's resources are targeted at people in greatest need and that general criterion overrides political or administrative boundaries.

### **Social Housing: Costs**

**Mr M McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the £160,000 spent per social household in terms of value for money and to provide a breakdown of how the £160,000 is spent and how much is paid to each developer. (AQO 565/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** Mr Speaker, can I thank the Member for his question, albeit I am not entirely sure what the question is alluding to so I trust the Member will excuse me if I answer somewhat generically and I am sure he will use his supplementary to follow up if my answer does not cover that which he perhaps expected.

For the benefit of members, the question asks me for an assessment of the “£160,000 spent per social household” and then “How much is paid to each developer”.

I don't recognise the £160,000 figure – the average cost to DSD of a social house is £88,000. Obviously, this varies depending on the location and the house type.

My Department assesses the value for money aspect of each and every scheme through a benchmark calculation called Total Cost Indicators or TCI.

This formula is based on actual data taken at any given time from activity in the land and property market and produces a guide price for any development based on its specific location and the type of dwellings being delivered.

This applies irrespectively of whether the housing is being built from new or acquired ‘off the shelf’. The Calculations are flexible enough to meet any type of unit in any location acquired through all procurement routes.

These figures are reviewed twice yearly to ensure that fluctuations in the housing market are taken into account as I am conscious that particularly in a decreasing market, we need to ensure we continue to pay only that which represents current market values. But I want to assure the Member and this House that whether a social house is newbuild or off-the-shelf we only purchase where it is the right house in the right place at the right price.

## Voluntary and Community Groups: Funding

**Mr D McNarry** asked the Minister for Social Development what advice her Department is giving to voluntary and community groups regarding the level of Government funding for charities in the short and medium terms. (AQO 566/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** My Department greatly values the vital services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations across Northern Ireland. In terms of providing funding to the sector, I have tried to increase the focus on supporting services as opposed to funding posts. It is clear, however, that the current financial climate presents significant challenges to both government departments and to the sector in terms of future funding and delivery of these services.

I am committed to bidding for sufficient levels of funding to sustain these important services during the next Comprehensive Spending Review period. All Ministers will, however, be required to make difficult decisions and ensure that resources are used in the most effective way. There is also an onus on voluntary and community sector organisations to work together in providing more integrated and efficient services so that they make Government funding go as far as possible. Naturally my Department has advised the sector of the financial challenges that lie ahead.

## Mixed Housing

**Dr S Farry** asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on the development of mixed housing. (AQO 567/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** I thank the Member for his question. I provided the Member with an update in November on the development of mixed housing and detailed the twin track approach I have adopted to achieve the vision of a shared future, firstly through the Social Housing Development Programme and secondly through the Shared Neighbourhood Programme.

To date, this approach has delivered four shared development schemes located in Enniskillen, Lisburn, Banbridge and Sion Mills with more to follow this year. I remain firmly committed to exploring new and innovative ways of securing a shared future in housing whilst continuing to meet housing need.

As I reported in November, the Shared Neighbourhood Programme, launched in August 2008 as a three year pilot programme, is aimed at supporting and encouraging 30 shared neighbourhoods, in existing estates, across Northern Ireland. To date, 16 housing areas have agreed to participate in the Programme, with the remaining 14 areas to be announced in the coming months.

I have always maintained that shared future housing will be my priority where it is desirable, practicable and safe. It is not simply a matter of providing more homes but rather about changing hearts and minds. This takes time and requires meaningful, and sometimes protracted, consultation within and between communities. However, I can assure you that achieving a shared future remains high on my agenda and I am looking at ways to take it to the next level.

But, as I have stated previously, housing initiatives alone cannot tackle our problems of sectarianism and division. In my view, the successful achievement of a shared future, based on equality and mutual respect, goes beyond the realm of housing and is an action to be addressed by the entire Northern Ireland Executive.

I recently hosted 14 public meetings across the North where many people who attended demonstrated a real appetite for tackling this biggest barrier to achieving a society at peace with itself. Very shortly I will report, my findings to other Ministers on how this work should be progressed.

