

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 6 June 2014

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 6 June 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Race Equality

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on updating race equality law.

(AQO 6142/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): We are currently considering the options for legislative reform. When we have made a decision we will outline our proposals.

We intend that the consultation on the draft Racial Equality Strategy will begin shortly and there are a number of questions in relation to reform of the Race Relations Order included in the document.

Colliers Report

Mr Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the Colliers International Marketing Strategy and Plan for a Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

(AQO 6136/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Strategic Investment Board commissioned the Colliers International Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre Marketing Strategy and Plan.

We did not complete an assessment of the Marketing Strategy and Plan.

Racial Equality Strategy

Mr F McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when their racial equality strategy will go out for consultation.

(AQO 6138/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following the most recent meeting of the Racial Equality Panel on 1 April, officials are refining the draft consultation document for the Racial Equality Strategy. This exercise is near completion and the public consultation of the revised Strategy will commence very shortly.

The consultation will last at least 12 weeks. A number of events will be held in the areas of highest population for minority ethnic people and events will be facilitated in different languages where appropriate.

We also intend to use social media to gather views from as many interested parties as we can.

At the end of that exercise we intend to have a reinvigorated, contemporary and focused Strategy that will help improve the lives of our minority ethnic people for the next decade.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Recommendations in Growing for Growth

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many of the recommendations in Growing for Growth, that fall within the remit of her Department, have received funding.

(AQW 33527/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I am fully committed to delivering on the aims and objectives of Going for Growth and, although the overall Executive response has not been agreed, in the meantime I have made progress on a number of fronts in the key areas of marketing, innovation and sustainable growth and my officials continue to work with the Agri-food Strategy Board (AFSB) and other departments to progress other agreed actions.

In relation to marketing, I have deferred the introduction of charges for Export Health Certificates for meat and dairy products. There has also been significant work done to help open up export markets. DARD has hosted inward inspections by Chinese and Singaporean officials, which have led to conditions for trade being secured. During my visits to China, which represents one of the key market opportunities for our industry, I have been able to build relationships with key officials that will assist in furthering negotiations on pork export contracts. I have also asked my officials to prepare for potential inward inspections from USA, Russia, China and Australia later this year, aimed at opening pork and beef markets.

On innovation in the sector, I have increased the number of postgraduate placements funded by DARD and I have opened a further tranche of the Research Challenge Fund. My Department is also funding a dedicated contact point at AFBI to assist local researchers and businesses in accessing EU Research Funds.

In the area of sustainable growth and production efficiency, I recently opened an additional tranche of the Manure Efficiency Technology Scheme (METS), which supports the AFSB's aims of growing the sector whilst enhancing our sustainability credentials. The METS scheme has been funded from the additional allocation of funding that I was able to secure in the 2014/15 capital reallocation exercise to help support the aims and objectives of Going for Growth.

My Department has consulted on proposals for the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme, which will be an important tool for delivering on a number of the recommendations in Going for Growth, not least the proposed Farm Business Improvement Scheme.

The main outstanding issue is funding for the Farm Business Improvement Scheme. The Board has set a very ambitious challenge for both industry and government to provide the investment necessary to grow the sector. That represents a major commitment and to deliver fully on the aims and objectives of Going for Growth I will need to pull in further funding in line with industry need.

Staff Recruitment

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of staff recruited to her Department in 2013; and of these, how many stated their community background as (i) Protestant; (ii) Roman Catholics; and (iii) non-determined.

(AQW 33616/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In total there were 99 staff recruited to DARD in 2013. Of these, the breakdown by community background was as follows:

- (i) Protestant - 43
- (ii) Roman Catholic - 47
- (iii) Non-determined - 9

Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the pilot projects under the joint project for the sustainable use of poultry litter will commence.

(AQW 33634/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The first stage of the joint DARD and DETI project for the Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter was a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition. The SBRI funded proof of concept / feasibility stage work and has encouraged the technical development of solutions to utilise poultry litter.

The next stage prior to the full commercial roll out of the technologies is the demonstration of consistent operation of poultry litter processing facilities at full, or near to full, scale.

Therefore, building on the progress from the SBRI competition, a project team comprising the Strategic Investment Board, DARD, DETI and InvestNI officials has developed a support package. This support aims to fast track the development of demonstrator plants to prove commercial and technical viability of solutions as soon as practicable.

However, a number of other factors, which involve the technology providers and the poultry sector, will impact on the timing of when these demonstrator plants will become operational. These include the time required to obtain the relevant regulatory consents, agree contracts for the supply of poultry litter and build the plants.

Qualifying technologies producing energy from the treatment process may also attract subsidies from the various Renewable Energy support schemes including the NI Renewables Obligation Certificates (NROCs) Scheme. To secure funding under the NROCs Scheme, processing plants would need to be operational and accredited under the Scheme by end March 2017.

Flooding Problems in the Fintona and Trillick Areas

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail her Department's plans to address flooding problems in the Fintona and Trillick areas; and whether her Department will review and report on the problems caused by flooding in these areas on 22 May 2014.

(AQW 33670/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The localised flooding incident of 22 May 2014 affecting Fintona and Trillick areas was due to torrential rainfall which led to flooding from overland flow, runoff from roads and inadequate drainage systems. Rivers Agency is currently conducting a CCTV survey of their culvert network to ensure that no debris has been washed into the system that could cause future blockages. The Agency will inspect open watercourse channels in the immediate area to ensure they are free flowing, and will also look for opportunities to improve the flow and reduce the risk of flooding. The Agency has agreed a site for a sandbag store close to Fintona town centre.

Rivers Agency met with residents and their representatives on 3 June as part of a planned pilot on community engagement with those at risk of flooding. Further meetings are planned and updates on progress to address flooding issues will be provided.

2013 Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme Payments

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the progress of the 2013 Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme payments.

(AQW 33759/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department has received 1,444 applications for the 2013 NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS).

Payment processing commenced on 22nd May 2014 and as at 2 June 2014, 534 payments (36.98%), with a total value of £1,672,807, have been processed.

We continue to clear cases as quickly as practical and it is anticipated that 90% of all eligible claims will be processed by 31 July 2014.

The Bushmills Trust

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding has been paid to The Bushmills Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33798/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Bushmills Trust received Axis 3 funding of £14,099.55 on 21/09/12 under Measure 3.5 – Village Renewal.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Coarse Fishing: Regulation Amendment

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33014/11-15, whether any proposals have been brought forward to amend this regulation, including any which have been rejected.

(AQW 33319/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department has received no proposals to amend this Regulation.

Libraries NI's Strategy to Promote the Irish Language

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail Libraries NI's strategy to promote the Irish language.

(AQW 33404/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI's strategy to promote the Irish language is based around my Líofo campaign which aspires to make Irish more accessible to people across the north of Ireland. As part of this strategy, Libraries NI is working to expand its Irish language stock and since April 2011 has spent over £47k on Irish language material. Libraries NI's is endeavouring to make this existing, and any new Irish language information and reading material it acquires in the future, available in the majority of its libraries.

Currently almost 12,500 items of Irish language material (adults' and childrens') are available for loan with larger collections deliberately located in branches where interest in the language is particularly strong. In addition Libraries NI holds an extensive collection of Irish language Heritage material which it is seeking to make more readily accessible to the entire community.

Libraries NI continues to run an extensive programme of activities and events designed to promote interest in and the use of Irish. These include local Irish language reading groups and conversational circles, storytelling sessions for children, public talks and exhibitions.

Libraries NI will also be launching its 2014 Children's Summer Reading Challenge in June which will incorporate provision for Irish language speakers. The authority is also planning a bilingual workshop (Irish and English) for school children during Community Relations Week in the same month.

Elver Kill at Ballyshannon in 2013

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether there was an elver kill at Ballyshannon in 2013; and if so, to detail the extent and protocols agreed with authorities in the Republic of Ireland as a result.

(AQW 33516/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: An incident occurred in May 2013 in which approximately 5kg of dead elvers were discovered at the ESB facility at Ballyshannon. An investigation established that the water supply to the trap had been accidentally turned off.

Consequently protocols have been put in place to ensure a continuous supply of running water to the trap.

Assessment of the Assertion of the Electricity Supply Board

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the assertion of the Electricity Supply Board that the elver kill at Ballyshannon reported on 22 April 2014 was the result of an excessive run of elvers on just one night.

(AQW 33517/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am most concerned at the incident that occurred at the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) facility at Ballyshannon which resulted in the loss of a substantial number of elvers. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is currently investigating the matter.

As this is an ongoing investigation it would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on the details at this time. I have requested a full report on the incident.

Enforcement Action Against ESB

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether enforcement action is under consideration against ESB or others on either side of the border as a result of the recent death of hundreds of thousands of elver on Lough Erne.

(AQW 33554/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: This incident occurred at the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) facility at Ballyshannon and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is investigating the matter.

This is an ongoing investigation and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the possible outcome at this time.

Arts Council for Northern Ireland: Dance

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many grants have been provided to (i) Scottish Country Dance; (ii) Highland Dance; and (iii) Irish Dance by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland in (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013; and to detail the amount of money allocated in each case.

(AQW 33597/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Arts Council supports dance through both its Small Grants Programme and its Annual Funding Programme. Funding provided through these programmes since 2011 has been detailed in the tables that follow.

The Arts Council has advised that dance projects for Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance are often classified broadly as 'Ulster-Scots'. Therefore, it is not possible to determine into which of these categories the project funding would fall so funding the categories (i) and (ii) has been grouped together.

Funding to Highland / Scottish Country Dancing (Ulster-Scots)

Financial Year	Organization Name	Project Title	Grant Amount (£)
2012-2013	Ballysillan Highland Dancers	Tuition of Highland Dancing	4,600
	Magherafelt Highland & Country Dance Group	Moving Best Foot Forward	3,087

Financial Year	Organization Name	Project Title	Grant Amount (£)
	Bright Lights*	Hands on Dance (Ulster-scots and Irish Dance project)	8,000
	Mid-Armagh Community Network	2012-2013 Music and Dance Programme	8,925
2011-2012	Magherafelt Highland & Country Dance Group	Best Foot Forward - Dance Project	2,646
	Bright Lights*	Hands on Dance (Ulster-scots and Irish Dance project)	8,000
	Mid-Armagh Community Network	2011-12 Music and Dance Programme	9,976

Funding to Irish Dancing

Financial Year	Organization Name	Project Title	Grant Amount (£)
2013-2014	BelfastTrad (Traditional Music and Dance Society)	Annual Funding	19,400
2012-2013	BelfastTrad (Traditional Music and Dance Society)	Annual Funding	20,000
	Bright Lights*	Hands on Dance (Ulster-scots and Irish Dance project)	8,000
2011-2012	BelfastTrad (Traditional Music and Dance Society)	Annual Funding	20,000
	Bright Lights*	Hands on Dance (Ulster-scots and Irish Dance project)	8,000
	Shannean Set Dancing Club	Shannean Set Dancing Club	3,190

* Please note that 'Bright Lights' falls into both categories and the total grant amount has been included in both tables.

SportNI: Dance Funding

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of grants for dance provided by SportNI in (i) 2011; (ii) 2012 and (iii) 2013; and to outline the dance genre and amount of money allocated in each case.

(AQW 33598/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: During the years detailed above, Sport NI has not provided any grants which are specifically for dance activities.

That said, since April 2010 Sport NI has invested £12.746 million in the Active Communities Programme, a National Lottery funded initiative. Dance is one of 36 sports and activities delivered through the programme and currently accounts for 2.2% of the programme.

On the basis of this, Sport NI has estimated that £280,412 has been invested in dance since April 2010. This investment has resulted in the following: -

- 4,858 hours of dancing delivered in school, club and community settings; and
- 12,863 people have participated in dance within the Active Communities programme.

