

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 17 September 2010

Volume 55, No WA1

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 17 September 2010

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Programme for Government

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline their plans for the development of the next Programme for Government and how it will be integrated with the forthcoming Budget.
(AQW 67/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): We are aware that the term of the 2008-2011 Programme for Government is drawing to a close and we have been developing plans to produce a refreshed programme that will sit appropriately with the new budget and investment strategy. We also wish to take account of the impending Assembly election in May 2011.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr G Savage asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the continued need for the Strategic Investment Board.
(AQW 112/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: To date the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) has played a key role in assisting the Executive implement its plans for Infrastructure Investment. SIB has been responsible for the development of the Investment Strategy 2008-18 and has worked with departments to deliver unprecedented levels of capital investment amounting to £3.5bn in the last two financial years. We expect that figure will increase to £5bn by the end of the current budget period.

We fully recognise that, as the challenges of government evolve, departments and non-departmental public bodies alike must adapt to meet them. We are determined to ensure that all those organisations under our governance remain fit for purpose and deliver value for money. Indeed, a review of SIB has just been completed and we will shortly be considering its findings to ensure that the Executive is able to take forward infrastructure investment in the most effective way.

Attendance at Executive Meetings

Dr S Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail each Executive Minister's attendance at Executive meetings during the (i) 2006-07; (ii) 2007-08; (iii) 2008-09; and (iv) 2009-10 sessions.
(AQW 144/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is not our practice to disclose details of Executive business. The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Migrant Workers

Ms A Lo asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline progress on the creation of an emergency fund to assist destitute migrant workers who have no recourse to public funds, as suggested by the Immigration Sub-Group of the Racial Equality Forum.

(AQW 147/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Immigration Sub-group, chaired by the Law Centre (NI) has met on three occasions, most recently on 9th September. The sub-group has agreed a number of key areas of work, including issues around groups and individuals with no recourse to public funds and the related difficulties faced by both the statutory and voluntary sector. It is expected that the group will report back on their recommendations on this issue to the Racial Equality Panel and Forum in the near future and we would not wish to prejudge this work. These recommendations will also be submitted to us for consideration.

The group will, of course, also take an interest from the devolved perspective in other aspects of immigration policy that is developed by the new coalition government in Westminster, in particular the potential impact on the region of proposals for an immigration cap.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr J Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment on the Draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy.

(AQO 9/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) agreed by the Executive on 22 July 2010 provides the framework for co-ordination across government departments for action against sectarianism, racism and all forms of hate.

The consultation on the draft CSI, which contains a high level Equality Statement, was launched on 27 July. The consultation comprises a wide range of public meetings and sectoral meetings which will be held at various locations across Northern Ireland throughout September. Details of the public meetings, including venues and times, are available on the OFMDFM website.

The consultation document invites everyone to comment on the range of issues covered by the draft CSI Programme. This includes any equality implications and the type of data/information that should be considered when assessing and monitoring equality of opportunity issues relating to the Programme.

It will not be possible to comment on any findings until the consultation closes on 29th October 2010.

In addition to OFMDFM's strategic level EQIA, Departments will screen all policies and programmes which support the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration and undertake full equality impact assessments where screening indicates that this is necessary.

Given the nature of the issues being addressed and the wider constituency involved, we hope and expect the consultation to produce many interesting and considered outcomes that will contribute to our overarching policy of achieving 'a peaceful, fair and prosperous society here with respect for the rule of law'.

Once the responses to the consultation, including those relevant to the EQIA, have been collated they will be taken on board for any revised text as appropriate.

The redrafted programme will again be considered by the Assembly Committee and the Executive before it is formally launched.

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

Washington Investment Conference

Mr P Butler asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the economic investment conference to be hosted by Secretary of State Clinton in October 2010 in Washington.
(AQO 8/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Economic Investment Conference will take place in Washington DC on 19 October 2010.

The one-day conference will be focused on direct business discussions and will also have a sectoral focus. The key objective will be to allow very senior executives from American companies to hear, at first hand, why an investment here makes sound commercial sense. The lead body for arrangements for the event is the United States' Department of State and we are grateful to Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and to Declan Kelly, the US Economic Envoy, for their willingness to host this event to promote investment here.

It is aimed at very senior executives from approximately a dozen American companies that have not yet made investments here. They will join an equally small number of Chief Executive Officers and senior representatives from existing American investors. This latter group will talk about their own positive experience of setting up their business operations here.

Child Abuse

Mr W Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action they intend to take following their recent meeting with victims of institutional child abuse.
(AQO 10/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We met with a group representing the victims of institutional abuse on Thursday 22 July 2010.

The group had wanted to discuss a range of issues such as an apology on behalf of the State, establishing a public enquiry and an assurance that no child would be put in a similar situation today.

You will appreciate that there are some very complex legal and relationship issues involved with this matter and in light of this and as a follow on to the meeting on 22 July, we have asked our officials, pending an Executive decision, to urgently co-ordinate the taking forward of this issue with the other relevant departments.

Actual policy responsibility for such institutions here is split across what are today the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice.

Whilst mindful of the legal constraints that need to be identified and given the age of some of the victims and the time they have carried this suffering, we are determined to move on this matter as quickly as possible.

Consequently we have agreed that our Department will take the lead in progressing the matter and will form a working group with those departments that have operational responsibility for the issues.

Pending the outcome of the working group, we have directed officials and advisers to pursue the following steps:

- Arrange a meeting with the group to identify their needs and how some might be met in the short term;
- examine ways of providing financial support to the group as it acts as a conduit between those who suffered institutional abuse; and
- in conjunction with the group, bring forward proposals on the shape and form of any inquiry and to engage with all concerned on its terms of reference. This work has already commenced.

We wish to ensure that the way forward will be the right one for all those affected by this extremely difficult and sensitive matter.

Discrimination and Equality Unit

Mr S Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to explain the necessity for expenditure of over £1.5 million per year on the discrimination and equality unit, given that enforcement in relation to disability discrimination is the responsibility of the courts and tribunals.

(AQO 11/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: US Investment

Mr J O'Dowd asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the investments arising from their recent visits to the United States, given the economic downturn and the need to create economic growth.

(AQO 12/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Our visit to the United States during March was one of the most successful visits we have undertaken in promoting the Northern Ireland economy. We undertook an extensive programme of engagements to promote inward investment opportunities, trade development and tourism providing us with unparalleled access to some of the most senior decision-makers in corporate America.

We met current and prospective investors, as well as a range of senior business and political leaders who can influence investment decisions here. Negotiations on inward investment projects are, by their very nature, confidential and this is particularly important in the current financial climate when the international competition is very stiff.

We met with the senior staff of Allstate, one of our most important financial services investors and with representatives from Caterpillar which has a major manufacturing plant in Larne. The First Minister and DETI Minister also visited the Hughes Tool Company in Texas. We used these opportunities to cement relationships and to demonstrate our personal appreciation for the commitment which the companies have made to the local economy.

We were particularly pleased to see the announcement of the project by Q1 Labs during our visit which is set to create 50 high quality ICT jobs. This shows our ability to attract high quality investment in the key sectors of ICT, financial service and business services.

With regard to the prospective investors, the work of follow-up is being undertaken by Invest NI staff in the United States and by its senior management team here. We are confident that further economic benefits will emerge from our engagement in the US.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr K McCarthy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the consultation on the Draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy.

(AQO 14/11)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The core of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration was agreed on 23rd February 2010. Following further development of the draft programme, including detailed discussions with all Departments, the Executive agreed the draft Programme. The public consultation on the draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration was launched on Tuesday 27 July 2010 and all responses to the consultation must be returned by the end of October 2010.

A series of public consultation events will take place at a range of venues throughout September, the details of which are included in the table below.

Date	Venue
Wednesday 1st September	City Hotel, Derry/Londonderry 7.45pm-10pm
Monday 6th September	Grosvenor House, Belfast 7.45pm-10pm

Date	Venue
Tuesday 7th September Newry	Arts Centre, Newry 7.45pm-10pm
Thursday 9th September	Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown 7.45pm-10pm
Monday 13th September	Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena 7.45pm-10pm
Wednesday 15th September	Clinton Centre, Enniskillen 7.45pm-10pm
Tuesday 21st September	Town Hall, Newtownards 7.45pm-10pm
Wednesday 22nd September	Seagoe Hotel Portadown 7.45pm-10pm
Monday 27th September	Armagh City Hotel 7.45pm-10pm
Wednesday 29th September	Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh 7.45pm-10pm

Copies of the consultation document can be obtained online via the OFMDFM website at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/community-relations.htm> or on the NI Direct Website at www.nidirect.gov.uk. Hard copies are available by contacting officials at 028 9052 3194 or by e-mailing policysec@ofmdfmi.gov.uk. Alternative formats of the document can be made available on request.

Information provided in response to this consultation may be published on the OFMDFM website or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation.

The consultation document includes detail of a high-level Equality Impact Statement and the consultation will be taking the views of the public on any equality implications and the type of data/information that should be considered when assessing and monitoring equality of opportunity issues relating to the Programme.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Phytophthora Ramorum

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's plans to tackle *Phytophthora Ramorum* in the (i) short; (ii) medium; and (iii) long terms; and what action she is taking to control its spread.

(AQW 88/11)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): The DARD Contingency Plan for Serious Pest/Plant Health Incidents has been instigated in connection with the outbreaks of the disease in Japanese larch caused by pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P. ramorum*). Incident Management Team (IMT) meetings have taken place on five occasions to date. A statutory notice has been served by DARD Quality Assurance Branch (QAB) on the private woodland owner to fell an infected area of Japanese larch on the private woodland site and letters sent from QAB to Forest Service, requiring felling of infected areas of trees in Woodburn and Ballyboley forests. The statutory notice and letters require felling to be completed by stated dates and outline bio security guidance to be followed. Harvesting plans have been prepared for Woodburn and Ballyboley forests and harvesting commenced in Woodburn on 16 August 2010 and in Ballyboley on 13 September 2010. Felling of infected areas of Japanese larch is the best method for controlling this disease and preventing further damage.

Forest Service, in conjunction with QAB, have published details of a licensing system incorporating bio-security measures, which will permit road haulage and processing of *P. ramorum* affected wood from infected areas.

Forest Service woodlands remain open to the public and notices have been erected at infected woodland at Woodburn and Ballyboley forests, indicating how visitors can help minimise the spread of the disease.

I have convened a meeting to inform stakeholders about the Department's approach to the outbreak, actions to date, and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions. Forest Service has also met the forestry industry representative body, ConFor, to update them about the situation and answer questions.