## Social Housing: Portadown

**Mr D Simpson** asked the Minister for Social Development for an outline of progress on social housing provision in the Watson Street / Edenderry area of Portadown. (AQO 568/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Watson Street/Edenderry area of Portadown is located within the local housing area identified by the Housing Executive as 'Portadown 2.' The projected need, as identified by the Housing Executive, in this area over the next five years is for 30 homes. These will be delivered over two sites. The first is for 20 units at Mahon Park, and the second is for 10 units at Hanover Street/Queen Street.

Clanmil Housing Association is taking forward the Mahon Park scheme which involves the purchase of former MOD housing. South Ulster Housing Association is taking forward the second scheme which involves rehabilitation/infill proposals at a number of town centre locations.

Both schemes are in the current Social Housing Development Programme and if they cannot for whatever reason deliver this year, they will be automatically rolled forward into next year's Programme.

### Social Housing: Funding

**Mr T Lunn** asked the Minister for Social Development for the up-to-date position on social housing funding. (AQO 570/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The economic downturn with the near collapse of capital receipts left a huge hole in the housing budget and although the Executive has regularly allocated additional funds to housing it has not been enough to close the gap. When I launched the New Housing Agenda in February 2008, I made it clear that I would seek to bring forward greater levels of Private Finance to complement the resources already committed from the public purse. I am continuing to explore a number of innovative options to fund the Housing Agenda, some of which have been successfully implemented.

Grant to Housing Associations has been reduced by approximately 10%, in effect requiring Housing Associations to contribute even greater levels of Private Finance in the delivery of new social homes. This means that we will make our money go further.

The grant funding of £15 million that I have provided to the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association has, for the first time, enabled it to attract its own significant private investment of £48 million to deliver affordable housing, and the Ulster Bank has agreed to work with the Co-ownership Housing Association in making mortgages without deposits available to applicants.

My officials are working closely with the Housing Executive to develop the social housing development programme to build, increasingly, on land already in public ownership, which will reduce the land-cost element of the Development Programme and allow us to build more homes with the same amount of money. The European Investment Bank has agreed to invest a record £30 million this year in five Housing Associations to deliver a range of new schemes right across Northern Ireland. This investment will complement the funding I have already made available and will support the delivery of 1750 new homes this year, our largest total for a decade.

I have been extremely innovative financially in the purchase of ex-military houses, particularly at Pond Park in Lisburn, where I have achieved tremendous value for the taxpayer.

Despite sound financial management and innovation the financial outlook for housing remains extremely difficult. The dependency on receipts will always undermine the housing capital programme and it is only when the two are decoupled that housing can be put on a firm financial footing.

### Private Sector Housing Grants

**Mr B McElduff** asked the Minister for Social Development how many applicants for private sector housing grants in the West Tyrone constituency have been categorised under 'exceptional circumstances' as eligible for immediate funding. (AQO 571/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** To date the Housing Executive has considered 263 cases under exceptional circumstances for all the Grants Offices and of these it has been agreed that 186 cases can be considered for grant aid. For the West Tyrone constituency, covering the Strabane and Omagh District Council areas, the Housing Executive has considered 9 cases and I am pleased to say that all 9 can be considered for grant aid.

### Warm Homes Scheme

**Mr K McCarthy** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Warm Homes Scheme. (AQO 573/10)

**Minister for Social Development:** The Warm Homes Scheme is my Department's main programme in tackling fuel poverty. The Warm Homes Scheme was been hugely popular and very successful since its introduction in 2001. Over £118 million has been spent making in excess of 71,000 households warmer.

Following a competitive tendering process the new Warm Homes Scheme contract was awarded on 1 July and H&A Mechanical Services Ltd and Bryson Charitable Group are the new scheme managers. My officials have stringent monitoring arrangements in place with both the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who are responsible for administering the scheme and the scheme managers. Monthly monitoring meetings are in place at which scheme managers provide detailed reports on progress to date against targets.

As with the award of any new contract, there is inevitably a settling in period. However, I am very pleased with the progress both scheme managers have made to date. At the end of December, 6885 successful applications have been received.

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