During 2014/15, seven schools received grants from Sport NI under the Exchequer funded Active Schools programme for activities which include dance. While the dance genre is not known, a breakdown of the awards is detailed below: -

- Ballyclare Secondary School - £4,610
- Colaiste Feirste (Belfast) - £4,715
- Drumlish Primary School (Dromore) - £4,537
- Mount Lourdes Grammer School (Enniskillen) - £1,602
- Riverside Special School (Antrim) - £2,072
- St Bernard's Primary School (Belfast) - £1,786
- St Colman's Primary School (Lisburn) - £4,600

Fish Kill at the ESB Power Station in Ballyshannon

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps currently exist to prevent a recurrence of the fish kill at the ESB power station in Ballyshannon.

(AQW 33613/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There have been protocols in place for some time between ESB and my Department regarding the trapping of elvers at Ballyshannon and their subsequent transport for release into Lough Erne.

Following the significant loss of elvers at the facility over the Easter period, my officials, in conjunction with colleagues from ESB and Inland Fisheries Ireland, have been carrying out an urgent review of the protocols to ensure that the elvers making their way into the Erne catchment are afforded the maximum protection.

Fisheries Staff

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the number of staff currently employed within the fisheries section of her Department; (ii) the location of these staff; and (iii) what consideration has been given to relocating the responsibilities of fisheries staff to Co. Fermanagh.

(AQW 33672/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) There are currently 66 staff employed within my Department's Inland Fisheries Group.
- (ii) Staff are located in six regional offices across the North as follows:
 - 17 in Causeway Exchange, Belfast;
 - 10 at Bushmills Salmon Research Station, Co Antrim;
 - 10 at Movagh Fish Farm, Kilrea, Co Antrim;
 - 10 at Riversdale and Inishkeen, Co Fermanagh.
 - 11 in Portadown, Co Armagh;
 - 8 in Castlewellan, Co Down;
- (iii) No consideration has been given to relocating the responsibilities of fisheries staff to Co Fermanagh in view of the need to operate strategic hubs across the North reflecting operational requirements.

Number of Clubs and Boxers

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of clubs and boxers from (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland that entered and competed in the Youth 1 and 2; National Boy 1, 2 & 3 and National Girl Championships held in Dublin National Stadium in April and May 2014; and to provide a breakdown of all the participant's gender.

(AQW 33676/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The organisation and delivery of sporting competitions rests wholly with the governing body of that sport, in this instance the Irish Amateur Boxing Association. Neither my Department, nor Sport NI, holds the information requested.

Sustainable Legacy of Derry as City of Culture 2013

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33120/11-15, to detail her bid to the Executive for 2014-16 to maximise the impact and sustainable legacy of Derry as City of Culture 2013 in terms of (i) the amount bid for; and (ii) the specific projects to be targeted.

(AQW 33681/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In November 2013 I announced that my Department will establish a strategic focus on cultural development in the North West to tackle significant socio economic need. My officials are finalising a bid to the Executive to support this and build on the success of City of Culture.

The bid, which is still in draft form, has a range of options and will support both the continuation of key projects from the 2013 City of Culture and a range of community and cultural development projects in the North West.

The bid to the Executive also proposes setting up a new delivery structure to take forward key activities and to pursue longer term funding for sustainable creative and cultural interventions.

I have already directed around £2M of funding to support high profile initiatives between January and March 2014. This included the return to Derry of Other Voices and the continuation of other music and digital skills activities, as well as sports investment and the development of cultural strategies for disadvantaged areas within the City.

Coleraine Library

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the plans to renovate Coleraine Library, including (i) the time period; (ii) the total expenditure; and (iii) when work will occur.

(AQW 33686/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Consideration is currently being given to a proposal to refurbish and extend the existing public library in Coleraine. This has been set out in a business case recently submitted to DCAL by Libraries NI. This business case suggests that the proposed refurbishment should make the library more accessible to all people, particularly those with limited mobility. It also argues that the renovations it recommends would improve health and safety and fire safety, enhance the building's energy efficiency, address inequalities and barriers to participation in areas of social need, provide access to cultural and heritage materials and offer a shared community space that would contribute effectively to the Executive's 'Together: Building A United Community' strategy.

The total estimated capital cost of the preferred option identified within the business case is £2.1m. Work on refurbishment will only occur when the business case receives all the requisite approvals and provided funding is secured for the project. If the necessary approvals and funding are secured, Libraries NI estimates that the proposed renovation of Coleraine library would take a minimum of 2 financial years to complete. A commencement date has not yet been established.

Venue for Sport and Cultural Activities in the Londonderry Area

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has sought to identify a large scale venue for sport and cultural activities in the Londonderry area to replace The Venue, to cater for patrons in the wider North West.

(AQW 33687/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I recognise that The Venue 2013, funded primarily by DSD, was an essential space for hosting large scale events included in the City of Culture's Cultural Programme during 2013. My Department is proposing to continue key cultural projects from City of Culture 2013 and develop new cultural and sporting venues in the North West of Ireland, subject to securing the necessary resources from the Executive.

This investment is being made under my Department's top priority of 'Promoting Equality and tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion', and on the basis of targeting public resources at sectors of greatest inequality in areas of greatest objective need.

Coleraine Borough Council has been allocated £1.5m to develop the first phase of a multi-sport 'sports village' in Rugby Avenue, Coleraine. Phase 1 of the Coleraine Borough Council project will provide provision of two synthetic pitches and ancillary facilities which are due to be operational by September 2014.

Development of a New Velodrome

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether a site has been identified for the development of a new velodrome; and to detail if a business case has been prepared.

(AQW 33688/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Responsibility for bringing forward a proposal for a velodrome rests in the first instance with the governing body of the sport, Cycling Ireland.

As yet, my Department, or Sport NI, have not received any formal proposals in this regard. That said we will be happy to support Cycling Ireland, as it takes forward the development of these.

Any new proposals for a velodrome would have to demonstrate value for money, and would need to be considered within the wide context of the Executive's priorities, DCAL priorities for sport and as part of a clear co-ordinated strategy for the sport, developed by the governing body.

As cycling is organised on an All Ireland basis, I and my Department will also be looking at the possibility of an all island approach to both the velodrome and the broader promotion of cycling.

Redevelopment of Coleraine Library

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the plans for the redevelopment of Coleraine Library.

(AQW 33690/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Consideration is currently being given to a proposal to refurbish and extend the existing public library in Coleraine. This has been set out in a business case recently submitted to DCAL by Libraries NI. This business case suggests that the proposed refurbishment should make the library more accessible to all people, particularly those with limited mobility. It also argues that the renovations it recommends would improve health and safety and fire safety, enhance the building's energy efficiency, address inequalities and barriers to participation in areas of social need, provide access to cultural and heritage materials and offer a shared community space that would contribute effectively to the Executive's 'Together: Building A United Community' strategy.

The total estimated capital cost of the preferred option identified within the business case is £2.1m. Work on refurbishment will only occur when the business case receives all the requisite approvals and provided funding is secured for the project. If the necessary approvals and funding are secured,

Libraries NI estimates that the proposed renovation of Coleraine library would take a minimum of 2 financial years to complete. A commencement date has not yet been established.

Coarse Fishing: Trophy Fish

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33192/11-15 and AQW 33605/11-15, to detail the location of each seizure.

(AQW 33735/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table below details the location of seizures as reported in AQW 33192/11-15 and AQW 33605/11-15:

Year	Seizures
2011	Case 1 - Spa Lake, Ballynahinch
	Case 2 - Cusher River, Tandragee
2013	Case 1 - Mc Auley's Lake, Ballynahinch
	Case 2 - Mc Auley's Lake, Ballynahinch
	Case 3 - Cusher River, Tandragee
2014	Case 1 - Upper Bann, Portadown

Department of Education

Elective Home Education

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education what consideration has been given to how the relevant authorities in other regions of the UK address the issue of Elective Home Education.

(AQW 33615/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Whilst the issue of elective home education is a devolved policy area my Department actively seeks to ensure, as for any policy area, that appropriate consideration is given to how such matters are addressed in other jurisdictions including the south of Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and further afield.

The Education and Library Boards are currently undertaking an open consultation on their draft guidelines for elective home education and have advised that, in developing the guidelines, information from a range of sources was reviewed. I understand that this included consideration of, for example, the elective home education policy in the South of Ireland, the "Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities" published in 2007 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Birmingham City Council's Elective Home Education Policy.

New School Builds

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how many new school builds have been agreed since 2011; and how much funding has been allocated to each new build.

(AQW 33623/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: On 25 June 2012 I announced 18 schools that would receive a new build as part of a £173m investment in the schools' estate.

Subsequently, on 22 January 2013 I announced a further 22 schools projects to be advanced in planning representing a potential investment of £220m.

Attached are tables showing the 2012 and 2013 projects and their associated costs.

June 2012 Capital Announcement

School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan		£6m
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast		£3.7m
St. Teresa's Primary School, Lurgan		£3.9m
Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast		£4.3m
St. Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry		£9.025m
St. Clare's Convent & St. Coleman's Abbey Primary School, Newry		£6.3m
St. Mary's Primary School, Banbridge		£6.8m
Eglinton Primary School, Derry		£2.6m
St. Gerard's Resource Centre, Belfast		£4.3m
Dromore Central Primary School, Co. Down		£11.4m
Arvalee Special School, Omagh		£18.9m
Foyle College/Ebrington Primary School, Derry		£31.9m
Coaliste Feirste		£11.9m
Castletower Special School, Ballymena		£20.2m
Rossmar Special School, Limavady		£8.3m
Belmont House Special School, Limavady	£7.4m	
Enniskillen Model Primary School	£5.7m	

School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
Strabane Academy		£21.5m
St Patrick's Academy Dungannon	£27m	
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	£25m	
Portora Royal/ Collegiate, Enniskillen	£17m	
St Marys St Pauls & St Michaels – Lurgan	£26.5m	
St Joseph & St James Primary School, Poyntzpass & SMA	£2m	
Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh, Strabane	£2m	
Gaelscoil Ui Neill, Coalisland	£2m	
St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor & SMA	£3m	
St Mary's PS/Glenravel Primary School	£2m	
Omagh Integrated Primary School	£4m	
Braidside Integrated Primary School	£3.5m	
Portadown Integrated Primary School	£2m	

School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
Craigbrack PS/ Mullabuoy PS/ Listress Primary School	£2m	
Corran Integrated Primary School	£2m	
Edendork Primary School, Dungannon & SMA	£4m	
Devenish College/ Lisnakea, Enniskillen	£22.5m	
Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim		£19.9m
Down High School	£17m	
Elmgrove Primary School/ Avoniel Primary School	£11m	
Edenderry Nursery School	£0.5m	
Glenwood Primary School	£10.5m	

January 2013 Capital Announcement

Estimated costs relate to those projects which have not yet had an Economic Appraisal (EA) approved.

Projects with an approved cost have Economic Appraisals (EA's) approved.

Schools: Physical Education

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of schools in each education sector which offer dance as the physical component for (i) GCSE; and (ii) GCE Physical Education.

(AQW 33650/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is not collected. The Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has advised that it holds records at subject level only i.e. candidates who have achieved specific grades in GCSE or GCE Physical Education. Although candidates may choose to study 'Dance' as one option/component of the specification, this level of detail is not recorded in the CCEA examinations database.

Schools: Physical Education

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils in each education sector who took dance as the physical component for (i) GCSE; and (ii) GCE Physical Education in (a) 2010/11; (b) 2011/12; and (c) 2012/13.