Forest Service has stepped up surveillance of Japanese larch woodland throughout the country and woodlands exhibiting suspicious symptoms have been sampled and sent for analysis. Plans are in place for helicopter surveillance as soon as weather permits. Owners and managers of private woodland have been alerted to the disease outbreak through a Departmental press release, and a number of those likely to have Japanese larch stands have been contacted directly. QAB have commenced surveillance of host plants in a 3 km buffer outside the three affected areas. Surveillance of Rhododendron, the main host species for Pramorom prior to it's diagnosis in Japanese larch is also ongoing.

After harvesting an infected site, it will remain infected for several years following clearance, because the pathogen can remain viable in the soil for some time. It is still too early to be able to give firm recommendations on tree species to be replanted on infected sites or tree species for general replanting, however Forest Service will make this available as soon as scientific evidence becomes available. Forest Service will recommence surveillance of Japanese larch woodland following bud burst in spring 2011.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

50 Metre Swimming Pool Planned for Bangor

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why the new 50 metre swimming pool planned for Bangor will not be ready in time for the 2012 Olympic Games.

(AQW 23/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): The objective of the 50 metre swimming pool project is to deliver a high quality sporting facility which will create a lasting legacy for future generations of athletes of all levels of ability and indeed the wider community and particularly young people. It was never the intention that it be used in the delivery of the 2012 Olympic Games.

Bearing in mind the significant investment of public funds in this project, it was critical that the necessary time was afforded to ensure fit for purpose design, compliant procurement and sustainability.

There have been some delays on the delivery of this significant development which originally was due to be completed in early 2012.

Delays included design adjustments identified at business case stage and negotiation on funding percentages between North Down Borough Council and my Department.

I also understand that the first successful tenderer for the construction withdrew and North Down Borough Council was obliged, as project managers, to source another construction company to take forward the project.

Despite these delays, the current estimate for completion of the 50 metre swimming pool is June 2012.

Sports Funding

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure an equitable balance of sports funding on the basis of gender.

(AQW 26/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport in Northern Ireland including the distribution of funding. In terms of gender, SNI recognises there is an imbalance between the number of men and women participating in sport on a regular

basis. As a result, SNI's Business Plan for 2009/10 has six corporate outcomes, the third of which is "increased participation in sport and physical recreation, especially among under-represented groups". These groups include women and girls, people with a disability, people aged over 50 and people from an ethnic minority background.

The 2009/10 Business Plan was based on a gross budgeted investment of £34.3m. Over 50% of this budget was allocated to programmes that contributed towards SNI's Corporate Outcome 3. Furthermore, all participation based projects include an assessment process that ensures women and girls and other under-represented groups are target beneficiaries of SNI investment. All SNI policies and programmes are also subject to a robust Section 75 screening process.

Ulster Scots Agency

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of the amount spent on hospitality by the Ulster Scots Agency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 80/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency's financial year is based on a calendar year. The table below shows the Agency's spend on hospitality for the last five financial years.

The figures shown in the table for 2008 and 2009 are from the unaudited financial statements. The figures for 2005, 2006 and 2007 are from the audited financial statements.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Ulster-Scots Agency	£1,557	£2,360	£2,234	£4,211	£1,240

Illegal Fishing in Lough Neagh

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps his Department is taking to prevent illegal fishing in Lough Neagh.

(AQW 87/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department assumed direct responsibility for the enforcement of fisheries protection legislation in the DCAL jurisdiction on 1 June 2009. Since then DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers (FPO's) have been organised into teams in 4 operational areas covering Northern, South Eastern and South Western areas and a unit was established to focus on the enforcement of fisheries legislation on Lough Neagh.

Under the management of Senior Fisheries Officers, FPO's carry out regular patrols on land and water on and around Lough Neagh and its tributaries. The Lough Neagh unit, augmented by other protection staff as required, patrol Lough Neagh using a number of craft including the Fisheries Protection Vessel Vigilare based at the Derrycrow boat house on the southern shore of Lough Neagh. A total of 61 boat patrols were carried out on Lough Neagh from 1 June 2009 to 31 March 2010.

Intelligence led operations are carried out to detect breaches of fisheries legislation. All illegal fishing gear/catches are seized and from 1 June 2009 to 31 March 2010 a total of 8,500m of illegal nets were seized in operations on Lough Neagh. Any persons found to be acting illegally are reported with a view to prosecution.

DCAL FPO's also carry out regular inspections at commercial dealers, fish retail outlets, hotels and restaurants to ensure that all fish being sold have been legally caught.

Loughmacrory Lough

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline his Department's efforts to re-stock Loughmacrory Lough; and to detail any other measures taken by his Department to support

and assist the local community, including anglers, to increase access to, and maximise the amenity of, Loughmacrory Lough.

(AQW 140/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Loughmacrory Lough is owned by NI Water and leased to Loughmacrory Community Development Association (LCDA). The Lough is a private fishery and not part of the Public Angling Estate. DCAL do not routinely stock private fisheries. However the Department can offer LCDA advice or assistance with its development and will consider stocking on a cost recovery basis.

LCDA were successful in obtaining an EU Peace II Grant under Measure 1.2a (Water Based Tourism) administered by DCAL. The application from LCDA was jointly funded by Omagh District Council (£10,000), Environment Heritage Service (£59,000) and DCAL / EU (£144,889) to provide an access pathway around the Lough, to include seating, litter bins, fishing jetties and a canoe launching jetty. All works were completed in 2006.

Odyssey Trust

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) how much funding his Department has awarded to the Odyssey Trust in each of the last 5 years; (ii) what the funding has been used for; and (iii) what role his Department has with the Odyssey Trust.

(AQW 320/11)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The attached table details the information requested in part (i) of the question.

FUNDING ALLOCATED TO AND DRAWN DOWN BY OTC OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS.

Year	Programme Allocated	Capital Allocated	Total	Programme Drawn Down	Capital Drawn Down	Total
2005/06	£360k	£150k	£510k	£360k	£150k	£510k
2006/07	£300k	£150k	£450k	£300k	Nil	£300k
2007/08	Nil	£150k	£150k	Nil	Nil	Nil
2008/09	£600k	£400k	£1m	£400k	£400k	£800k
2009/10	£600k	£400k	£1m	£500k	£400k	£900k

- (ii) The Department provided the above funding to the Odyssey Trust Company to help with the provision of a Science Centre, W5. The current agreement is for DCAL funding to transfer via Odyssey Trust.
- (iii) The Trustees of the Odyssey Trust Company Ltd are responsible for the provision and monitoring of a Science Centre and the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare. DCAL have observer status on the Board.

Department of Education

Grammar School Entrance Test

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage of each entrance test grade accepted by each grammar school for the intake in the 2010/11 academic year.

(AQW 41/11)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Tá úsáid scrúduithe éalaithe iontrála ag scoileanna gramadaí contrártha do threoir mo Roinne ar aistriú iarbhunscoile. Mar sin, níl baint ag mo Roinn le riarachán na

scrúduithe éalaithe, agus níl teacht aici ar eolas faoi ghráid scrúduithe a fhaigheann daltaí atá ag lorg iontrála i scoileanna gramadaí.

The use of breakaway entrance tests by grammar schools is in contravention of my Department's guidance on post-primary transfer. As such, my Department has no involvement in the administration of breakaway tests, nor does it have access to information about test grades obtained by pupils seeking admission to grammar schools.

AS and A Levels Enrolments

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education how many pupils enrolled for AS and A Levels in each of the last five years.

(AQW 84/11)

Minister of Education: Ní bhailíonn an Roinn eolas ó scoileanna ar líon na ndaltaí atá rollaithe do Leibhéal AS nó Leibhéal A . Taifeadann an Roinn sonraí ar líon na ndaltaí atá rollaithe do scrúduithe Leibhéal A, áfach. Tá na figiúirí seo soláthraithe sa tábla thíos:

The Department does not collect information from schools on the number of pupils enrolled for AS and A levels. However, the Department records details of the number of pupils entered for A level examinations. These figures are provided in the table below:

Academic year	Number of pupils entered for A level examinations
2008/09	12,053
2007/08	11,579
2006/07	11,514
2005/06	11,758
2004/05	11,686

Removing Children from School During Term-time

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education whether parents or guardians can be prosecuted for removing children from school during term-time for holidays; and, if so, how many prosecutions have been brought in the last year.

(AQW 93/11)

Minister of Education: De ghnáth, ní ionchúisítear tuismitheoirí mar gheall ar neamhfhreastal a bpáistí ar scoile ach i gcásanna ina dteiptear ar idirghabhálacha chun freastal rialta a chur chun cinn.

Prosecution of parents for the non-attendance of their children at school is normally only undertaken when other interventions to promote regular attendance have failed.

A one-off holiday taken during term time, in itself, would not warrant a referral for poor attendance to the Education Welfare Service. The normal criterion for a referral is when attendance falls to around 85% attendance. Schools can make referrals at any time when they have concerns about a pupil's pattern of attendance and this might include a regular pattern of family holidays during term time.

No prosecutions have been brought on these grounds in the last academic year.

Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Education what plans her Department has to provide capital funding for the new build at Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus.

(AQO 20/11)

Minister of Education: Tá Woodburn Primary School ar cheann de roinnt tionscadal caipitil ar aithníodh go bhfuil fadhbanna tromchúiseacha cóiríochta ann, ach nár fógraíodh go raibh sé ag fáil cistithe.

Woodburn Primary School is one of a number of capital projects which have been identified as having serious accommodation issues, but which have not been announced for funding.

I have already highlighted the historic underinvestment in the schools estate. I am pleased to say that the Executive recognised this and made available some £13m in the June monitoring round. This has allowed me to put another 12 projects on site, also to purchase a site for a school to address unmet need and to undertake some much needed minor works.

I want to build schools and I have demonstrated that, when resources are available, I can deliver new schools. Since May 2007 the Department has completed 48 major schools' projects representing an investment of around £404million in our schools' estate. A further 8 major capital school projects are currently on site representing a further investment of over £108m.

The Department currently has 7 major works schemes on site representing a capital investment in the schools estate of some £146m. There are a further 2 major capital works being procured (Lagan College, Tor Bank Special School) which have yet to commence on site.

I will continue to press my Executive Colleagues for additional resources for education but until I get these resources schools, such as Woodburn Primary, will not progress as quickly as all involved would wish.

Schools: Maintenance

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the impact of the backlog in the school maintenance budget on the schools estate.