(AQW 33651/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is not collected. The Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has advised that it holds records at subject level only i.e. candidates who have achieved specific grades in GCSE or GCE Physical Education. Although candidates may choose to study 'Dance' as one option/component of the specification, this level of detail is not recorded in the CCEA examinations database.

Schools: Physical Education

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number and percentage of pupils in each education sector who took dance as the physical component for (i) GCSE; and (ii) GCE Physical Education in (i) 2010/11; (ii) 2011/12; and (iii) 2012/13, who attained grades A*-C.

(AQW 33652/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is not collected. The Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has advised that it holds records at subject level only i.e. candidates who have

achieved specific grades in GCSE or GCE Physical Education. Although candidates may choose to study 'Dance' as one option/component of the specification, this level of detail is not recorded in the CCEA examinations database.

Primary Schools: Curriculum

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of primary schools in each education sector which offer (i) Irish dance; (ii) highland dance; and (iii) Scottish country dance as part of the curriculum.

(AQW 33653/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not collate information on the types of dance offered by schools in their delivery of the curriculum.

Dance as an Extra-Curricular Activity

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of primary schools in each education sector which offer (i) Irish dance; (ii) highland dance; and (iii) Scottish country dance as an extra-curricular activity.

(AQW 33654/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not routinely collect information on extra-curricular dance activities.

Ballee Community High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education when he received the latest development plan for Ballee Community High School from the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 33695/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that this question relates to the Development Proposal (DP) to close Ballee Community High School (CHS).

On 3 September 2013, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) gave my Department statutory notice of its intention to publish a DP for the closure of Ballee CHS with effect from 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. The Board published the DP on 1 October 2013.

On 26 November 2013, NEELB published a DP to increase the enrolment at Dunclug College. As the two proposals formed part of NEELB's area solution for Ballymena, they were considered together, rather than in isolation from each other.

A two-month public consultation period commenced at the publication date of each of these DPs. The consultation periods ended on 2 December 2013 and 27 January 2014 for the Ballee and Dunclug proposals respectively.

Having carefully considered the detail of these proposals, and all relevant circumstances, I decided to approve the closure of Ballee CHS and the expansion of Dunclug College on 21 May 2014.

Oversubscribed Places at Primary 1 Level

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of oversubscribed places at Primary 1 level in each education sector in South Belfast, that are administered by the (i) Belfast Education and Library Board; and (ii) South Eastern Education and Library Board, as of 1 May 2014.

(AQW 33701/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested for schools in South Belfast is set out in the following tables:

1 Belfast Education and Library Board**Controlled**

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Rosetta PS	59	25	-
Harding Memorial PS	30	31	1
Nettlefield PS	54	45	-
Taughmonagh PS	28	25	-
Stranmillis PS	58	75	17
Finaghy PS	66	69	3
Donegall Road PS	45	24	-
Fane Street PS	71	26	-
Blythefield PS	73	7	-
Botanic PS	30	37	7

Catholic Maintained

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Holy Rosary PS	73	61	-
St Anne's PS	120	123	3
St Bride's PS	116	130	14
St Michael's PS	58	76	18
St Malachy's PS	50	58	8

Other Maintained

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Scoil An Droichid	21	23	2

Controlled Integrated

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Forge PS	36	60	24

Grant Maintained Integrated

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Cranmore PS	29	25	-

2 South-Eastern Education and Library Board**Controlled**

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Knockbreda PS	30	27	-
Belvoir Park PS	53	29	-
Cairnshill PS	83	61	-
Lead Hill PS	30	8	-
Carryduff PS	48	22	-

Catholic Maintained

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
St Joseph's PS	60	66	6
St Bernard's PS	60	61	1
St Ita's PS	82	95	13

Grant Maintained Integrated

School	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference Applications	Number by which over-subscribed
Loughview PS	58	77	19

Note: The figures were supplied by the Belfast and South-Eastern Education and Library Boards and reflect the position at 30 April 2014.

Post-Primary School Curriculum

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of post-primary schools in each education sector which offer (i) Irish dance; (ii) highland dance; and (iii) Scottish country dance as part of the curriculum.

(AQW 33704/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While dance is prescribed as a specific area to be covered under the Physical Education (PE) Area of Learning of the statutory curriculum at primary level, it is not specified within the PE curriculum for post-primary pupils.

At post-primary level, Key Stage 3 pupils should have opportunities to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills through frequent and regular participation in a balanced programme of athletics, games, gymnastics and swimming. At Key Stage 4, schools have further flexibility with their PE provision as pupils should be enabled to plan and participate in a regular, frequent and balanced programme of physical activity. The content of this balanced programme is a matter for each school.

Some post-primary schools may of course offer dance as an option within their PE curriculum, however the Department would not hold this information.

Dance as an Extra-Curricular Activity: Post-Primary

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of post-primary schools in each education sector which offer (i) Irish dance; (ii) highland dance; and (iii) Scottish country dance as an extra-curricular activity.

(AQW 33705/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not routinely collect information on extra-curricular activities.

United Nations Covention on the Rights of the Child

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education to detail the obligations that his Department has under the United Nations Covention on the Rights of the Child; and the mechanisms in place to ensure compliance.

(AQW 33706/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is fully committed to the promotion and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention). The principles and four categories of rights of the Convention clearly provide an important guiding framework for the development, implementation and review of Departmental policies, legislation and practice.

The Convention places equal emphasis on all rights for children and recognises that these rights are indivisible and interrelated and that decisions with regard to one right must be made in light of all other rights in the Convention.

Reflecting this approach, my Department proactively works to ensure that children's rights are respected, promoted, protected and fulfilled in the development and implementation of legislation and policy. For example, DE makes a vitally important contribution to the protection and fulfilment of children's survival and development rights as detailed under articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC (which relate specifically to a child's right to a sound and suitable education) and also those under articles 24, 27, 30 and 41.

In addition, the Department seeks to ensure that children's protection and participation rights including, for example, those under articles 12, 13, 19, 34 are addressed and fulfilled in developing and implementing Departmental legislation/policy.

It is important to note, however, that whilst the Westminster Government ratified the Convention in 1991 it has not been directly incorporated into law in GB or the north.

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is the lead department here with responsibility for co-ordinating Departmental actions to ensure compliance with the Convention and my Department recently provided detailed information to OFMDFM setting out the actions taken by the Department in this regard. I understand that some of this information is reflected in the State Party's 5th Periodic Report submitted to the United Nations on 23 May 2014.

Closure of Ballee Community High School

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the closure of Ballee Community High School, to detail the process in place to accommodate current pupils, including the provisions being made to accommodate them in other schools.

(AQW 33732/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Development Proposal to close Ballee Community High School with effect from 31 August 2014 was approved on 21 May. During this process the North-Eastern Education and Library Board consulted with the Board of Governors, staff and parents of pupils. There was also a two month period of public consultation during which comments could be sent to the Department.

Since the DP was approved the NEELB has been working to ensure that all Ballee Community High School pupils secure a place at a new school before the end of June. Senior Board officers have been liaising with principals of neighbouring schools to ensure that, as far as possible, all pupils can be accommodated in their school of choice.

The Board has also published contact details for parents of children affected on its website and has written to parents:

- a) of children who were due to be informed of Year 8 placement in Ballee CHS;
- b) of existing pupils in Years 8 to 11 advising them to make application to the school of their choice for September 2014, providing contact numbers of neighbouring schools with places available, giving advice about issues to consider when choosing another school, providing contact numbers of NEELB staff for assistance on admissions and transport matters, and enclosing the appropriate application form; and
- c) of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs advising that the NEELB's Special Education Branch would arrange placement in another school and that a Board officer would contact them regarding school preference.

Woodlands Speech and Language Unit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education what provision is available for Key Stage Two students in the new language classes replacing the Woodlands Speech and Language Unit.

(AQW 33736/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Western Education and Library Board has advised that, from September 2014, there will be speech and language classes located at Ebrington Primary School, St. Anne's Primary School and Ballykelly Primary School. These classes will be able to cater for pupils with speech and language difficulties at Key Stages One and Two with provision being tailored to the individual learning needs of each pupil attending these units.

Portora Royal School in Enniskillen

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether he has visited Portora Royal School in Enniskillen; and if so, to detail (i) when; (ii) who he met; (iii) the purpose of the visit; and (iv) the outcome of the visit.

(AQW 33741/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have not visited Portora Royal School in Enniskillen.

Primary School Places in the Maintained Sector

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to address the lack of primary school places in the Maintained Sector in the (i) South Belfast constituency; and (ii) current Castlereagh Borough Council area.

(AQW 33769/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As the planning authority for maintained schools, it is the responsibility of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to manage and monitor their estate and to bring forward proposals to develop a cohesive plan for maintained primary school provision in Carryduff and the wider South Belfast area.

On 17 April 2013, I approved a development proposal to increase the enrolment number of St Ita's Primary School, Carryduff from 525 to 574. This was to permit the school to increase their admissions number from 75 to 82 pupils with effect from 1 September 2013.

The latest versions of the Belfast and South Eastern Education and Library Board's Draft Area Plans for Primary Schools do not contain any further proposals to increase provision at any other maintained schools in the area.

I expect CCMS to review the situation on a regular basis to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet the needs of children in the area. If additional places are required then development proposals should be brought forward in a timely manner.

GCSE and A Level Politics

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many pupils studied (i) GCSE; and (ii) A Level politics in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 33784/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is contained in the table below.

Number of Pupils who made one or more examination entry in Politics at either GCSE or A-level, 2003/04 – 2012/13

	Pupils with examination entries in GCSE Politics	Pupils with examination entries in A-level Politics
2003/04	0	1078
2004/05	0	1115
2005/06	0	1090
2006/07	0	1011
2007/08	0	978
2008/09	0	1018
2009/10	0	931
2010/11	0	1050
2011/12	0	992
2012/13	0	1001

Source: RM Education

Public Bodies and Boards

Mr McEliduff asked the Minister of Education to list the public bodies and Boards under the aegis of his Department; and to detail the process for seeking appointment to these bodies.

(AQW 33812/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The public bodies and Boards currently under the aegis of my Department are as follows:

- Belfast Education and Library Board;
- North Eastern Education and Library Board;

- South Eastern Education and Library Board;
- Southern Education and Library Board;
- Western Education and Library Board
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;
- Council for Integrated Education (NICIE);
- Exceptional Circumstances Body;
- General Teaching Council;
- Middletown Centre for Autism Ltd;
- Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards; and
- Youth Council.

The appointments I and my Department make to these public bodies and Boards fall into two broad categories; (1) self nomination by individuals in response to a public advertisement, and (2) nomination by an external organisation such as a local council or one of the main churches.

With the exception of the Exceptional Circumstances Body and the Middletown Centre for Autism Ltd, the appointments I and my Department make to these public bodies and Boards are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Shankill Manifesto for Education

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the implementation of the Shankill Manifesto for Education.

(AQO 6223/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I met with Nigel Dodds MP and Jackie Redpath of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board in December 2013 to discuss the Shankill Manifesto for Education.

Since that meeting the Partnership Board has submitted a new proposal to the Department for the development of a framework for collaborative working by relevant agencies and partners with the aim of designating the area a 'Children's Zone'.

I am heartened by the commitment shown by the community leaders and their recognition that the community itself has a particular and significant role to play.

I am committed to supporting the framework and their proposal to designate the area as a 'Shankill Children's Zone'.

I understand that the community are not at the implementation stage and that there is still work to be undertaken with regard to the framework. However my officials have been working closely with Jackie Redpath and the Greater Shankill Partnership Board and will continue to do so.

Teachers: Professional Development

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Education how his Department intends to encourage and provide for the professional development of teachers.

(AQO 6224/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I want to ensure teachers have the skills needed to drive forward school improvement and to improve the educational outcomes for all our young people.

It is the statutory responsibility of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) in each of the Education and Library Boards to provide advisory and support services to all grant aided schools. Therefore, they are the main providers of in-service education and training (INSET).

In order to provide such training CASS carry out an annual training needs audit of schools from which they then prepare a scheme of support.

In addition, I am currently developing a Strategy that will set out the way forward for Teacher Professional Development. This will provide an overarching and coherent framework for teacher education and continuous professional development to support and strengthen the professionalism and expertise of the teaching workforce.

My officials are engaging with key stakeholders to inform the development of this framework.

It is regrettable that work on the establishment of a new School Development Service under ESA has been delayed. In the interim, investigation of planned provision is being carried out to inform the development of a regional programme of support for schools and professional development for teachers to complement the significant existing provision.

Education and Library Boards

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for an update on the reconstitution of the Education and Library Boards.

(AQO 6226/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have submitted a paper to the Executive proposing that the 5 Education and Library Boards are replaced by one Education Board. This is needed to ensure our education administration will be compatible with our new local councils from 1 April, 2015.

Free School Meals

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Education whether his Department will benefit from additional resources as a result of the Barnett Consequentials following the decision to extend Free School Meal entitlement in England.

(AQO 6227/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All Barnett consequentials are unhypothecated and hence it is up to the Executive to decide on the use of any additional funding. However I met with the Finance Minister on Tuesday 27 May to discuss how this additional £38 million allocation could be utilised for educational purposes. I will continue to seek to maximise the funding allocated to the education sector.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education when he will publish his list of alternatives to the Education and Skills Authority and their expected impact on Area Based Planning.

(AQO 6228/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have submitted a paper to the Executive proposing that the five Education and Library Boards are replaced by one Education Board. This is needed to ensure that education administration will be compatible with our new local councils from 1 April, 2015. Key challenges such as Area Planning will be taken forward in the context of the Executive's agreement.

Key Stage Assessments

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Education to detail the total expenditure for the implementation of the End of Key Stage Assessments over the last three years.

(AQO 6229/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Over the three year period from 2011 to 2014, expenditure by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in relation to implementation of the requirement for schools to assess and to report the cross-curricular skills of pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 with reference to Levels of Progression totalled approximately £3.4 million.

These figures include the costs associated with:

- On-line and face-to-face training for all primary teachers and all relevant post-primary teachers;
- Development and trialling of assessment materials, training and arrangements;
- Funding made available to schools for assessment activity, including in-school activity;
- Provision of support services and materials to schools; and
- The operation of moderation.

This total does not include legacy end of Key Stage assessment arrangements in relation to levels of attainment or expenditure on CCEA staffing.

Irish-Medium Post-Primary Group

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Education for an update on the work of the Irish Medium Post-Primary Group.

(AQO 6230/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the Irish Medium Post-Primary Group presented me with their Report on 28 April. I am currently considering the findings and recommendations contained in the Report.

Department for Employment and Learning

Disabled Students Allowance

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the Disabled Students Allowance.

(AQW 33591/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Disabled Students' Allowances are available to students who have a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty and are attending a Higher Education course. This allowance is not means tested and is available in addition to the usual tuition fee and maintenance support.

The following is available in academic year 2014/15: A specialist equipment allowance of up to £5,266 for the whole course; a non-medical helper's allowance of up to £20,938 per year; a general allowance of up to £1,759 per year to help towards other disability related spending such as printer cartridges and Braille paper; and any extra travel costs the student may have to pay to attend University or College because of their disability.

Utilisation of the Youth Employment Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 33212/11-15, to detail the employers who utilised The Youth Employment Scheme between 1 January 2014 and 8 May 2014.

(AQW 33596/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have placed a list detailing those employers that have had one or more young people placed on the Youth Employment Scheme at some point during the period between 1 January 2014 and 8 May 2014 in the Assembly Library and on my department's website at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/>.

South West Regional College: Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the South West Regional College's proposed capital developments in Enniskillen.

(AQO 6240/11-15)

Dr Farry: The South West College has submitted a draft business case to address accommodation needs at its Fairview campus in Enniskillen. The draft has identified, as the value for money option, a replacement new build at the old Erne Hospital site. This site is currently in the ownership of the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

The Trust and Fermanagh District Council are working on plans for the transfer of the site from the Trust to the Council, which would see it developed as a public sector shared services site, with the College being one of the public sector bodies that would subsequently take ownership of a major part of the site.

The Council and the Trust have agreed that prior to transfer the Trust will be demolishing the current buildings. This work requires Planning Approval. There are also issues around contamination, with title and final valuations still to be completed or agreed.

The College does not expect to be in a position to finalise the business case until the Trust has completed the demolition of the existing buildings and transferred the site to the Council.

University for Derry

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his most recent discussions with University for Derry in relation to additional higher education places at Magee.

(AQO 6237/11-15)

Dr Farry: I met with a delegation last September which included representatives of the University for Derry group.

I am committed to achieving the One Plan target of 1,000 additional places at Magee by 2015, subject to resources being available.

Young Farmers' Scheme

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the use of Regional College facilities by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise to help deliver the necessary number of courses for a level 2 qualification to allow the maximum number of people to qualify for the Young Farmers' Scheme.

(AQO 6241/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has responsibility for food, farming, environmental policy and development of the rural sector in Northern Ireland. My Department has responsibility for skills training and helping people into employment; this includes responsibility for the Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing sector, however, the Young Farmers' Scheme does not fall into this remit.

I co-chair the Skills Action Group for the Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing sector and I am currently seeking to widen the membership. This will include representation from the farming sector such as the Ulster Farmers Union, the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association and Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector.

This will align with the Agri-food Strategy Boards Strategic Action Plan 'Going for Growth' which advocates a single supply chain to develop the industry's people and skills.

Further education colleges currently offer an extensive range of courses in their curriculum including agriculture related provision at level 2, which is accessible to young farmers.

The review of youth training is presently reviewing all aspects of provision at Level 2 for young people, including those wanting to progress to a further education course at Level 3, or into employment. The expectation is that the future offer at level 2 will be better aligned to the needs of employers across all sectors of the economy, including the land based industries.

Regarding the delivery of courses for an agricultural level 2 qualification for the Young Farmers' Scheme; this is clearly a matter for DARD under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

I am happy to meet with the DARD Minister to discuss how my Department can assist with skills development across the land based sector.

Assured Skills Programme

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the Assured Skills Programme.

(AQO 6242/11-15)

Dr Farry: To date, there have been twelve company projects supported through Assured Skills, relating to over 3,000 jobs. When fully realised, this will benefit the local economy by £86 million each year.

Alongside support provided by Invest Northern Ireland, the support provided through Assured Skills has been instrumental in securing new jobs for Northern Ireland, such as the significant number announced within the last few weeks.

The Assured Skills offer has many benefits for companies. They can find employees in what is commonly a new labour market. Any training developed is bespoke, helping to find people with the right skills and attributes for their company; and the trainees are more productive more quickly, with a consequent effect on the company's bottom line. Further, networks are established with local further education colleges or universities, with the potential for ongoing links to mutual benefit.

In addition, Assured Skills supports short-term interventions to meet identified needs of existing employers in Northern Ireland, and also to help unemployed graduates find suitable employment.

The Software Testers' Academy has been the most successful intervention to date, but we have also used our "academy approach" to meet needs in cloud computing, data analytics, and computer numerical control machining. We are now looking to develop academies in animation, and in sales and marketing.

Assured Skills is an innovative and responsive programme, which has made a big impact in a short period of time. It is continuing to evolve, and it is my intention to keep Assured Skills at the cutting edge of our economic interventions.

I have set challenging targets for Assured Skills, and look forward to continuing to expand the benefits that the programme brings.

EU Youth Guarantee Scheme

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he intends to engage with the recently returned Members of the European Parliament in relation to the establishment of a properly funded EU youth guarantee scheme.

(AQO 6243/11-15)

Dr Farry: The EU Youth Guarantee is a framework and not a scheme or programme. As our level of youth unemployment, while challenging, is less severe than in many other parts of Europe, Northern Ireland is not eligible for EU Youth Employment Initiative funding.

Through the range of DEL programmes, Northern Ireland is delivering a Youth Guarantee.

All 16-17 year old school leavers have a guarantee of a training place through Training for Success with extended eligibility for those with a disability and from an in care background. 18-24 year olds can avail of a range of provision including further education, apprenticeships, foundation degrees, Steps to

Work, and the Youth Employment Scheme. In addition my Department provides a comprehensive range of programmes for individuals who are not in employment, education or training supported through the Pathways to Success strategy and the European Social Fund.

My Department plans to allocate over half of the ESF funding for 2014-20 to programmes targeting young people. The ESF allocation to the new Programme for 2014-2020 will be €205 million, giving a total fund value of £417 million, including matched funding. In the new ESF Programme, there will be a specific focus on supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training; this will be through a ring-fenced allocation under Priority 1 of £50 million, which includes matched funding.

In addition, young people who are not in education, employment or training will also benefit from activity under Priority 2, through the Community Family Support Programme, and under Priority 3, which will focus on apprenticeships and youth training.

During his recent visit to Belfast, Commissioner László Andor acknowledged Northern Ireland's approach to supporting the Youth Guarantee framework. My intention is to work in partnership with the recently returned Members of the European Parliament and anyone else who can help ensure that Northern Ireland maximises all opportunities within Europe, including funding opportunities.

Northern Regional College: Ballymoney

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the future of the Ballymoney campus of the Northern Regional College.

(AQO 6244/11-15)

Dr Farry: The College is currently preparing an outline business case exploring options for the provision of further education in the Ballymena, Ballymoney and Coleraine areas.

This business case will identify the value for money option, funding requirements and procurement route. Until the business case has been assessed and approved, I am not in a position to be definitive about the College's plans for the Ballymoney area.

However, I can assure you that my Department is working hard with the College to ensure that, going forward, the learners, employers and community in the College's area will benefit from the state of the art accommodation and equipment that are now available in many other College areas.

University Research Base

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the development of a strong, internationally-regarded research base in local universities.

(AQO 6236/11-15)

Dr Farry: Through "Graduating to Success", a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland, I have committed to supporting our universities in the development of an internationally excellent and world-leading research base.

I have promoted this commitment by introducing a new Quality Related Research funding model, through a substantially increased allocation to the latest round of our Higher Education Innovation Fund, as well as making provision for an enhanced Connected Programme. Also there are various special funding initiatives including the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership and the recently announced partnership between my Department and Science Foundation Ireland in relation to their prestigious Investigators Programme.

In order to maximise Northern Ireland's drawdown from the European Commission's recently-launched Horizon 2020 programme, Minister Foster and I jointly established a new network of experienced EU practitioners known as Northern Ireland Contact Points who are tasked with providing specialist advice and assistance to academics and businesses right across Northern Ireland.

We are also focused on developing the researchers of tomorrow. To that end, I was pleased to be able to provide support for a Centre for Doctoral Training in Photonic Integration for Advanced Data Storage.

Announced by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Centre last week, the Centre is the first of its kind here. It will be led by Queen's University and involve key industry partners, including Seagate Technology.

This is a strategically significant development for Northern Ireland and will support a cohort of 50 future scientists and engineers. The Centre will help create new working cultures, which will present the ideal environment for our future PhDs to carry out high-quality research whilst also developing the skills that are crucial for themselves and for the wider economy. This should help further increase the international profile of our higher education research base.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

InvestNI Funds

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 33091/11-15, whether she is concerned that InvestNI funds have been utilised to procure products and services outside Northern Ireland when such items are readily available locally.