(AQO 21/11)

Minister of Education: Go stairiúil, nór cuireadh go leor infheistithe isteach sna scoileanna. Ó cheapadh mar Aire Oideachais mé áfach, tá ocht mórthionscadal caipitil scoile is daichead curtha i gcrích againn, is é sin infheistiú san eastát scoile de thart ar Cheithre Chéad is a Cheathair milliún punt. Chomh maith leis sin, chuir mé Ochtó milliún punt sa bhreis ar fáil le haghaidh cothabhála scoile le trí bliana anuas.

There has been historic failure to invest sufficiently in our schools. However, in the time since I have been Minister for Education, we have completed 48 major capital school projects, representing an investment of around £404 million in our schools' estate. In the last 3 years I have also provided over £80 million for school maintenance.

I am acutely aware of the importance of ensuring that the schools' estate is appropriately maintained to prevent unacceptable deterioration of the buildings and to ensure our young people and teachers have a learning environment that is kept fit for purpose.

I have continually highlighted the need for the investment in our schools estate to be prioritised and protected and that significant investment is needed in our schools' estate to tackle the high levels of maintenance backlog.

In the current year I have allocated an additional £10m for maintenance in 2010/11 and have bid for additional resources under the 2010 funding process.

My record shows that if I am provided with the necessary funding, I will spend it efficiently and effectively.

A Levels

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the number of students achieving A Level grades A* to C compared to the rest of the United Kingdom.

(AQO 22/11)

Minister of Education: Déanaim comhghairdeas le daoine óga an tuaiscirt faoina gcuid gnóthachtálacha sna scrúduithe A-leibhéal.

I congratulate our young people on their successes at A level.

Their results reflect not only the hard work that they have put into their studies over the years, but also the dedication, help and support provided by teachers and parents.

I do not think that assessing us against Wales, Scotland and England is useful, as these countries face similar challenges to us in becoming top performing education systems on an international stage. Countries such as Finland regularly top international comparisons of performance in reading, mathematics and science. Comparing A level results has a particular danger as it leaves out the long tail of underachievement that is a challenging characteristic of our system. Each year more than 9,500 pupils leave our schools after 12 years of compulsory education without achieving the benchmark standard of 5 or more good GCSEs including maths and Gaeilge or English. Addressing this issue will remain a focus for me, and will provide a basis for allowing a wider range of pupils the opportunity to progress to studies at A level, or to move into further training or employment.

Schools: Redundancies

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what assessment she has made of the potential redundancies among teaching and non-teaching staff in the 2010-2015 budget period and whether she will prioritise her budget to avoid such redundancies.

(AQO 23/11)

Minister of Education: Creidim go bhfuil sé ró-luath le bheith ag déanamh tuairimíochta faoi shonraí an choigiltis sula ndéanfar dul chun cinn ar an obair a thionscain an Coiste Feidhmiúcháin ar an lá ar shiúl, agus sula ndéanfar an obair chomhthreomhar ar Chlár nua don Rialtas.

I believe that it is premature to speculate details on savings before work initiated by the Executive on its away day is progressed and parallel work on a new Programme for Government is taken forward.

I am keen that any reductions to education services agreed by the Executive will be applied in a way that protects frontline services as far as possible I recognise that there will be difficult decisions to be made in this Budget process but I am very clear about the critical need to invest in education. The economic argument for this is clear. We must raise standards, invest in skills and employability if we are to flourish economically. These are the arguments I have been making, and which are being accepted, in the Executive Sub Committee on the economy which is taking forward the work of Richard Barnett in his report.

The Executive will be looking at all options to protect public services as much as possible. We need to look seriously at reducing bureaucracy and the number of public bodies. In this context it is difficult to understand why my proposal to set up ESA and abolish nine bodies and make significant savings is being delayed rather than accelerated.

Project Funding

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Education why funding earmarked for specific projects in 2009/10 has not been released to Education and Library Boards.

(AQO 24/11)

Minister of Education: Leithdháileadh an cistiú iomlán a cuireadh i leataobh a bhí oiriúnach don bhliain airgeadais 2009/10 go díreach ar na scoileanna féin nó tríd na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlann.

All earmarked funding appropriate to the 2009/10 financial year has been allocated either directly to schools or via the Education and Library Boards.

Schools: Building Budget

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to explain the £350 million underspend in the school building budget over recent years at a time when schools in Mid-Ulster are in urgent need of a re-build.
(AQO 25/11)

Minister of Education: Sa dhá bhliain iomlán ina raibh mise mar Aire (2008/09 agus 2009/10) tá 27 scoil nua oscailte ag mo Roinn, is é sin infheistiú de £219.4m punt. Go dtí seo i mbliana, tá 8 scoil nua oscailte ag mo Roinn agus tá 8 scoil eile á dtógáil faoi láthair, is é sin infheistiú breise san eastát scoile de £225.5m.

In the two full years I have been Minister (2008/09 and 2009/10) my Department has opened 27 new schools, representing an investment of £219.4m. So far this year my Department has opened 8 new schools and has 8 more under construction, representing a further investment in the schools' estate of £225.5m.

The member is incorrect in quoting an under-spend figure of £350m across the five year period. This figure is not an under spend but a reflection of the difference between the initial gross budget position for the department and the final out turn figure for the department. The actual under-spend recorded across the period detailed in the Audit Office report is £107m.

School Facilities

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Education what progress her Department has made in facilitating out-of-hours use of the school estate by local communities.
(AQO 26/11)

Minister of Education: Is acmhainní tábhachtacha poiblí iad na scoileanna. Tá mé tiomanta úsáid níos leithne áitribh na scoileanna a chur chun tosaigh le freastal ar riachtanais na ndaltaí, a gcuid tuismitheoirí, a gcuid teaghlach agus an phobail áitiúil.

Schools represent a significant public resource and I am committed to promoting the wider use of school premises in order to serve the needs of pupils, their parents, families and the local community.

My Department has sought to increase community access to school facilities and as a first step in taking this forward, I established a Working Group made up of key educational stakeholders was established to produce a report to outline a set of guidance to schools and make recommendations to help inform policy and operations aimed at enhancing the community use of school premises. The working Group presented its report earlier this year. It contains a wide range of recommendations designed to enhance the community use of schools. As some of the recommendations impact on other agencies and departments, my officials have sought their response, and this process is still underway. Guidance to assist schools in enhancing the community use of school premises will follow in due course.

NIAO Report: 'School Design and Delivery'

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the recent Northern Ireland Audit Office Report 'School Design and Delivery'.
(AQO 27/11)

Minister of Education: Cuirim fáilte roimh phríomhfhionnachtana na tuairisce seo ón Oifig Iniúchóireachta ar Dhearadh agus Sheachadadh Scoile. Aithníonn an tuairisc go raibh mé ábalta na cistí a leithdháileadh orm le haghaidh móroibreacha caipitil le dhá bhliain anuas a úsáid ina n-iomláine.

I welcome the main findings of this report from the Audit Office on School Design and Delivery. The report recognises my achievement of fully utilising the funds allocated to me for major capital works in the last 2 years.

I am also pleased to note that it acknowledges that previous concerns over design quality have been addressed, with clear evidence of improvements in the overall design quality of recently built and refurbished schools.

This report reinforces what I have previously advised the Assembly that as a result of a history of under-investment, a sizeable proportion of the schools' estate does not meet the current Schools Building Handbook standard and has resulted in a sizeable maintenance backlog, standing at c. £290 million.

My officials are currently considering the recommendations set out in the report.

Schools: Admissions

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to review the admissions cap on secondary schools in the North Down area.

(AQO 28/11)

Minister of Education: Athbhreithníonn an Roinn an líon iontrála do gach iar-bhunscoil gach fóimhar.

The Department reviews the admissions number of every post primary school each autumn.

Education Bill

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the Education Bill.

(AQO 29/11)

Minister of Education: Gheall an Coiste Feidhmiúcháin go mbeadh 1 Eanáir ina dháta bunaithe don Údarás nua um Oideachas agus Scileanna (ESA) a ghlacfaidh feidhmeanna na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlann ar láimh. Ní dheachaigh an Bille Oideachais ar aghaidh chuig an chéim bhreithnithe, áfach, cionn is nach ndearna an Coiste Feidhmiúcháin cíoradh ar na leasuithe a bhí curtha síos agamsa, ag an Choiste Oideachais ná ag baill aonair. Creidim go n-aithníonn mo chomhghleacaithe ar an Choiste Feidhmiúcháin an gá le dul ar aghaidh go práinneach leis an leasú riachtanach seo sa riarachán oideachais d'fhonn go bhféadfar an tÚdarás nua seo a bhunú ag an dáta is luaithe is féidir. Leanfaidh na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlann dena bheith ag feidhmiú don idirthréimse roimh bhunú an ESA.

The Executive committed itself to 1 January 2010 as the establishment date for the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) which is to take over the functions of the Education and Library Boards. However, the Education Bill has not proceeded to Consideration Stage because the Executive has yet considered the amendments that have been tabled by the Education Committee, by individual Members and by myself. I trust that my Executive colleagues recognise the need to proceed urgently on this much-needed reform of education administration so that the new authority can be established at the earliest possible date. The Education and Library Boards will continue to operate for the transitional period until the establishment of ESA.

Department for Employment and Learning

Public Sector Spend on Higher Education

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the public sector spend on higher education (a) total; and (b) per capita compared to England, Scotland and Wales, in each of the last three years; and (ii) to provide an estimate of the annual spend on higher education if it were to be brought into line with the per capita spend in (a) England; (b) Scotland; and (c) Wales.

(AQW 64/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The table below sets out the public sector spend on tertiary education for the years 2006/07 to 2008/09 in each of the four UK administrations. The figures come from the HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2010 published in July this year and figures for 2009/10 are not yet available.

	2006/07 outturn (£m)	2007/08 outturn (£m)	2008/09 outturn (£m)
England	8,112	9,366	9,255
Scotland	1,378	1,454	1,411
Wales	508	537	537
Northern Ireland	332	342	332
Total	10,330	11,699	11,535

Figures are also available for per capita spend in each of the three years and these are shown below.

	2006/07 £/capita	2007/08 £/capita	2008/09 £/capita
England	160	183	180
Scotland	269	283	273
Wales	171	180	180
Northern Ireland	191	194	187

You will see that the highest per capita spend is in Scotland but this is due to the fact that there are no student tuition fees in Scotland and government therefore provides more funding to the universities. However, in the other three administrations where tuition fees are levied, Northern Ireland has the highest per capita spend in each of the three years.

To bring Northern Ireland into line with the spend in Scotland, an additional £154 million would have had to be provided in 2008/09. This assumes, of course, that tuition fees would not be levied in Northern Ireland. Alternatively, to bring Northern Ireland into line with either England or Wales in 2008/09, a reduction in spend of around £12.5 million would have been required.

University Places

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students from Northern Ireland applied for a university place in Northern Ireland for each of the last five academic year's, broken down by gender and religious background; and, of these, how many were accepted.

(AQW 86/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the central organisation that processes applications for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges. UCAS do not collect information on religious background.

The table below shows (1) the number of students from Northern Ireland (NI) who applied for at least one full-time undergraduate course at a NI institution through UCAS; and (2) those students from NI accepted to an NI institution - by gender for each of the last five academic years:

		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Applicants	Male	6,166	5,952	5,867	6,442	7,279
	Female	8,724	8,706	8,433	8,569	9,467
	Total	14,890	14,658	14,300	15,011	16,746

		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Accepted Applicants	Male	3,516	3,605	3,837	4,192	*
	Female	4,533	4,978	5,173	5,104	*
	Total	8,049	8,583	9,010	9,296	*

Source: UCAS

Notes: * Comparative final accepted applicant figures for 2010/11 entry will not be available until January 2011.

Students can currently include up to five choices on their UCAS application and there is no preference order. As a result he or she may receive a rejection for one course from a NI institution but, in parallel, receive an offer for a different course within the region. Students may also receive an offer from a NI institution however accept a place elsewhere.

AS and A Level Enrolments in Further and Higher Education Colleges

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students enrolled for AS and A Levels in Further and Higher Education Colleges, in each of the last five years, and the 2010/11 academic year.

(AQW 96/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The tables below detail the number of enrolments for AS and A Levels in Northern Ireland Further and Higher Education Colleges in each of the last five years. The latest enrolment data available are for academic year 2008/09.

Academic year	AS Level	A Level	Total
2004/05	7,210	3,763	10,973
2005/06	6,864	3,545	10,409
2006/07	6,291	3,193	9,484
2007/08	5,105	2,969	8,074
2008/09	4,673	2,561	7,234

Source: Further Education Statistical Record

South Eastern Regional College

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what financial assistance he is making available to the South Eastern Regional College for the 2010/11 academic year, following the cancellation of all A Level courses due to funding pressures.

(AQW 162/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The recurrent budget allocation for South Eastern Regional College for 2010/11 is £25,125,581, an increase of 3.95% on the previous academic year. The College has indicated that no A Level courses have been cancelled this year due to funding pressures. They advise that several courses at the Downpatrick and Lisburn campuses have been cancelled due to insufficient demand and that students affected have been offered places on alternative courses or at a different campus.

South Eastern Regional College

Ms M Ritchie asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he intends to take to ensure that A Level courses are reinstated at the South Eastern Regional College; and to make a statement on the matter.

(AQW 197/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I refer to a previous Priority Written Assembly Question, AQW 162/11, to which I replied on 14th September.

The South Eastern Regional College advises that some courses at its Downpatrick and Lisburn campuses have been cancelled due to insufficient demand, and not due to funding pressures, and that the students affected have been offered places on alternative courses or on the same course at a different campus.

My Department sets high level Public Service Agreement targets in respect of the FE curriculum to be delivered by the FE sector, and agrees broad targets with individual colleges through the annual college development planning process. Among other things, these targets encourage Colleges to deliver Level 3 provision, which includes A Level courses.

However, it is the responsibility of individual colleges to design a curriculum offer to meet the needs of learners and employers in their areas in a cost effect way that ensures best use of public money.

Open University: Vocational Degrees

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what recognition major employers give to vocational degrees obtained from the Open University.

(AQO 35/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Under the terms of the Education (Recognised Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2005, the Open University is granted degree awarding powers by Royal Charter through the Privy Council. This is exactly the same as any other university. As a result degrees from the Open University have exactly the same status as those from other universities.

All higher education providers are required to demonstrate that the qualifications they award are in accordance with the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The main purpose of the Framework is to provide a point of reference for setting and assessing standards in higher education qualifications.

The Open University has a long and impressive track record in helping to improve the skills of the workforce in Northern Ireland.

The suitability of any degree, including vocational degrees, is a matter for individual employers to determine, relative to their particular needs.

Apprenticeships

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures his Department is taking to encourage the uptake and completion of apprenticeships and other similar schemes.

(AQO 36/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of apprenticeship places available is determined by employers in Northern Ireland. In the current economic climate this is challenging and my Department has taken the following steps to encourage the uptake and completion of apprenticeships:

- the Apprenticeship package on offer to employers is attractive, in that the apprentices' directed training costs are paid by the Department;
- progression through the apprenticeship framework is encouraged by the structure of milestone payments and on completion an employer incentive is also paid;
- all-age apprenticeships and provision for those working reduced contracted hours were introduced in September 2008;
- in November 2008 short term contingency arrangements were introduced to allow apprentices who were made redundant due to the economic downturn in the construction, engineering and motor vehicle sectors to continue with training;

- the Department's 2010 ApprenticeshipsNI advertising campaign has had a strong focus on encouraging employers to recruit apprentices and increasing the awareness amongst young people.

Steps to Work

Mr P Frew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the effectiveness of the Core Gateway Scheme under the Steps to Work Programme.

(AQO 37/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Core Gateway course has proved to be an effective way of providing jobsearch assistance to unemployed people taking part in the Steps to Work programme.

A recent survey of Core Gateway participants, undertaken across six Jobs and Benefits office areas, found that 85% of those interviewed stated that Core Gateway was beneficial to them. In particular participants stated that the advice and assistance provided in areas such as completion of application forms, producing a CV and interviewing skills were particularly valuable.

All aspects of the Steps to Work programme, including Core Gateway, are kept under review on an ongoing basis.

Student Support

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the pressures facing the student support budget.

(AQO 38/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has a forecast pressure of £17.6m on the student support budget in this financial year.

The student support budget mainly covers the means tested maintenance grants and loans for students' living expenses and the non-means tested tuition fee loans to meet tuition fees.

The pressures on the student support budget reflect the current economic circumstances and the effect these have had on family income. We face both increasing demand and increases in the level of support payable. For example over the last two academic years the number of students receiving the range of student support available has increased by almost 12% for grants and 4.4% for loans; and within these annual cohorts of students, more have become eligible for increased means tested maintenance support.

This is not a pressure that I can simply turn off in year. It is demand-led. My Department has to meet all eligible applications for student support.

I have sought support from Executive colleagues in meeting this pressure in June and September Monitoring. I hope for a successful outcome for my latest bid.

University of Ulster: Magee Campus

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he intends to bid for extra resources to enable him to relax the maximum number of students cap at the University of Ulster, in light of the Magee Strategic Development Plan currently being considered by his Department.

(AQO 39/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Yes, I have submitted a bid as part of the Budget 2010 process for additional funding to support the University's desire to increase full time undergraduate numbers at Magee by 1,000 by 2015.

Careers Officers

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the work of his Department's careers officers in dealing with students who recently received their GCSE and A Level results.

(AQO 40/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I am pleased to confirm that initial feedback has been positive.

While data pertaining to the results period is still being collated, preliminary findings indicate the following levels of activity during the two-week period covering the exam results:

- Over 300 Careers Guidance Interviews with students in Years 12 and 14; and
- 3321 hits on the Careers Service website;

My Department also conducted a focused media campaign, aimed at encouraging students to think carefully about their future careers options, and to advise that there is support available from the Careers Service to help decide on the best way forward. This year's media campaign has been the most successful to date, with 116 printed media articles and 41 broadcast media interviews taking place during the results period.

However, while the post-results period is a critical decision point for many, the Careers Advisers are working with young people in school from year 10 onwards preparing them for the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As a result of this ongoing work, for many others, there is a seamless transition to the next stage in their career development.

Careers Advisers continue to provide professional, impartial, and free careers information, advice and guidance to people of all ages, tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

Further and Higher Education: Funding

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consultation he has had with the new UK Government on the future funding of Further and Higher Education.

(AQO 41/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Since the change of government senior officials within my Department have met and engaged in significant dialogue with colleagues in the other UK regions and with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. These communications dealt with a range of issues, specifically related to Further and Higher Education including funding, and explored the new policy directions of the Coalition.

Higher Education: STEM Subjects

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department will protect STEM subjects in the Higher Education sector, following the decision of the Higher Education Funding Council for England to ring-fence £20m to support the national Higher Education STEM Programme from August 2009 to July 2012.

(AQO 42/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Yes, it is widely acknowledged that STEM subjects are vital to innovation and the Executive's current top priority is to grow a dynamic and innovative economy.

The funding ring-fenced represents around one fifth of one per cent of HEFCE's budget for the 2009-10 financial year. I can assure you that my Department spends more than that on STEM.

Officials are working closely with several other Northern Ireland Departments and have helped to produce the draft Government STEM Strategy which was published for public consultation last month. The draft Strategy outlines how Government will take forward the recommendations contained in the 'Report of the STEM Review' published in September 2009.

Within the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland is at the forefront in having the highest percentage (48%) of its higher education students enrolled on STEM related subjects. The comparative figures for England, Scotland and Wales are 40%, 47% and 38% respectively. In the current CSR period (2008–11) my Department has funded an additional 300 PhD students and twelve cross-border research projects. These are all in areas of economic relevance and many are STEM related.

My Department is currently engaged in work to develop a Higher Education Strategy and the potential to further protect STEM areas will be considered.

Higher Education: Funding

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he will ensure that Northern Ireland contributes to the national debate on Higher Education as part of the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance.

(AQO 43/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The independent review of higher education funding and student finance in England under the chairmanship of Lord Browne has coincided with the independent review in Northern Ireland of tuition fees and future student finance arrangements, chaired by Joanne Stuart.

Officials in the Department are in regular contact with their counterparts in Lord Browne's team and Joanne Stuart has met with Lord Browne over the summer.

I am currently considering the final report from Joanne Stuart in advance of a public consultation which is planned for later this year. This consultation will need to take account of the findings of the Browne review, which is due to report to Government in the autumn.

One of my concerns will be to protect, as far as possible, Northern Ireland's position as having the highest participation rate, of all the regions, in higher education for those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Essential Skills Course

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what percentage of people who enrolled in Essential Skills courses over the last four years were aged 16-19.

(AQO 44/11)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The percentage of people who enrolled in Essential Skills courses over the last four years who were aged 16-19 is as follows:

Academic Year	Number of Enrolments	No. of 16-19 year olds enrolled	Percentage aged 16-19
2006/07	20,809	14,566	70%
2007/08	26,706	19,228	72%
2008/09	36,027	23,057	64%
2009/10*	41,005	26,243	64%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return.