(AQW 33463/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): In my response to AQW 33091, I clarified that it is explicitly prohibited under EU guidelines to attach conditions to Invest NI offers of support to companies to stipulate the procuring of locally produced products and services.

The Northern Ireland Executive's Economic Strategy and Invest NI's Corporate Plan both recognise the potential of supply chain initiatives to meet the needs of potential customers. Invest NI will continue to work closely with NI businesses to ensure they are well positioned to exploit the supply chain opportunities that exist.

The final procurement decision will, ultimately, be for the company based on its own individual business needs and requirements.

Recommendations in Growing for Growth

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many of the recommendations in Growing for Growth, that fall within the remit of her Department, have received funding.

(AQW 33526/11-15)

Mrs Foster: All recommendations in Going for Growth which fall within the remit of my Department are being taken forward and funded, where required.

Current Moratorium on Lignite Extraction in North Antrim

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the current moratorium on lignite extraction in North Antrim.

(AQW 33580/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Planning Appeals Commission's (PAC) Independent Examination of Development Plans was expected to report to the Department of the Environment at end of May 2014 on the Commission's findings in relation to the draft Northern Area Plan 2016.

When the outcome of the PAC Report is known, DETI intends to issue a paper for public consultation on a revised policy on lignite and a proposal to extend the moratorium on licensing for lignite prospecting and extraction.

The public consultation will remain open for a period of 12 weeks.

Tamboran

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the work items Tamboran has delivered since permission was granted to drill a deep stratigraphic borehole in May 2012.

(AQW 33671/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Permission has not been granted for Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd to drill a deep stratigraphic borehole. The company has not applied to drill this or any other borehole in their petroleum licence area.

InvestNI: First Minister's Comments

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what evaluation has been carried out by InvestNI of the risk caused to inward investment and export sales as a result of the First Minister's comments in support of Pastor McConnell's reported views.

(AQW 33774/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Attracting inward investment and supporting local companies to grow their export base are key elements of Invest Northern Ireland's long term strategy to support delivery of Programme for Government targets.

The organisation has recently reported its best ever year of performance with a very strong outcome in relation to inward investment. I am pleased to advise that there is also a very healthy pipeline of new potential projects.

Invest NI is continuing to implement its current Overseas Event and Inward Investment Programmes (2014-15), which will see almost seventy Trade Missions and other Trade events to over thirty countries.

Invest NI enjoys productive and mutually beneficial relationships with many regions and countries throughout the world and is confident that these will continue.

Both Invest NI, and my Department, are fully committed to working openly and constructively with all those who can contribute to the economic revitalisation of the Northern Ireland economy, both home and abroad. Northern Ireland is, and will continue to be, open for business and a welcoming region with which to do business.

Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project as announced on 7 February 2014.

(AQW 33811/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since signing the contract for the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, BT has been engaged in an extensive survey and design process that takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc. This methodology seeks to achieve the greatest value for money, while at the same time attaining the highest number of beneficiaries. This is a complex process which has taken longer than anticipated to complete.

The project will be completed in eight phases and details of the roll-out plans will be published as the outcomes of the survey and design process become available. My Department intends to use the NI Direct website for that purpose.

Economic Data

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her Department's proposals to address the data gap within local economic strategies as highlighted in the report published by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action in March 2014.

(AQO 6250/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I reject the implication that data is not available to monitor local economic strategies. We have access to a wide range of information, including national statistics produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

In drawing their conclusion, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action report did not highlight that the Economic Strategy has four measurable objectives and a further seventeen key performance indicators which are reported on each year by the Executive Sub-committee on the Economy.

Whilst my officials regularly engage with Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency colleagues to identify potential data improvements, we all have to be aware that gathering more information from businesses increases the burden on them.

Border SMEs

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her Department's strategy to address the regulatory barriers and challenges facing small and medium sized enterprises located around the border in building their sales and export base.

(AQO 6251/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The overarching goal of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy is to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy through a focus on export led economic growth. For many small companies, particularly those located in border areas, the Republic of Ireland market offers a first opportunity to sell to an export market. To this end, Invest NI offers regular export skills workshops to encourage cross border trade and works closely with InterTradelreland, on programmes such as Acumen, which seeks to promote cross border sales for small and medium enterprises across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

InterTradelreland has also established a 'First Stop Shop' for businesses on both sides of the border and provides guidance on regulations which affect companies wishing to undertake cross border business.

Invest NI provides a wide portfolio of support for small and medium sized businesses in the border areas providing practical help and support to help boost sales and exports.

Finally, my Department is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of business red tape which aims to find ways to reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses.

Tourism: Cruise Ships

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the economic benefits of the growing number of cruise ships docking at Belfast Harbour.

(AQO 6252/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The number of cruise ships docking in Belfast is increasing each year. In 2009, thirty six cruise ships docked, in 2013 this figure increased to fifty nine ships generating an estimated five million, eight hundred thousand pounds in visitor spend. Sixty one ships have scheduled a visit during 2014.

Visit Belfast and Belfast Harbour Commissioners work in partnership to sell Belfast and Northern Ireland as a cruise destination, under the banner of 'Cruise Belfast'. This partnership has been successfully developed over a number of years, with excellent relationships built up with the cruise companies and ground handlers. A wide range of marketing activities are undertaken including:

A personal welcome and visitor information is provided to all passengers about Belfast and Northern Ireland, the service is delivered on the ship and in a marquee at the quayside.

Broadband: Rural Timescales

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the timescales for the roll-out of high speed rural broadband.

(AQO 6255/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 4th February 2014 my Department signed a contract with British Telecom for a twenty three million, five hundred thousand pounds project which will see improvements in the broadband service for more than forty five thousand premises across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015.

The project will be completed in eight phases and will be informed by an extensive survey and design process that takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc. This methodology seeks to achieve the greatest value for money and the highest number of beneficiaries. This is a complex process which has taken longer than anticipated to complete.

Details of the roll-out plans will be published as the outcomes of this process become available and my Department intends to use the Northern Ireland Direct website for that purpose.

Rugby World Cup 2023

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her input to the cross-border steering group undertaking a feasibility study into an Irish bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

(AQO 6256/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The cross-border steering group looking at the feasibility of hosting the Rugby World Cup 2023 has met four times since it was established in February 2014.

The group is discussing issues such as the number of matches to be played in Northern Ireland, number of training camps expected, numbers of potential visitors and their related spend as well as the social benefits of hosting an event such as the Rugby World Cup.

It is expected that Hugo MacNeill, former Ireland International rugby player and Managing Director at Goldman Sachs Dublin, who chairs the group will present a report to Ministers over the summer to allow a decision to be made about a bid.

Going for Growth

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when she plans to bring the Going for Growth strategy to the Executive.

(AQO 6257/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Going for Growth has been forwarded to the Executive Secretariat by myself, and the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development.

All recommendations in Going for Growth which fall within the remit of my Department are being taken forward.

Department of the Environment

Grants for the Restoration of Listed Buildings

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether grants for the restoration of listed buildings awarded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have been put on hold; and if so, for how long.

(AQW 32074/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): First of all, I must apologise for the delay in responding to your question.

Additional funding was made available through the Executive's 2012 Economy and Jobs Initiative. In November 2012, NIEA received an extra £2.4M from this 'Initiative' (for its Listed Buildings Grant-aid scheme), to be expended up until the end of financial year 2014/15. This funding was provided for a specific short-term period as part of an Executive package to stimulate economic activity during the

recession. This funding enabled NIEA to raise the cap to £500K per scheme - as well as raising the rate of grant aid from 35% to 45% (an actual increase of 28%) - with immediate effect.

Overall, the NIEA listed buildings grant aid continues to provide significant investment in the construction industry, with a proven ratio of 1:7.65 of leverage funding (every £1 of NIEA grant aid results in an overall spend of £7.65). Over the last six years the Department's c£24M investment has resulted in a total spend of c£183M in this sector.

I understand that this increase in the Listed Buildings Grant Aid rate - and cap - has proved to be so successful that the additional funding is now fully committed. Prior to December 2012, applications were received at a rate of 14 per month. Since then, the average has been 19 new applications monthly, with the near doubling of the average grant-aid award to approximately £60K. As such I understand that there is a substantial amount of applications to be processed to letter of offer stage; officials have advised that these will be processed in the usual orderly manner, with letters of offer being issued, as funding becomes available. I can also advise that I have prepared a bid for additional funding in the June Monitoring round.

Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Mineral Extraction

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has administered or authorised payments of the aggregates level rebate for any of the unregulated minerals extractions taking place within Lough Neagh Special Protection Area; and if so, to detail each occasion and the amounts involved.

(AQW 32560/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment administered the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme on behalf of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and was responsible for entering into Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) agreements with site operators; monitoring such agreements and issuing and, where necessary, withdrawing ALCS certificates. The Department did not administer or authorise payments. The ALCS was suspended on 1 December 2010.

Prior to December 2010, a site operator was required to satisfy the Department that all mandatory authorisations to achieve legal compliance were in place in order to qualify for tax relief from HMRC under the ALCS. Entry to the scheme was also conditional on the operator agreeing to commission environmental audits and to undertake work, where necessary, to resolve any issues subsequently highlighted.

Under the ALCS criteria, unauthorised sites did not receive an ALCS certificate, and therefore were ineligible to apply for a rebate from HMRC on the levy payable.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Research Programme on Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment (i) what is the total predicted cost of the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Research Programme on Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction; and (ii) how much his Department is contributing to the research programme.

(AQW 33493/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The cost of the initial contract related to the Research Programme on Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction is estimated to be in the region of €700,000 plus VAT. A supplementary tender may be required for subsequent aspects of the research which are dependent upon the outcome of the initial contract. The cost of the supplementary tender is not yet known.

My Department is contributing €246,000 to the overall Research Programme.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of representations received by his Department with regards to planning application E/2013/0093/F; and how many of these representations (i) objected to; and (ii) supported the application.

(AQW 33541/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has received 1423 representations in connection to planning application E/2013/0093/F.

All of the representations received are in opposition to the development.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out on planning application E/2013/0093/F.

(AQW 33542/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under Regulation 10 of the Planning 'Environmental Impact Assessment' (EIA) Regulations (NI) 2012, the Department is required to make a determination as to whether the proposed development would or would not be deemed EIA development.

The application automatically falls within the thresholds of Schedule 2:2(D) of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 2012 and the Department is automatically required to determine if the application is required to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

I can assure you that the environmental regulation of fracking will be subject to the requirements and environmental standards set out in the relevant European Directives. The Environmental Impact Assessment Directive will play a central role and is non-negotiable in the decision making process as it will ensure the environmental implications of this project are taken into account before any final decision and it will involve the public in the decision making process making it more transparent.

I have made it publicly clear that all appropriate planning and environmental standards will be strictly applied on the issue of fracking. As Planning and Environment Minister this approach will not be compromised.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Maestro Card Payments

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment why the Driver and Vehicle Agency is unable to accept online Maestro card payments for services such as theory test bookings; and when he expects this issue to be resolved.

(AQW 33553/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In 2010, Barclaycard, the card processor for the theory test, advised the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) and the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in Britain, that they required 3D Secure card payment security arrangements to be implemented for all theory test internet bookings. At that time, it was estimated that the work would cost £1 million.

In Britain, as Maestro card payments only accounted for a very small number of DVSA's transactions, DVSA chose to cease accepting Maestro payments.

In Northern Ireland, as 18% of online theory test payments were made using Maestro, the DVA chose to maintain accepting Maestro card payments for as long as possible.

In November 2013, the theory test contractor advised the DVA that they could no longer maintain Payment Card Industry (PCI) accreditation of their card payment processing system if they continued to process Maestro payments.

The cost of implementing these security arrangements for the DVA's theory test customers would necessitate the Agency increasing the theory test fees for all customers to recover the £1 million

investment. Therefore, the Agency took the decision to remove the facility to accept Maestro payments from online theory test bookings. However, Maestro card payments can still be accepted for theory test telephone bookings. Danske Bank, one of the banks to issue Maestro cards in Northern Ireland, has recently announced that they are phasing out the use of Maestro in favour of a new Debit Mastercard, which will be accepted for online theory test payments.

Provision has been made in the new theory test contract, which comes into effect in September 2016, for payments to be made using Maestro. The Agency will keep the volume of Maestro transactions under review to establish if this facility will be required in 2016.

Since November 2013, the Agency has received only one comment from the public regarding the removal of Maestro payments.

EU Water Directive: Lough Erne

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Dublin on the implementation of the EU water directive on Lough Erne and the role that ESB plays in managing fish movements.

(AQW 33555/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The North Western International River Basin District lies partly in Northern Ireland and partly in the Republic of Ireland; it includes the Lough Erne catchment. The North Western River Basin Management Plan which covers the period 2009-2015, was published in December 2009 to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). In addition, Managing our Shared Waters – Working Together – The North Western International River Basin District is a published document outlining the cooperation arrangements between the two jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, involved in implementing WFD in our shared waters.

At the North South Ministerial Council meeting in May 2014 it was noted that both jurisdictions continue to work in preparation for the second river basin planning cycle (2015-2021) as required by the Directive.

WFD has a requirement to assess the continuity of watercourses, which includes the ability of fish and eels to pass man-made obstacles. The ESB hydro-electric plant at Ballyshannon is a significant barrier to the passage of migratory fish and eels. ESB is required by European law to manage methods to ensure safe fish-passage and to comply with the EU Eel Management Plan for the Erne catchment. As such, eels currently have to be caught in traps and assisted in their migration both upstream and downstream.

Following the recent incident at the ESB hydro-electric plant at Ballyshannon, with the reported loss of approximately 100kgs of elvers (juvenile eels) from the Erne system, Inland Fisheries Ireland is currently undertaking a formal investigation.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is working closely with Fisheries Agencies (DCAL and Loughs Agency) to assess continuity for all of Northern Ireland for WFD classification reporting in 2015. These assessments will include the Lough Erne catchment.

Regular liaison occurs between NIEA and Inland Fisheries Ireland through a Rivers and Lakes Technical Group, and an inter-agency River Restoration and Continuity Group which has, amongst other things, been set up to co-ordinate continuity issues. Both these groups enable the sharing of monitoring and classification data collected to meet the requirements of Water Framework Directive.

I have directed my officials to ensure that measures to ensure safe fish-passage and to comply with eel management plans for the catchment will be included in the draft North Western River Basin Management Plan to be published for consultation by 22 December 2014. Given that eels stocks are under considerable pressure throughout Europe, I am committed to working with fellow Ministers to manage our shared waters and to ensure no further loss of eels in the Erne catchment.

Taxi Provision at Ravenhill Rugby Grounds

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32602/11-15 and with reference to the legal position regarding taxi provision at Ravenhill Rugby Grounds, and under the heading Particular Provisions and Considerations Point 1 states that there must be an explicit engagement in place, why no such an agreement is in place.

(AQW 33568/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The document to which the member refers, which has previously been provided to the member and to the Environment Committee, states as follows:

1 Taxis proceeding to Ravenhill

Regulation 13(i) of the 1985 Regulations allows private hire taxis to wait in order to fulfil an engagement previously entered into. This allows for an organisation or individual to order one or more taxis to a particular location for passengers.

Requirements – there must be an explicit engagement made. This requires a request by someone other than an on-duty employee of the taxi operator, to the taxi operator, to send specified numbers of vehicles at specified times to a specified location. A record of this request must be maintained by the operator in accordance with the record keeping requirements of the 2012 Regulations.

The document does not require an agreement to be in place – rather, on each occasion that taxis are required, a request must be made as set out.

The Department is content that fonaCAB Ltd provide taxis at Ravenhill in accordance with Regulation 13(i) of the 1985 Regulations and maintain a register of booking records which has been scrutinised by DVA Taxi Compliance Officers.

Driver and Vehicle Agency Closure

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the provision of new employment opportunities at County Hall in Coleraine following the closure of the Driver and Vehicle Agency.

(AQW 33573/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Following the decision by Department for Transport to centralise all vehicle licensing services in Swansea, the local motor tax offices will cease to deliver these services after the close of business on 17 July 2014. The Driver and Vehicle Agency's other functions, such as driver licensing, driver and vehicle testing, the licensing of bus and taxi operators and taxi drivers and the enforcement of compliance with licensing and roadworthiness requirements are not affected by this decision

The cessation of vehicle licensing services affects 205 permanent staff in County Hall, Coleraine. In conjunction with the Minister for Finance and Personnel, and with the support of the Executive, measures have been put in place across all departments to restrict the recruitment, promotion and transfer of staff in the affected grades until the surplus staff position in the DVA has been addressed.

In parallel with these measures, all Ministers agreed to seek to identify any opportunities to transfer work to Coleraine. This process is continuing and a number of measures are currently under consideration to address the surplus staff position.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer Posts

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how many Scientific Officer posts there are within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

(AQW 33590/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are currently 127 Scientific Officer posts within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. This is comprised of 120 staff and 7 vacancies. There are an additional 18 Scientific Officer posts within the wider Department, comprised of 17 staff and 1 vacancy.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer Posts

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer posts advertised in August 2012, why candidates were not informed if their application was successful until September 2013.

(AQW 33592/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's Scientific Officer competition was advertised in October 2012. Due to the overwhelming number of applicants there was a delay in arranging the next stage of the recruitment process. Candidates were notified of this in January 2013. Interviews commenced in May 2013 and were completed in September 2013. Candidates could not be informed of the outcome of their interview until all interviews were complete.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer Posts

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer posts advertised in August 2012, how many posts in were filled through this recruitment campaign; and how many of the posts were filled by external candidates.

(AQW 33593/11-15)

Mr Durkan: To date, 49 posts have been filled from this recruitment competition, 45 in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and 4 in the wider Department. Of these posts 47 were filled by external candidates and 2 by internal candidates.

Historical Buildings Unit

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Historical Buildings Unit to respond in a timely manner to planning applications involving listed buildings.

(AQW 33617/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In recent years, the Historic Buildings Unit of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has consistently exceeded its published targets to respond to Planning Applications involving listed buildings. These targets are:

- to respond to 75% of Routine Planning Applications within 15 working days;
- to respond to 75% of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessments) within 15 working days, and;
- to respond to 100% of EIA HA (Habitat Assessment) & Article 6 applications within 30 working days.

I attach detail for your information, on NIEA's responses over the last 2 years – 2012/13, and 2013/14. This is provided in Appendix A.

As can be seen from this table, while some 'routine' applications were not returned within the desired timescale, all of the Unit's targets were met.

Appendix A

Applications Received 2012/13	No. Applications Received	Responded	%	Not Responded within time	%
Routine	1333	1113	83.5	220	16.5
(75% Response within 15 Working days)					
Environmental Impact Assessment	1	1	100	0	0
(75% Response within 15 Working days)					
Environmental Impact Assessment	2	2	100	0	0
Habitat Assessment and Article 6					
(100% Response within 30 Working days)					
Total	1336	1116	83.53	220	16.47

Applications Received 2013/14	No. Applications Received	Responded	%	Not Responded within time	%
Routine	1342	1038	77.35	304	22.65
(75% Response within 15 Working days)					
Environmental Impact Assessment	2	2	100	0	0
(75% Response within 15 Working days)					
Environmental Impact Assessment	6	6	100	0	0
Habitat Assessment and Article 6					
(100% Response within 30 Working days)					
Total	1350	1046	77.48	304	22.52

Listed Buildings

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment whether a legislative requirement exists for organisations or businesses who are evacuating listed buildings to seek approval prior to undertaking any works required to remove fixtures and fittings.

(AQW 33618/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Article 42(7) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 explains that the term “listed building” refers to any building included in the list and that the following is also treated as part of the building:

- “(a) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building and fixed to the building; and
(b) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 October 1973.”*

Under Article 44 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 any change that alters the special architectural or historic character of a listed building requires consent from the Department. This is known as Listed Building Consent. Fixtures and fittings which form part of a listed building fall under this control. It is a criminal offence under Article 44 (1) to carry out such works without this consent. A person guilty of such an offence, shall on summary conviction be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding £100,000, or both, or on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine (unlimited), or both.

If the change does not alter the character of the building, then this consent is not required. However, each case must be treated individually, and owners that contemplate works to remove such features are advised to contact the Department to ensure that an offence is not committed.

Departmental Policy in Annex C of Planning Policy Statement 6 (paragraph C32 and C33) also explains that:

“The word ‘fixed’ has the same connotation as in the law of fixtures, where any object or structure fixed to a building should be treated as part of it. It is therefore a test of fact in each case as to whether a structure is free-standing or physically fixed to the building.” ... “Free standing objects, such as statues, may be fixtures if they were put in place as part of an overall architectural design; this would include objects especially designed or made to fit in a particular space or room. Works of art which were placed in a building - primarily to be enjoyed as objects in their own right, rather than forming part of the land or building - are not likely to be considered as fixtures.”

Prosecution of Taxi Drivers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the prosecution of taxi drivers operating illegally, whether he will introduce legislation to automatically include an additional charge of not being AccessNI cleared whilst performing a public service.

(AQW 33621/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Currently, at the point of application, all taxi drivers are required to produce an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure Certificate which is no longer than 3 months old. A licence is not granted by DVA unless such certification is produced.

Further, as per regulation 7(2) of the Motor Vehicles (Taxi Drivers’ Licences) Regulations (NI) 1991, it is condition of their licence that they must, if convicted of any offence, immediately notify in writing particulars of the conviction to the Department. Failure to do so is an offence which may result in the licence being revoked. This ensures that, should there be a change in drivers’ circumstances during the period of the licence, the onus is on them to inform the Department.

It is the Department’s intention that this condition and related offence will continue when taxi drivers are licensed under the Taxis Act.

I do not feel, therefore, that the offence of failing to be AccessNI cleared is required in addition to the offences already involved in operating a taxi service whilst not being appropriately licensed.

Local Agri-food Industry

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he is taking to enable planning application decisions to be expedited, especially those which will help to grow the local Agri-food industry.

(AQW 33635/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I fully support and acknowledge the importance of a planning system which creates a better environment and a stronger economy. Timely planning decisions, which are not at the expense of our environment, are crucial to this.

You will be aware from AQW33513/11-15 that I created a dedicated planning team to deal specifically with applications for poultry houses in order to support and facilitate developments in the agri-food industry. The aim of this team is to reduce processing times for poultry house applications. In addition to processing applications for poultry houses received from Moy Park the team also provides advice and support to Area Offices dealing with other poultry house applications.

Additionally, in early April this year I launched revised guidance for Pre-Application Discussions. This key improvement recognises the great benefit of front-loading the planning system through constructive discussions before applications are submitted. The new guidelines open up the process to a broader range of development proposals including those applications made by the agri-food industry.

You may also be aware that last August new permitted development rights came into operation which increased the range of agricultural development that no longer needs planning permission. As a result farmers are now able to undertake new build or extend agricultural buildings up to 500 square metres without having to go through the planning application process which will assist the agri-food industry.

Pollutants Entering River Courses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the (i) number of convictions; and (ii) penalties imposed for pollutants entering river courses in each of the last five years, broken down by court division.