* Figures for 2009/10 do not represent a full academic year as data are correct as at 11th February 2010. Therefore figures are provisional and subject to change.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Renewable Energy

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to introduce a feed-in tariff for renewable energy, including the likely timescale.

(AQW 72/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): I have undertaken to consider the introduction of a small-scale Feed In Tariff (FIT) as introduced in the rest of the United Kingdom. There are a number of considerations I must take account of, not least the impact of subsidies on electricity bills and the ability of any particular incentive mechanism to deliver Northern Ireland's overall target of 40% electricity from renewable generation by 2020. I must also take account of the coalition Government's manifesto proposals to extend the Great Britain FIT to generating stations above 5MW capacity as this will have significant implications for the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation. I will make an announcement in due course once I have all the information but this is not likely to be before the end of this year.

Ryanair

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any contact or discussions that Ryanair had with her Department, prior to its withdrawal from the George Best Belfast City Airport.

(AQW 223/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department had no contact or discussions with Ryanair prior to the announcement of its intention to withdraw services from George Best Belfast City Airport at the end of October 2010.

However, I met Michael Cawley, Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer of Ryanair, on 3 September 2010 to discuss the announcement.

Ryanair

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which routes vacated by Ryanair from the George Best Belfast City Airport (i) have been taken over by another carrier; or (ii) remain to be filled.

(AQW 224/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Essentially this is a commercial matter between the airport and its airlines. However, it has been announced in the media that 3 of the 5 routes that will be vacated by Ryanair on 31 October 2010 will be taken over by Flybe – the Bristol, East Midlands and Liverpool routes.

At the present time, the London Stansted and Prestwick routes have yet to be filled.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Report 'Making the Most of Devolution'

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the PricewaterhouseCoopers report 'Making the Most of Devolution'.

(AQW 362/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The PricewaterhouseCoopers report, "Making the most of Devolution" makes a valuable contribution to the debate on whether there should be a reduction in Corporation Tax for Northern Ireland.

Whilst it highlights the opportunities arising from the openness of the Coalition Government to consider a change in the current regime, there is also recognition of the potential risks involved.

This highlights the importance of the Executive taking all the options into account before making a decision on how best to grow the private sector in Northern Ireland.

Job Creation Strategy

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she intends to bring to the Assembly a revised Job Creation Strategy, as an essential platform for sustainable economic recovery. **(AQW 363/11)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: One of the Executive's primary priorities in the short-term is to support local business in responding to the impact of the recession, and in particular the reduction in employment due to the downturn.

To this end, the Executive has implemented a series of measures to support jobs in the economy during this period. However, it is also important that jobs created in the economy are sustainable.

It is for this reason that the economic strategy, currently under development, will include measures to support rebuilding and rebalancing the economy in the short, medium and longer-term. This will include measures to support employment.

Tourism: Welcome to Excellence

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many organisations in the Coleraine and Limavady Borough Council areas have registered for a course on the 'Welcome to Excellence Northern Ireland' programme. **(AQO 51/11)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board provides customer service training through its Welcome to Excellence suite of Training Programmes. These Programmes were developed to assist individuals and organisations in the tourism, leisure and hospitality industry to provide first class standards of service on a consistent basis to both visitors and local residents.

To date, 1 organisation in the Coleraine Borough Council area has registered a total of 49 participants and 2 organisations in the Limavady Borough Council area have registered a total of 38 participants for a course on the 'Welcome to Excellence Northern Ireland' Programme since its redevelopment in 2008.

Small Business Funding

Mr C McDevitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has any plans to cut investment in the various small business funds managed by DETI and Invest NI, in the near future or in the next Comprehensive Spending Review period. **(AQO 53/11)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Details of savings will be produced in the DETI Savings Delivery Plan which will be published at the same time as the Draft Budget 2010. It is, however, too early to say what the potential impact of any cuts would be on my department's programmes. DETI is of course working closely with DFP in the Budget process so that the Executive can make informed decisions, and I have provided a high level prioritised list of savings and bids. Work is currently ongoing to identify the detail of potential savings and the impact of these savings. Savings of an individual department should not be considered in isolation but should be considered in the context of an Executive agreed strategic approach to the Northern Ireland Block. Savings will, undoubtedly, be painful but it is important to keep focus on the economy as a top priority.

Economic Policy

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Review of Economic Policy. **(AQO 54/11)**

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 10 and 15 together.

Following my statement to the Assembly on the 25th January 2010, where I set out details of my response to the Independent Review of Economic Policy, the recommendations in the final report have been progressed by my Department working in conjunction with other Executive Departments.

To date many of the substantive recommendations have been fully implemented. These include:

- The establishment of an Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy;
- The creation of an independent Economic Advisory Group, made up of economists and business leaders; and
- The introduction of measures to make Invest NI more business focused and to reduce bureaucracy.

Work continues to implement the outstanding recommendations and it is my intention to make a full statement to the Assembly on this matter by the end of 2010.

XEMC Ltd

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any discussions her Department had with representatives of the Chinese company XEMC Ltd during their recent visit.
(AQO 55/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI met with representatives of the Chinese wind turbine company XEMC Ltd on Tuesday 24th August 2010. This was a privately organised visit as Northern Ireland is one of a number of global locations being considered for a proposed manufacturing plant. It is premature to make any further comment. However, Invest NI will continue to work with the Company and its representatives to try and secure the project for Northern Ireland.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any discussions she has had with her Executive colleagues and Westminster counterparts concerning the plight of Presbyterian Mutual Society savers.[R]
(AQO 56/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The First Minister, deputy First Minister and Finance Minister attended a meeting of the reconvened Ministerial Working Group on 21 July 2010 to consider the options for a speedy resolution to the PMS problem. I subsequently pursued the matter during the course of separate meetings with the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson and David Gauke, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury.

More recently, on 8 September 2010, I attended a second meeting of the Ministerial Working Group, along with the First Minister Peter Robinson, and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, to review the ongoing work of officials.

This was a useful meeting where progress was made, and the Government committed to work towards a mid October 2010 deadline in line with the Government's Spending Review announcement.

We agreed that officials should continue to work through technical details before the next meeting of the Ministerial Working Group when I am hopeful it will be possible to have a report to the Prime Minister agreed.

I assure you that I will continue to do all that I can to achieve a fair and just outcome for all PMS members.

Ryanair

Mr L Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment she has made of the economic impact of Ryanair's decision to cease operations at George Best Belfast City Airport, including the impact on tourism.
(AQO 57/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Any loss of capacity on the air routes operated by Ryanair and the consequent job losses are to be regretted.

The announcement by Flybe on Monday 6th September 2010 that it will be operating 3 new services to Bristol, East Midlands and Liverpool is to be welcomed.

I also understand that Bmibaby will increase the frequency of its services to East Midlands, adding five extra flights a week. Only Stansted and Prestwick of Ryanair's current destinations from Belfast City are left without replacement flights at this stage.

These positive announcements, together with the fact that we have not lost any geographic spread of access and the reassurance that discussions are continuing with a number of other carriers to fill the gaps left by Ryanair, give me reason to be hopeful that the impact will be minimal.

Wind Turbine Companies

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she is aware of the concerns of small-scale wind turbine companies about a perceived disparity between the subsidies afforded to entrants to the market before and after April 2010.

(AQO 58/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I am aware of the concerns. The current consultation on changes to the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation for 2011 proposes that existing generators who add additional capacity would receive enhanced levels of support, where applicable, for this new capacity. However, to raise the support level for existing generators would give no additional value in terms of renewable capacity, bearing in mind that they made investment decisions based on the level of support available at that time.

Economic Policy

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Review of Economic Policy.

(AQO 59/11)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 10 and 15 together.

Following my statement to the Assembly on the 25th January 2010, where I set out details of my response to the Independent Review of Economic Policy, the recommendations in the final report have been progressed by my Department working in conjunction with other Executive Departments.

To date many of the substantive recommendations have been fully implemented. These include:

- The establishment of an Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy;
- The creation of an independent Economic Advisory Group, made up of economists and business leaders; and
- The introduction of measures to make Invest NI more business focused and to reduce bureaucracy.

Work continues to implement the outstanding recommendations and it is my intention to make a full statement to the Assembly on this matter by the end of 2010.

Department of the Environment

Bonfire Sites

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the total costs incurred by each local council for cleaning and repairing bonfire sites during the summer of 2010.

(AQW 33/11)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): The total expenditure incurred by each district council in cleaning up and repairing bonfire sites in the summer of 2010 is set out in the table below.

COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON BONFIRES – SUMMER 2010

Council	£
Antrim	3,741
Ards	4,500
Armagh	5,970
Ballymena	11,408
Ballymoney	8,952
Banbridge	900
Belfast	53,704
Carrickfergus	1,086
Castlereagh	15,904
Coleraine	400
Cookstown	1,500
Craigavon	21,264
Derry	2,555
Down	2,112
Dungannon & South Tyrone	100
Fermanagh	0
Larne	9,201
Limavady	805
Lisburn	5,392
Magherafelt	2,160
Moyle	1,451
Newry & Mourne	0
Newtownabbey	2,670
North Down	1,200
Omagh	1,358
Strabane	0
Total	158,333

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr C Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment how many investigations the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has undertaken against Departments since it was established.

(AQW 55/11)

Minister of the Environment: On 1 July 2008 the then Environment Minister, Sammy Wilson, launched the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), which replaced the Environment and Heritage Service.

Since then, NIEA has undertaken a total of 23 investigations against Northern Ireland Departments.

Under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, 17 investigations were undertaken where Northern Ireland Departments were identified as the suspected polluter.

In addition, 6 investigations were undertaken into possible breaches of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (the Order) by Northern Ireland Departments.

Reform of Local Government

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how much has been spent to date by Planning Service in relation to the Reform of Local Government.

(AQW 85/11)

Minister of the Environment: Prior to the return of devolved Government and the review of the local government decisions in relation to Review of Public Administration (RPA), the Planning Service had an RPA project team which incurred expenditure of £364,633 in 2006/07 and 2007/08 in preparing for the proposed transfer to 7 councils, which was anticipated to take place in 2009. Other staff, such as those engaged in policy and legislation, were also involved in contributing to the preparations but it is not possible to separately identify the financial costs.

In late 2007 (while the RPA decision were still under review), Planning Service began to take forward a major planning reform programme and the RPA project team was diverted to that programme of work. When the Executive decisions in relation to local Government reorganisation were subsequently announced in early 2008, Planning Service ensured that the proposed planning reforms were designed to take account of the structural changes anticipated under the reform of local Government. Since then, Planning Service has managed reform and RPA as a single integrated programme and no specific resources were allocated by Planning Service to activity in relation to the reform of local Government.