(AQW 33646/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The information requested is set out in the attached tables.

Table 1: Water pollution incidents which occurred during 2009

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ards	3	£1,000 £1,200 £4,000
Antrim	2	£750 £800
Omagh	4	£250 £500 £750 £12,500
Downpatrick	6	£300 £500 £500 £2,000 £4,000 Conditional Discharge
Newry	6	Conditional discharge £250 £350 £350 £500 £700

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Craigavon	5	£500 £750 £750 £2,500 £3,500
Dungannon	3	£400 £500 £950
Strabane	2	£1,000 £2,250
Armagh	3	Conditional discharge £750 £2,500
Lisburn	0	N/A
Fermanagh	0	N/A
North Antrim (Coleraine)	0	N/A
North Down (Bangor)	2	Absolute discharge Absolute discharge
Ballymena	1	Conditional discharge
Magherafelt	0	N/A
Limavady	0	N/A
Belfast	0	N/A

Table 2: Water pollution incidents which occurred during 2010

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ards	3	£750 £1,500 £4,000
Antrim	1	£2,000
Omagh	4	£200 £300 £600 £2,500
Downpatrick	2	£500 £1,250
Newry	4	£750 £750 £1,500 £5,000

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Craigavon	3	£1,000 £1,250 £2,250
Dungannon	3	£250 £900 £1,000
Strabane	1	£1,000
Armagh	3	£600 £1,000 £1,000
Lisburn	3	£400 £500 £500
Fermanagh	5	£500 £750 £750 £1,000 £2,000
North Antrim (Coleraine)	6	£150 £300 £300 £350 £400 £500
North Down (Bangor)	1	£600
Ballymena	2	Absolute discharge £300
Magherafelt	1	Absolute discharge
Limavady	1	£1,000
Belfast	2	£500 £1,000

Table 3: Water pollution incidents which occurred during 2011

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ards	4	£500 £1,500 £2,500 £8,000
Antrim	0	N/A

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Omagh	6	£200 £250 £300 £400 £500 £1000
Downpatrick	3	£500 £500 £2,500
Newry	3	£250 £1,500 £2,000
Craigavon	2	£500 £500
Dungannon	7	£100 £150 £250 £300 £350 £1,500 £2,500
Strabane	7	£750 £1,000 £1,000 £1,500 £1,500 £1,500 £2,000
Armagh	4	Conditional discharge £500 £600 £1,500
Lisburn	1	£1,500
Fermanagh	2	£1,000 £4,500
North Antrim (Coleraine)	5	£200 £400 £400 £500 £500
North Down (Bangor)	1	£2,000

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ballymena	7	Absolute discharge Absolute discharge Absolute discharge Absolute Discharge £300 £750 £5,000
Magherafelt	4	Absolute discharge Absolute discharge Absolute discharge Absolute discharge
Limavady	1	£275
Belfast	1	£400

Table 4: Water pollution incidents which occurred during 2012

(Note, as detailed, above that an additional 4 prosecutions for 2012 incidents are still in the court system and so are not listed below)

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ards	0	N/A
Antrim	1	£6,500
Omagh	2	£250 £300
Downpatrick	0	N/A
Newry	4	£250 £500 £500 £750
Craigavon	1	£1,000
Dungannon	7	£200 £900 £1,000 £1,250 £1,400 £1,500 £7,000 plus a suspended prison sentence of 21 months (Crown Court case)
Strabane	1	£1,000
Armagh	1	£275
Lisburn	4	£300 £500 £750 £1,000
Fermanagh	1	£7,500

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
North Antrim (Coleraine)	2	Conditional discharge £750
North Down (Bangor)	0	N/A
Ballymena	2 (plus 1 case dismissed)	Absolute discharge £600
Magherafelt	1	Absolute discharge
Limavady	1	£500
Belfast	1	£1,000

Table 5: Water pollution incidents which occurred during 2013

(Note, as detailed, above that an additional 40 prosecutions for 2013 incidents are still in the court system and so are not listed below)

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Ards	0	N/A
Antrim	0	N/A
Omagh	0	N/A
Downpatrick	0	N/A
Newry	2	£500 £1000
Craigavon	1	£1,200
Dungannon	5	£400 £500 £525 £600 £3,000
Strabane	0	N/A
Armagh	1	£3,000
Lisburn	1	£2,000
Fermanagh	3	£1,000 £1,000 £1,000
North Antrim (Coleraine)	0	N/A
North Down (Bangor)	0	N/A
Ballymena	0	N/A
Magherafelt	1	Absolute discharge

Courthouse	Convictions	Penalties imposed
Limavady	0	N/A
Belfast	1	£500

Table 6: Current court divisional structure (Source www.courtsni.gov.uk)

County Court Division	Petty Sessions Districts	Local Government Districts	Courthouses
Antrim	North Antrim	Coleraine Ballymoney Moyle	Coleraine
	Ballymena	Ballymena	Ballymena
	Antrim	Antrim	Antrim
	Larne	Larne	Larne
Ards	Down	Down	Downpatrick
	Castlereagh	Castlereagh	
	Ards	Ards	Newtownards
	North Down	North Down	Bangor
Armagh and South Down	Armagh	Armagh	Armagh
	Newry and Mourne	Newry and Mourne	Newry
	Banbridge	Banbridge	Banbridge
Belfast	Belfast and Newtownabbey	Belfast Newtownabbey Carrickfergus	RCJ Laganside Old Townhall
Craigavon	Craigavon	Craigavon	Craigavon
	Lisburn	Lisburn	Lisburn
Fermanagh and Tyrone	East Tyrone	Cookstown Dungannon	Dungannon
	Omagh	Omagh	Omagh
	Strabane	Strabane	Strabane
	Fermanagh	Fermanagh	Enniskillen
Londonderry	Londonderry	Derry	Londonderry
	Limavady	Limavady	Limavady
	Magherafelt	Magherafelt	Magherafelt

Quarrying Industry

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the current low financial trends in the quarrying industry, how his Department considers and analyses the need for further quarries when considering planning applications.

(AQW 33663/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The need for minerals development is considered by the Department on a case by case basis. Applications will be considered in light of the provisions of the Programme for Government 2011-2015 and of Planning Policy Statements (in particular PPS 1, paragraphs 10 & 11) and 'A Planning Strategy for Rural NI'. Often, applicants will be required to provide economic justification for their proposal and a 'case of need'.

The question refers to current low financial trends in the quarrying industry. Often quarry developments, particularly hard rock quarries, will have a life span exceeding 25 years; therefore, current low financial trends are of limited weight in considering a proposal.

Waste Incinerator in Mallusk

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to Arc21's proposal to develop a waste incinerator in Mallusk, for an update on (i) whether the preferred bidder status has been granted to the Becon Consortium for the project; (ii) what companies are involved in the Becon Consortium; and (iii) whether Indaver Ireland have expressed an interest or agreed to take a commercial stake in the Arc21 Mallusk Energy from Waste project.

(AQW 33745/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the Competitive Dialogue process by which the arc21 procurement is being conducted, the appointment of Preferred Bidder occurs following the receipt and assessment of Final Tender by the procuring authority at close of dialogue. The arc21 project remains in dialogue with the remaining bidder and has not yet reached this stage.

My Department is not party to the procurement for which arc21 is the procuring authority. Management of the project, including the make-up of the bidder consortium and investors, is a matter for arc21 and its constituent councils, and any questions in that regard should be directed to them.

Challenge Fund

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to ensure that local groups, which have no professional funding support, can access the Challenge Fund.

(AQO 6268/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This year's Challenge Fund successfully delivered over 250 community-based environmental projects, achieving a remarkably even spread across the country, mirroring the urban and rural contributions made to the Carrier Bag Levy, ensuring that all communities have been reached by the Fund.

The applicants, comprised of communities, schools and environmental groups, were considered at every stage, very much centring the Challenge Fund on the people involved, ensuring that local groups were readily able to access the funding.

The Northern Ireland Environment Link, who administered the fund, used their extensive membership list to generate widespread interest. This in combination with regional media coverage meant publication of the Challenge Fund program was far reaching, and we received 377 applications, with funding four times oversubscribed.

The application process was streamlined, with simplified forms, guidance provided, and face to face information sessions. The judging panel also considered applications on the quality of project, rather than the written quality of application. This ensured that those more practiced at funding applications held no advantage over those without bid-writing experience.

Additional feedback was available upon request. This ranged from judge's comments to an individual session with Challenge Fund team members. Many groups took advantage of these sessions this year, and will be returning with stronger bids in the future.

To ensure that local groups with limited means were enabled to apply, no match funding was required. Grants accounted for 100% of many project budgets. For groups with restricted resources, a partial claims mechanism was available, allowing payment for completed work at specific project stages; helping small groups with limited resources deliver large projects.

I personally visited several projects and gained an appreciation for the pressures faced by many groups. The dedication and response of applicants to all challenges was inspiring. I thoroughly endorse the work done by the Challenge Fund this year, and commend the success of local community groups and all others involved.

Councils: Voting Systems

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of the Environment how he will influence the range of issues included in councils' standing orders that will be subject to weighted majority voting.

(AQO 6267/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 makes provision for certain decisions to be taken by a qualified majority. Section 40 of the Act provides that a council's standing orders must specify decisions which are to be taken by a qualified majority. During the passage of the Act through the Assembly I stated my commitment that the decisions that must be taken by a qualified majority, in addition to those specified on the face of the Act, would be specified as a mandatory standing order in regulations, using the enabling power provided by section 38 of that Act. My position on this has not changed.

My officials are currently finalising a consultation document on proposals for the mandatory standing orders to be specified in the draft regulations that will be subject to consideration by the Assembly. This consultation will seek views on which decisions, over and above those decisions which are already specified in the Act, should be specified in the draft regulations as having to be taken by a qualified majority.

In seeking views on the content of the mandatory standing orders to be specified in the draft regulations I will seek input from the political parties, through their members on the Political Reference Group, on this important aspect of the new governance arrangements for councils. The final draft regulations will be subject to the draft affirmative procedure in the Assembly.

Alcohol Consumption: Buses

Mr Storey asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to deal with bus operators who allow the consumption of alcohol in their vehicles.

(AQO 6263/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department consulted last year on proposals better to regulate alcohol consumption on buses with a view to mitigating the resulting road safety risks. Responses to the consultation, whilst providing no consensus as to the best way to deal with this issue, highlighted that the problems with alcohol consumption on buses were reflective of a major societal issue around excessive alcohol consumption and that we cannot effectively tackle this issue in isolation from other activities to reduce the impacts of inappropriate consumption of alcohol.

I believe that responsibilities for dealing with the road safety problems related to alcohol in buses are also shared by government and passengers, not just the operator. Therefore, in moving forward I have agreed that my Department will pursue four main strands of activity to mitigate road safety risks.

Firstly my Department has commissioned radio and social media activity which will highlight the rules about drinking alcohol on a bus and the road safety risks associated with it. Development work is underway and I anticipate this campaign starting over the coming months.

From 1 June the Driver and Vehicle Agency has been placing new licensing conditions on all new or renewed bus operator licences. These conditions require operators to take all reasonable steps to ensure that alcohol is not consumed and not do anything to promote or assist in the consumption of alcohol on board a bus. They will have to tell hirers that passengers are not allowed to consume alcohol and make it a condition of all hire contracts that alcohol is not consumed. They will also be required to display “no drinking” signs on their buses. Failure to take the required action will be a breach of their licence conditions.

My officials have been engaging with colleagues in the Department of Justice, as calls for a total ban on the carriage of alcohol would be best addressed by DOJ. I have also met with Minister Ford on this issue and plan to do so again.