Ballyutoag Road Incinerator

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the decontamination required for the Ballyutoag Road incinerator site.

(AQW 97/11)

Minister of the Environment: I cannot be specific as to the level and type of decontamination, or clean up, required at this site. The site is currently the subject of investigations by both the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Planning Service, for alleged breaches of environmental and planning legislation.

The NIEA Environmental Crime Unit is conducting a criminal investigation into the alleged presence of controlled waste at this site. As the investigation is ongoing, I am unable to provide further details which could compromise the integrity of the investigation or the rights of those under investigation.

Planning Service served an Enforcement Notice (Ref: EN/2010/0507) on 8/7/10 in relation to the unauthorised use of land for the deposit of controlled waste at Ballyutoag, specifying, inter alia, that all the controlled waste, including buried waste and waste used to create bund, should be removed from the site within 60 days of the notice taking effect (12/8/10).

The Enforcement Notice has been appealed, to the Planning Appeals Commission, within the specified period, so no further action can be taken in terms of the specified remedial action until this appeal has been heard and determined. The PAC has not yet set a date for hearing this appeal.

Ballyutoag Road Incinerator

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment why the planning application for the Ballyutoag Road incinerator was rejected.

(AQW 99/11)

Minister of the Environment: A planning application by Irish Recycling Services for an EfW power plant was submitted to Planning Service on 2 June 2009. The application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES). The application was designated as one of major importance under Article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 on 21 September 2009.

Following a rigorous examination of the proposal, and taking account of the expert advice provided by consultees and all material planning matters, my officials determined that a facility of this nature is not compliant with a number of planning policies relevant to a proposal of this nature at the proposed location. It has been determined that the proposal is not acceptable on a number of grounds including visual and landscape impact, impact on the character of the area, access issues, impact on aircraft safety, location in a rural area and a failure to demonstrate that the proposed facility is the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO).

A Notice of Opinion (NOP) to refuse the application was issued on 22 July 2010. The applicants' agent has now advised Planning Service that they do not accept the NOP to refuse and they have requested a hearing before the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). The PAC has been notified of this request and a date has yet to be set for the hearing. Following a hearing the Department will consider the report and recommendation of the PAC and make a final decision on the application.

Rose Energy incinerator at Glenavy

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the technological difficulties involved in Rose Energy's plans for a chicken waste incinerator at Glenavy, particularly in relation to Radox laboratories.

(AQW 100/11)

Minister of the Environment: The two Rose Energy planning applications for a Biomass Fuelled Power Plant and a Water Abstraction Facility have been fully assessed having regard to the Development Plan for the area and all other material considerations including the views of third parties and the expert advice provided by consultees.

There have been 6782 letters of objection and 6348 letters of support received in respect of the Power Plant application and 49 letters of objection received in respect of the Water Abstraction Facility.

Radox Laboratories Ltd. has submitted a number of detailed objections in respect of the proposal and the potential technological difficulties posed including emissions and the impact on all aspects to the Radox business. Expert advice has been sought from consultees on the content of the objections, including advice from NIEA Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate (IPRI), DARD and the Agri-Food Bioscience Institute (AFBI).

The expert advice provided by NIEA IPRI is that the Industrial Pollution Prevention Control permitting process will take into consideration emission limit values and air quality/environmental standards to ensure no significant environmental impact arises from the operation.

Following advice from my planning officials, I am satisfied that the objection issues raised by third parties, including Radox Laboratories Ltd., have either been satisfactorily addressed by the applicant or can be controlled either under the IPPC permitting regime or by the imposition of planning conditions.

Ryanair

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all correspondence between Ryanair and his Department in the last 18 months.

(AQW 110/11)

Minister of the Environment: There has been no correspondence between Ryanair and my Department in the last 18 months.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of the Environment what consultation has been undertaken with residents and residents groups, in the areas affected by the noise from the George Best Belfast City Airport, in relation to his proposal to remove the seats for sale cap, given that no consultation was listed on his Department's website or posted in any newspaper.

(AQW 184/11)

Minister of the Environment: Under Article 40A(2) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 where it is proposed to modify a planning agreement my Department is required to consult with the District Council for the area in which the land, which is the subject of the agreement, is situated. However, given the high level of public interest in the airports operational activities and in the interests of openness and transparency I took the decision to follow the same consultative process as undertaken with the 2008 modified Planning Agreement. In this context, Belfast City Council, North Down Borough Council and the Airport Forum, which consists of representatives of local residents, were consulted.

All representations received in relation to the seats for sale restriction will be taken into consideration prior to a decision being reached.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the recent admission by the Planning Service that it failed to enforce regulations in relation to the two million seats for sale limit at the George Best Belfast City Airport (i) who approved the decision not to enforce departmental policy; and (ii) what action he has taken to address this issue.

(AQW 293/11)

Minister of the Environment: I agreed that my Department should not initiate legal action regarding the breach of the seats for sale restriction at George Best Belfast City Airport pending the outcome of the request to remove the restriction. This is not an unusual approach for my Department to take where a matter remains under active consideration.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Review of Centres of Procurement Expertise Status and Policy Implementation

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) tender price; and (ii) actual cost of the contract for the report 'Review of Centres of Procurement Expertise Status and Policy Implementation' by PWC in September 2009.

(AQW 35/11)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): The tender price which was evaluated in respect of the Review of Centres of Procurement Expertise Status and Policy Implementation was £30,000 (excl. VAT) The actual cost of the contract for the Report was £30,000 (excl. VAT).

Conflict of Interest for Firms Tendering

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what instructions are given by the Central Procurement Directorate to Government Departments and bodies on conflict of interest for firms tendering; and what measures are in place to ensure compliance.

(AQW 37/11)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Procurement law places an obligation on Government Departments when acting as contracting authorities to comply with the European legal principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equality. Where a conflict of interest causes a bidder to have an unfair advantage, the contracting authority will be under a duty to take action to ensure compliance with the above principles. Any such perceived or actual conflict of interest may not necessarily result in the bidder being excluded from further participation in the process; this will depend on how serious the conflict is, whether it can be removed, and on the contracting authority's duty to comply with European law.

For supplies and services' procurements, all bidders are required to complete a conflict of interest statement which identifies any real or perceived conflicts of interest, in relation to the personnel or type of work involved in the contract. The conditions of contract then set out the duties owed by the contractor to the client in relation to a conflict of interest arising during the life of the contract. This includes the right of the client to terminate the contract.

For construction related procurements, details of firms, typically architects, engineers and surveyors, already appointed to advise the client are published in the prequalification document. Bidders are advised that none of the listed firms may form part of their team. The construction prequalification process also requires bidders to demonstrate, and to seek the contracting authority's approval in advance of the closing date, that no conflict of interest would arise should they, or another part of their business holding, propose to participate as part of another bidder's supply chain.

Procurement Guidance Note 02/09 provides guidance to Departments on the evaluation of tenders. It includes information on the roles and responsibilities of the Chairperson of the evaluation panel and other panel members in relation to conflict of interest. In line with this guidance, evaluation panel members complete conflict of interest declarations.

In all cases the Chairperson of the evaluation panel, supported by advice from a Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE), will ultimately decide on the appropriate course of action. If deemed necessary, legal advice may also be sought.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

The Regional Review of Urology Services

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of recommendations set out in The Regional Review of Urology Services announced in March 2010; and how many of these recommendations have been implemented by each Health and Social Care Trust since then.

(AQW 133/11)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The Review of Adult Urology Services in Northern Ireland contained 26 recommendations, of which four have been fully implemented and a further 12 are well progressed towards implementation.

The timescale of full implementation is being guided by the Health and Social Care Board, and is subject to the approval of implementation plans by commissioners to fully deliver all of the recommendations. Trusts have submitted a draft implementation plan, which sets out the service model, key performance indicators and modernisation plans and the financial implications of delivering these important recommendations.

Regional Women's and Children's Hospital

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that departmental policy was to build a Regional Women's and Children's Hospital and that last week's Ministerial announcement effectively overturns this policy, why he made such a fundamental policy shift without consultation.

(AQW 254/11)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My announcement last week does not constitute a change of policy regarding regional services for women's and children's care. It is my intention to bring forward the women's hospital first and to follow with the children's hospital as soon as it is financially viable. The announcement I made last week indicates how I propose to bring forward the women's hospital.

The original announcement in June 2003 that the RGH was selected as the site of the new centralised maternity hospital for Belfast, with links to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC) and the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) was made following extensive public consultation.

Department of Justice

Phone Calls for Foreign National Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the free weekly phone calls for foreign national prisoners to their homeland, which can last up to fifteen minutes, to detail (i) the countries involved; and (ii) the cost of the scheme since its introduction.

(AQW 21/11)

Minister of Justice (Mr D Ford): To reduce the difficulties caused by separation from distant families, in December 2007 NIPS introduced a free 10 minute phone call each week for those foreign national prisoners who have no visits and who do not have the means to call family overseas on a regular basis.

The cost of the calls since December 2007 is:

Maghaberry: £8502.70

Magilligan: £2418.67

Hydebank: £6131.83

It would only be possible to clarify the countries at disproportionate cost.

Public Disorder and Street Drinking during the 11 and 12 July Period

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice, for each of the last five years, to detail (i) the number of recorded offences relating to (a) public disorder; and (b) street drinking during the 11 and 12 July period; (ii) for a breakdown of the specific types of offences; (iii) the number of cases which resulted in a conviction; (iv) the total of any fines which were imposed; and (v) for a summary of any other sanctions which were imposed.

(AQW 43/11)

Minister of Justice: Table 1 gives the number of recorded offences relating to public disorder that were reported on the 11 and 12 July in each of the years 2006 to 2010. Table 2 gives the number convicted in 2002 to 2006 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) for offences which were committed on 11 or 12 July.

It is not possible to reconcile PSNI data on the number of offences recorded directly with conviction data, as the former are offence-based whereas conviction data are offender-based. In addition, PSNI denote the offence as it has been initially recorded and this may differ from the offence for which a suspect (or suspects) is subsequently proceeded against.

Information on street drinking is a matter for District Councils.

TABLE 1: PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES¹, CRIMINAL DAMAGE AND ASSAULT ON POLICE – RECORDED OFFENCES REPORTED ON 11 AND 12 JULY 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public order offences	52	54	85	71	102

- 1 Includes offences 'disorderly behaviour', 'riot', 'riotous behaviour', 'possessing offensive weapon in a public place' and 'possessing article with blade or point in a public place'. Excludes firearms offences and offences relating to causing a bomb hoax.
- 2 It cannot be determined if the offences related to public disorder or if they occurred under other circumstances.

Source: PSNI

TABLE 2: PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES¹, – DISPOSALS GIVEN TO THOSE CONVICTED AND THE TOTAL SUM OF ANY FINES IMPOSED (£) IN 2002-2006 FOR OFFENCES COMMITTED DURING 11 AND 12 JULY PERIOD²

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Public order offences					
Immediate custody	0	0	1	3	2
Suspended custody	2	12	3	8	7
Supervision in the community	5	4	5	2	5
Fine	10	6	10	15	12
Total sum of fines imposed (£)	1315	860	1900	3220	2250
Conditional discharge	1	1	2	2	3
Other	1	2	2	1	5
Total	19	25	23	31	34

- 1 Includes offences 'disorderly behaviour', 'riot', 'riotous behaviour' and 'possessing offensive weapon in a public place'.
- 2 The table refers to the number convicted in the given year but may have been for an offence committed on the 11 or 12 July of a previous year and not necessarily in the year stated.

Source: Department of Justice

Civil Service Equal Pay

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Justice what action he is taking to ensure that individuals who were seconded to the PSNI, but were subject to Civil Service pay and conditions, will be covered by the Equal Pay settlement.

(AQW 65/11)

Minister of Justice: From October 2008, civilian staff in the PSNI have been employed by the Chief Constable on behalf of the Policing Board and he has lead responsibility for dealing with the equal pay claims.

On 9 April 2010 the NIO gave approval to the assimilation of the new Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales to be applied to the relevant grades in PSNI; however this approval was without prejudice to the wider question of whether the terms of the equal pay settlement should be applied.

In line with my Department's approval role under the corporate governance arrangements for the PSNI, my officials are currently considering a business case on equal pay for police staff prepared by the PSNI. The business case will also require DFP approval to proceed.

Sexual Offences Prevention Order

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many people are the subject of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order, including Interim Orders, in each policing district.

(AQW 95/11)

Minister of Justice: The recording of the number of people who are the subject of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

The information requested is available by contacting the PSNI directly.

Sexual Offences Prevention Order and the Supervision and Treatment Order

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Justice, under the Sexual Offences Prevention Order and the Supervision and Treatment Order, which contains a residency clause requiring a supervising officer to approve an address of an individual, whether a supervising officer can remove approval for an address which was previously approved under the same order.

(AQW 195/11)

Minister of Justice: A Sexual Offences Prevention Order is a civil order for the purposes of protecting the public from serious sexual harm. It may contain a prohibition on an individual residing at an address which has not been approved by the lead agency with risk management responsibility for the case. The police are responsible for enforcement of the prohibitions contained in the order. The police will apply to the court for such a prohibition to be made and will supply supporting evidence. The court will consider whether such a prohibition is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances, taking into account the level of risk posed by the individual. The court will also consider whether other disposals are being made in the case which would render such a provision unnecessary.

If such a prohibition is included, it is possible for the lead agency later to remove approval for an address. This would normally occur where there has been a change in circumstances which is relevant to the management of the risk posed by the individual living in the community. In that case, they could not specify where the individual must live, but could withhold approval for any addresses put forward which are deemed unsuitable.

Subject to appropriate medical and other relevant evidence, the court may make a Supervision and Treatment Order under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986. Depending on whether the supervising officer is to be a social worker or a probation officer, a supervision and treatment order must specify either the Health Trust area or petty sessions district in which the supervised person resides or will reside. In addition, the court may include within a Supervision and Treatment Order a requirement relating to approval of residency.

Before including a residence requirement, the court must consider the home surroundings of the supervised person. This would normally provide an opportunity for relevant professionals, for example, a social worker or a probation officer, to provide an assessment of the current suitability of the home surroundings.

The Mental Health Order does not preclude the supervising officer from later removing approval for the supervised person's address. Indeed, it only stipulates referral to a court for an amendment to the supervision and treatment order in relation to the place of residence in the event that the

supervised person proposes to change, or has changed, his residence to another Health Trust area or petty sessions district. However, as for a Sexual Offences Prevention Order, removing approval for an address would normally occur where there has been a change in circumstances which is relevant to the management of risk and/or the availability or delivery of treatment.

Applicants to the PSNI

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Justice to provide a demographic breakdown of all applicants to the PSNI in each year since the implementation of the Patten reforms, broken down by (i) religion; (ii) age group; (iii) gender; and (iv) nationality.

(AQW 243/11)

Minister of Justice: The demographic breakdown of PSNI applicants is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

The information requested is available by contacting the PSNI directly.

Department for Regional Development

Footpath and Road Resurfacing Schemes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) footpath schemes; and (ii) road resurfacing schemes which will proceed in the North Down area for the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 14/11)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): I would remind the Member that information on the completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

<http://applications.drdni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=18443>

NI Water

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if he can confirm whether information was deliberately withheld from the Consumer Council in relation to the awarding of contracts within NI Water; (ii) whether this constitutes a breach of the partnership agreement between his Department, the Consumer Council and NI Water; and (iii) who within his Department was responsible for deciding to deliberately withhold this information.

(AQW 18/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I am not aware of information which the Consumer Council is entitled to receive in relation to the awarding of contracts within Northern Ireland Water (NIW), being deliberately withheld from it. I am therefore not aware of such information being deliberately withheld contrary to the spirit of the voluntary Partnership Agreement between the various stakeholders. The powers of the Consumer Council on the provision of information in relation to water and sewerage services are set out in the Water and Sewerage Services (NI) order 2006.

I have asked my officials to deal with any specific concerns that the Consumer Council may wish to raise with the Department in this context.

Comber Greenway

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to extending the Comber Greenway to Donaghadee using the route of the former railway line.

(AQW 31/11)

Minister for Regional Development: It is an important Roads Service objective to increase and promote walking and cycling facilities in the North. However, I can advise that, due to the lack of suitable stretches of the former railway line from Comber to Donaghadee that have not been built upon, and the downward pressure on funding, this proposal would attract a low priority when compared to other worthwhile transportation schemes.

Bonfire Sites

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total costs incurred by his Department for cleaning and repairing bonfire sites during the summer of 2010.

(AQW 32/11)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not monitor expenditure specifically related to the costs of cleaning and repairing bonfire sites. However, during the summer of 2010, it is estimated that around £31,000 has been spent on attending / repairing bonfire sites.

External Consultants

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development, for each of the last five years (i) how much (a) his Department; (b) NI Water; and (c) Roads Service spent on external consultants; and (ii) how much was paid to (a) PricewaterhouseCoopers; (b) Deloitte; and (c) Ernst & Young.

(AQW 36/11)

Minister for Regional Development: The Department's expenditure on external consultants as defined in the Department of Finance and Personnel's guidance on the Use of Consultants is set out in the tables below.

Financial Year	Expenditure £ (ex VAT)			
	Core Department	Northern Ireland Water	Roads Service	Total
2005/06	1,372,423	5,546,060*	1,694,054	8,612,537
2006/07	5,076,580	9,996,902*	864,881	15,938,363
2007/08	1,081,710	7,260,842	757,368	9,099,920
2008/09	533,145	5,563,047	248,299	6,344,491
2009/10	391,035	3,654,010	164,214	4,209,259

* Payments made by Water Service prior to the establishment of Northern Ireland Water in April 2007.

Firm	Expenditure £ (ex VAT)				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
PricewaterhouseCoopers	4,152,066+	7,431,018+	5,196,929	3,924,594	1,143,103
Deloitte	19,780	2,495,425	491,611	32,608	438,139
Ernst and Young	0	79,838	15,000	47,067	298,406

+ Included within these figures are the following payments made to PWC as lead partners in consortium arrangements:

In 2005/06 an amount of £2.78m was paid to PWC as lead partner in a consortium with Mott McDonald, Ferguson McIlveen, Scottish Water, Dundas Wilson, L'Estrange & Brett and O'Connor Kennedy. This consortium provided specific expert advice in relation to Public Private Partnership exercises.

In 2006/07 an amount of £155,196 was paid to PWC as lead partner in a consortium with Capita Consulting. This consortium provided advice in relation to Human Resource issues.

Footpath Schemes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the footpath schemes which will proceed in (i) the Donaghadee area; and (ii) the Millisle area for the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 54/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I would remind the Member that information on the completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

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

Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any concerns or conflicts of interest that have arisen between the suspended Permanent Secretary and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland to date.

(AQW 58/11)

Minister for Regional Development: The interests of Board Members of the Department for Regional Development are set out in the Departmental Register of Interests which is publicly available. The latest version of the Register, updated in January 2010, does not indicate any conflict of interest between the parties to which the question relates.

If the member has any evidence to the contrary I would be grateful if he bring it to my attention in writing.

UTV Programme 'Stormy Water'

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development why he has not viewed the UTV programme 'Stormy Water' which feature revelations about his Department's conduct.

(AQW 60/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I have reviewed all media material, both print and broadcast, including the UTV programme, which relates to the issue.

NI Water: Director of Customer Service Delivery

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 8094/10, whether any conflicts of interest arose between members of the interviewing panel and the interviewees; and whether declarations of any kind were made during the nine interviews.

(AQW 62/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the interviewing panel for the position of Director of Customer Service Delivery consisted of the Chairman, the Chief Executive and the Director of Human Resources. Two of the candidates had past or current working relationships with members of the panel. All panel members were made fully aware of these relationships. These were not deemed to create a conflict of interest.

Footpath and Street Lighting Schemes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) footpath schemes; and (ii) street lighting schemes which will proceed in the Holywood area in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 107/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I would remind the Member that information on the completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

<http://applications.drdni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=18443>

NI Water Action Plan

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the NI Water action plan designed to address recent procurement and accountability breaches.

(AQW 111/11)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that a number of immediate actions have been taken to address recent procurement and accountability breaches including:

- the roll out of training to senior management on procurement procedures and financial delegation approval requirements;
- the development of a detailed end to end Procurement Manual;
- the appointment of a dedicated Procurement Compliance Officer;
- the presentation of a monthly procurement compliance report to the NIW Board;
- work to regularise the identified contract exceptions by running competitive tender exercises or organising necessary approvals for valid sole supplier situations.
- recruitment of four temporary resources to support the additional procurement workload related to regularising the identified exceptions;
- analysis of the remaining supplier arrangements with expenditure between £30,000 and £100,000, which were not covered in the deep dive audit, to confirm whether further procurement exercises are required;
- a further internal audit review, planned to commence on 11 October 2010, to confirm whether the end to end procurement governance process is now operating and designed effectively; and
- mapping of Executive responsibility for the contract exceptions has been completed with the related disciplinary process underway and this will be completed in due course.

These actions go a long way to ensuring that NIW now has 'best practice' procurement related processes. Further, NIW is awaiting completion of an independent review of its CoPE accreditation being carried out by the Department of Finance & Personnel's Central Procurement Directorate and in addition, the report by PAC. Any additional actions identified in the respective reports will be pursued with vigour by NIW.

Enterprise Train

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any damage caused to the Enterprise train due to the hijacking attempt at the beginning of July 2010 and the cost of repairs.

(AQW 117/11)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have advised that the front carriage of the Enterprise train suffered scorch damage to paintwork, broken front windows, broken side windows and other minor damage to door and internal fixtures.

The cost of the repairs, which were carried out in Dublin by Iarnród Éireann, was €2,028 and NI Railways incurred further repair costs of £531.

Flags, Emblems and Paramilitary Signage

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to introduce legislation that would grant his Department the authority to remove flags, emblems and paramilitary signage from lamp standards, electricity poles and fencing located at roundabouts and alongside public roads.
(AQW 158/11)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has signed up to the Multi Agency Protocol on the display of flags in public areas, arising from 'A Shared Future' – the policy and strategic framework for good relations in the North. OFMDFM is presently leading a review of this Protocol.

Should any proposals for legislation come from the review, I would be content to consider them at that point.

Overgrown Invasive Plant Species

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) how many times his officials have cleared overgrown invasive plant species from his Department's property, roads and pavements in each of the last five years; (ii) the cost involved; and (iii) the type of plant species removed in each case.
(AQW 220/11)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it aims to keep its property free of obstructions, and to comply with other legal requirements.

Roads Service does not hold records of how many times its officials have cleared the wide variety of overgrown, invasive plant species in the North, from its property, roads and pavements in each of the last five years, the cost involved, or the type of plant species removed in each case.

Department for Social Development

Flats in the Rathgill Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the refurbishment of the flats in the Rathgill estate, Bangor.
(AQW 6/11)

Minister for Social Development (Mr A Attwood): The proposed Multi Element Improvement scheme for the Rathgill estate cannot proceed as the significant resources needed to take it forward are no longer available. The Savills Stock Condition Report said that the Housing Executive should develop a maintenance strategy which will be completed later this year and will determine the investment necessary on all Housing Executive stock.

Flats in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the refurbishment of the flats in the Kilcooley estate, Bangor.
(AQW 7/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has programmed a heating replacement scheme for 55 dwellings at a cost of £242,000 approximately for the Kilcooley estate in Bangor during 2010/11. However, the proposed Multi Element Improvement scheme cannot proceed as the significant resources needed to take it forward are no longer available. The Savills Stock Condition Report said that the Housing Executive should develop a maintenance strategy which will be completed later this year and will determine the investment necessary on all Housing Executive stock.

Department Staff

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many staff in his Department are either directly or indirectly at a higher grade to a relative or a relation in the Department; (ii) if they are in a position to influence decisions made directly or indirectly concerning the family member; and (iii) to outline his Department's policy on this issue.

(AQW 20/11)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested in parts (i) and (ii) of the question is not available in the format requested and it could be made available only at disproportionate cost. Neither the Department for Social Development nor the wider NICS has a specific policy on this issue but would expect all staff to comply with the NICS Code of Ethics and the general standards of conduct set out in the NICS HR Handbook. These require staff to act at all times with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality, never to misuse their official position and to avoid conflicts of interest.

Overpaid Housing Benefit Payments

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development how much the Housing Executive, or other agencies within his Department, has overpaid in respect of housing benefit payments in each of the last five years; and how much of this has been recouped.

(AQW 47/11)

Minister for Social Development: The information is only available for the last four years as shown in the table below:-

Year	Overpaid	Recovered
2006/2007	£14.9m	£11.9m
2007/2008	£13.7m	£11.7m
2008/2009	£14.1m	£11.8m
2009/2010	£17.2m	£14.1m

The Housing Executive advise this is because they changed their computer system in 2004 and there were significant early problems with some aspects of the information on housing benefit overpayments.

Overpaid Housing Benefit Payments

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development how the Housing Executive recoups money lost due to overpayment of housing benefit; and who they recoup it from in respect of agents who have acted for landlords.

(AQW 48/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive recoups overpayments of Housing Benefit as follows:-

- Where the claimant remains on Housing Benefit, a set amount each week (£9.90 for standard overpayments and £13.20 for fraud overpayments) is deducted from the ongoing claim.
- Where the claimant no longer receives Housing Benefit, recovery is sought through the most appropriate means including voluntary repayments, deductions from other Social Security benefits, via the Small Claims Court or County Court and through the use of Private Sector Recovery Agents.
- Where the landlord or his agent is held liable, the overpayment can be recovered from any payment of benefit made directly to him in respect of any future claims from his tenants, or by voluntary agreement or court action if there are no future payments. If the payment of benefit had been made to an agent in place of the landlord, recovery is sought from the agent.

Community Worker in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the continuation of Housing Executive funding for the community worker in the Bloomfield estate in Bangor.

(AQW 53/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive is currently funding a part-time post in the Bloomfield Estate until 31 March 2011. The amount of funding is £15,165.

Given the current funding difficulties, I am unable to comment on the position for next year as budgets are still to be confirmed.

Vacant Flats at Lysander Park and Rathmullan Drive in Newtownards

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the redevelopment plans for the vacant flats at (i) Lysander Park; and (ii) Rathmullan Drive in Newtownards.

(AQW 73/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive are currently revising their economic appraisal for Rathmullan Drive and it will be submitted to the Department for consideration in the coming weeks.

However, any work to the flats at either Lysander or the 24 vacant flats at Rathmullan Drive will be subject to the availability of resources however I remain committed to the redevelopment of both sites and will continue to make the case for an increased investment in housing to enable this sort of work to be delivered.

Village Urban Renewal Area

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Housing Executive has set up a planning and design team for the Village Urban Renewal Area; and if so (i) to list the membership of the team; and (ii) when it is likely to meet.

(AQW 108/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has set up a planning and design team for the Village Urban Renewal Area. Membership of this team has not yet been confirmed but will comprise representatives from the Housing Executive, Fold and Helm Housing Associations and also two nominated representatives from the local community.

A Residents Design Group has also been formed and their first meeting was on 6 September 2010. It comprises ten local residents and is independently chaired. This group will nominate the two community representatives to the formal Planning and Design Team. While formal membership of the Planning and Design Team has not yet been established both groups have arranged to meet on 6 October 2010.

Jobs and Benefits Office for Ballynahinch

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the delivery of a new Jobs and Benefits Office for Ballynahinch, including the sites which are being considered.

(AQW 135/11)

Minister for Social Development: Ballynahinch is one of 8 remaining offices still to be converted to a Jobs & Benefits office. Due to difficulties in identifying a new site for the Ballynahinch Jobs & Benefits office, the current plan is to redevelop the existing Social Security Office at 18 Crossgar Road and the necessary planning permission is in place. Whilst there is no definite date for delivery of the office, the current planning assumptions would suggest that the earliest date for the start of construction is April 2014. Delivery will be subject to the availability of capital funding in SR 10. Given the anticipated pressures on capital funding in the SR 10 period, I have asked that possible contingency measures be developed which would go some way towards the implementation of key parts of the Jobs & Benefits service in the event that it is not possible to deliver a new office in Ballynahinch.

Environmental Scheme on the Andersonstown Road

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development when the environmental scheme on the Andersonstown Road will begin; and how long it will take to complete.

(AQW 172/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Andersonstown Road scheme is a high priority urban regeneration project. I placed a bid with the Executive to restore a major deficit in my budget in June of this year. Due to the results of June monitoring I did not receive the necessary budget cover to commence the scheme. I have made a new bid for both contractual and priority urban regeneration projects in September monitoring, after which the in year budget situation will be clearer.

My Department has completed extensive consultation with the community, local traders and statutory bodies including the DRD Roads Service and Rapid Transit Division. DSD expects to secure planning permission for the scheme in October 2010 and has already completed a procurement process so that work could commence within weeks of securing a budget. The scheme will take approximately 18 months to complete.

Clanmill Housing Association

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development if he is aware that Clanmill Housing Association has refused to install a bus lay-by at the site of the new housing scheme at the former InBev site on the Glen Road, Belfast; and if he will encourage them to install a lay-by.

(AQW 265/11)

Minister for Social Development: I have now been advised of the matter and shall monitor the issue. I understand that a meeting has now been arranged for 17 September between you and Clanmil Housing Association to discuss the matter further and to explore options.

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 17 September 2010

(AQW 7836/09)

	2005/06 £m	2006/07 £m	2007/08 £m
Expenditure on External Consultancy	0.62	0.38	0.50

(AQW 151/10)

The amount that the Department has spent on external consultancy in the past five years is contained in the table below. The Department adheres to DFP guidance on professional services, which defines external consultancy expenditure and best practice in relation to the engagement of consultants.

Year	2004/5 £m	2005/6 £m	2006/7 £m	2007/8 £m	2008/9 £m
Amount	£0.42	£0.62	£0.38	£0.5	£0.58

The amount the Department has spent on event organisers in the past five years is contained in the table below. The Department procures event organisers in association with the relevant branch and the Central Procurement Directorate – CPD within DFP.

Year	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Amount	£16750.00	£16750.00	£29790.00	£22723.00	£35972.00

The amount mentioned refers to the salary costs of the former Equality, Rights and Social Needs Division. This Division has undergone a restructuring exercise within the wider Directorate which has resulted in a significant reduction in headcount and costs. Anti-discrimination and equality issues are the responsibility of the Directorate encompassing Equality, Good Relations and Economic Policy.

This Directorate is responsible for, amongst other issues, gender issues, older people issues, monitoring ECNI, children and young people's issues, implementing good relations policies, racial equality issues, addressing disability discrimination, tackling poverty and social exclusion, EC directives, providing good relations funding, developing legislation for an Older People's Commissioner, victims and survivors issues and oversight of the Programme for Government.



Published by Authority of the Northern Ireland Assembly,
Belfast: The Stationery Office

and available from:

Online

www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

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PO Box 29, Norwich, NR3 1GN

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Fax: 028 9023 5401

ISSN 1463-7162

Daily Editions: Single copies £5, Annual subscriptions £325

Bound Volumes of Debates are issued periodically during the session: Single copies: £90

Printed in Northern Ireland by The Stationery Office Limited

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ISBN 978-0-339-70183-0