Finally, my officials are working with DHSSPS and other stakeholders as part of the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs, as I recognise that problems with alcohol consumption on buses form one facet of the wider societal problem of alcohol and drug misuse in Northern Ireland.

Environment: Improvement Plans

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to improve the local environment.

(AQO 6265/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has a number of important environment related priorities which are largely set out as Key Commitments within the Executive’s 2011-15 Programme for Government. These commitments include extending the Carrier Bag Levy, having in place an action plan to implement the new Biodiversity Strategy which will work towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020, continuing to increase recycling or composting rates and continuing a range of measures to ensure a reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Another significant objective is to deliver all the actions in response to the Mills Report commissioned following the discovery of a major illegal waste site in the North West. I am committed to making significant improvements to the overall design and implementation of Northern Ireland’s waste regulation system that everyone in Northern Ireland can have confidence in.

I directed the Chief Executive of the NI Environment Agency to implement key actions in accordance with the specified timelines to include –

- A full Operational Strategy with a detailed Action Plan.
- A new Waste Directorate will be created to bring together the various regulatory and enforcement teams in NIEA.
- A review of potential legislative enhancements.
- NIEA will build on its existing work with other government organisations within Northern Ireland, the rest of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and across Europe.
- A plan will be developed to ensure the NIEA’s internal whistleblower system is strongly promoted.

I am determined that this will happen as quickly as possible. The Mills report shows it took too long to identify and take action on illegal dumping. NIEA has now restructured to deliver. For example, there is now a Resource Efficiency Division to “deal with waste”. Recognising the extent and damage caused by serious environmental offending, the Department will continue to actively participate in a number of cross agency networks to identify and bring enforcement action against offenders.

There is also a revised Innovation Strategies Division to work in close collaboration with new local Authorities to develop new levels of visitors’ experience at our Country Parks and Heritage assets through investment and innovation that will enhance the local environment and help the local economy.

As planning authority my department seeks to balance the protection of the local environment with ensuring that appropriate social and economic development takes place for the greater good of our

society. The Executive agreed that a number of functions would transfer from Central Government to the new councils as part of Local Government reform in April 2015. One of the key functions transferring will be responsibility for most operational planning activity. I have recently consulted on a new Strategic Planning Policy Statement which for the first time consolidates existing planning policies into one shorter, simpler and strategic document. The SPPS sets a new policy framework to ensure that the reformed two tier planning system continues to contribute to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland. Through this the new 11 District Councils will be empowered to develop plans and policies, informed by the SPPS, which will shape their local areas ensuring the appropriate balance between environmental protection and economic growth.

The Department too, has already commenced preparatory work on development plans for the new councils which will be used to guide development decisions within a specified area. The preparation of a new development plan provides an opportunity to get involved in shaping the future development of an area. This work involves close working with the new shadow councils and will allow them to move quickly to bring forward their own Local Development Plans when powers transfer.

My Department is developing Northern Ireland's first Marine Plan, which will contribute to the effective management of marine activities and the sustainable use of our marine and coastal resources. Alongside this, we are implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, with the aim of achieving Good Environmental Status in the marine environment by 2020.

I am also progressing the designation of Marine Conservation Zones, which will contribute to the development of an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas, to meeting Marine Strategy Framework Directive targets and wider biodiversity commitments at European and global level.

Dereliction Fund

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding the allocation of funding to the Dereliction Fund in the next monitoring round.

(AQO 6266/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As many of you know, the Dereliction Intervention Funding programme was introduced in February 2012 to provide councils with funding to enhance and improve the cosmetic and aesthetic appearance of an area, whether it is a city, town, village or neighbourhood.

Since February 2012, some £4.2m has been allocated to councils. The scheme has received very positive feedback from both residents and visitors to the areas covered.

As part of the 2014-15 June Monitoring round I have submitted a bid for an additional £1.0 million which will help progress the scheme on a gradual basis with the aim of meeting all bids submitted by councils.

Taxis: Public Hire

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on his proposals to address the concerns of public hire taxi operators in Belfast.

(AQO 6269/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, which was passed by this Assembly without division, was designed to deliver the benefits which enhanced taxi regulation could bring to Northern Ireland. The benefits derive from an increased choice for consumers, greater clarity around what taxis are (and are not) permitted to do, and an increased capacity within the industry to deal with peak demand at specific times and locations, thereby helping to address public and personal safety concerns. My Department has already introduced taxi operator licensing and is preparing a suite of legislation which will fully implement the remaining provisions of the Taxis Act.

The proposed introduction of a single tier licensing system, which is a central component of the new legislation, is opposed by Belfast public hire taxi drivers and operators. Single tier licensing is

however supported by a wide range of stakeholders. I have listened carefully to the issues raised and am currently considering what – if any – changes might be appropriate to the plans which have been approved by the Environment Committee, and which could address those concerns whilst still delivering the benefits flowing from the Act.

HGV Road User Levy

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of his statement on 12 May 2014 that no one is enforcing the Heavy Goods Vehicle Levy locally, whether Donegal hauliers are subject to the levy.
(AQO 6270/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) Road User Levy has been introduced by the Department for Transport in London. It has applied since 1 April 2014 to all qualifying HGVs using the roads in all parts of the UK. It is classified as an Excepted Matter for the purposes of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and as such the Department for Transport has lead responsibility for all aspects of the levy, including its enforcement. Not paying the Levy when using the UK's roads is an offence; all UK trucks have been paying the Levy as part of their Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) since 1 April 2014.

Planning: Article 31 Applications

Mr Givan asked the Minister of the Environment how many Article 31 planning applications are currently under consideration.
(AQO 6271/11-15)

Mr Durkan: You will know that applications which have been processed under Article 31 fall to me to determine. As at 27 May, there are 26 live Article 31 applications with the Department. Of these, Notices of Opinion to refuse have issued on 7 applications, and these have all requested a hearing before the Planning Appeals Commission, and one further application is scheduled for a public inquiry.

This leaves 18 applications on which I have yet to make a decision.

Since coming to office in May 2011, there were 60 applications with the Department and my predecessor and I have processed 48 applications to a final decision.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Air Passenger Duty

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of flights taken to destinations in Air Passenger Duty Band B and C since the Assembly legislated to set the Air Passenger Duty of such flights to zero on 1 January 2013; and (ii) the total cost to date to the Executive of funding the reduction.
(AQW 33543/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Information on the number of flights in this regard is not publically available.

The total cost to date applied to the NI Block Grant has been £2.04m.

Mortgage Holders

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any assistance being offered to mortgage holders in negative equity.
(AQW 33622/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My department has no responsibility or role to play in providing assistance to mortgage holders in negative equity.

Owners in Negative Equity

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action he is taking in response to the issue of negative equity ownership.

(AQW 33675/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My department has no responsibility or role to play in providing assistance to mortgage holders in negative equity.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Digital Switchover

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the digital switchover in October 2012, how many wards in Acute Hospitals do not have televisions available in wards as a result of set-top boxes still not having been activated.

(AQW 33515/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Following the digital switchover in October 2012, all Health and Social Care Trusts report that all wards in Acute Hospitals have television sets which are in working order and are available for use. Unfortunately, a number of television sets in wards in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, are not working due to their age and the unavailability of spare parts. Their condition is not related to the digital switchover.

Disposable Nappies

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the incentives in place to promote the use of reusable nappies; (ii) the incentives he is putting in place to encourage parents to choose reusable nappies; and (iii) for his assessment of the impact the gift of disposable nappies to parents of newborns by corporations has on the uptake of disposable nappies.

(AQW 33522/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency (PHA) issues The Pregnancy Book to all first time mothers which includes information regarding nappies in general and provides advice on both cloth and disposable nappies.

While the PHA does not provide direct incentives for the use of either type of nappy, The Pregnancy Book does advise that, "Washable cloth nappies are cheaper than disposable nappies, even when you take into account the cost of washing them at home or getting them washed by a laundry service. They are more environmentally friendly and are easily laundered in a 60°C wash." It also provides advice on accessories needed to use cloth nappies (pins, liners, sterilising equipment etc) and links to information about local suppliers and laundry services.

New mothers are given free product sample-packs and information from Bounty, which is a charitable trust. The samples provide opportunities to 'try before buying'. The packs are issued at the beginning of pregnancy and after a baby is born, and their contents are the responsibility of Bounty. My Department does not hold information on the impact of these packs on the uptake of disposable nappies.

Pancreatic Cancer

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the availability of information for people who are newly diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 33546/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health and Social Care Trust medical and nursing teams provide support and advice to newly diagnosed pancreatic cancer patients. In addition patients are offered information booklets published by Macmillan Cancer Support. This support continues throughout the patient pathway. Some Trusts also offer referral to Citizen's Advice for financial support and counselling if required.

Pancreatic Cancer

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what contact his Department has had with relevant third sector organisations to improve awareness, diagnosis, treatment and care of pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 33547/11-15)

Mr Poots: I supported the launch of the Northern Ireland Fundraising Group of the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF) in February 2014 and attended a charity walk the group held in Moira in July 2013. My Department is committed to working in partnership with the third sector to provide the best awareness, information and services that we can provide for all types of cancer.

Pancreatic Cancer

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that current medical training promotes early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 33549/11-15)

Mr Poots: Training in pancreatic cancer diagnosis is provided for GP trainees in accordance with the GP curriculum. This includes interpreting common symptoms, understanding the indications for urgent referral for pancreatic cancer and understanding the risks associated with various symptoms which may indicate pancreatic cancer.

Training is also covered in the surgical curriculum. Trainees are required to manage the patient presenting with symptoms relating to pancreatic cancer and be competent to diagnose and manage those patients appropriately.

Emergency Eye Clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what facilities are available to facilitate wheelchair uses at the emergency eye clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

(AQW 33564/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust that the Eye Casualty in the Royal Victoria Hospital is situated on Level 8 of the Eyes, Ear, Nose and Throat (EENT) building and is accessible by elevator from both the main hospital entrance and the Falls Road entrance of the hospital. The EENT building is situated in an older part of the hospital estate, however elevators are available and doorways and corridors are wide enough to facilitate wheelchair users. If a patient with either a sensory or physical disability presents at Eye Casualty and reasonable adjustments are required, the Trust will do its utmost to accommodate these patients.

Services Provided by Family Support

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are provided by Family Support; and to outline the availability of these services in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33583/11-15)

Mr Poots: Family Support is broad term that covers a wide range of services delivered by HSC Trusts and other Agencies. These include:

- Family Intervention Teams;
- The Community Family Support Programme; and
- Family Support Hubs.

Family Intervention Teams are situated within each HSC Trust area and seek to safeguard and promote best outcomes for children and families through the provision of a professional, accountable and quality social work service. They deliver family support and child protection services. They also provide services to court and have the Gateway Service including the single point of entry to access Gateway.

The Community Family Support Programme is a Delivering Social Change signature project entitled 'Pathways to Employment for Young People'. This programme, led by DEL, is being delivered in five areas, based on the Health and Social Care Trust areas. Community Family Support Programme providers work in partnership with statutory agencies such as Health and Social Care Trusts and the Youth Justice Agency to support families.

A Family Support Hub is a multi-agency network of statutory, community and voluntary organizations that either provide early intervention services or work with families who need early intervention services.

Delivering Social Change funding has been used to establish a further 10 hubs, bringing the total to 25 across Northern Ireland. This funding will also enable a minimum of 1700 additional family support interventions to be delivered, across a two year period, in addition to the interventions already being provided.

The network accepts referrals of families who need early intervention family support and uses their knowledge of local service providers and the Family Support Database (www.familysupportni.gov.uk) to signpost families with specific needs to appropriate services.

Prostate Specific Antigen Test

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to reaffirm the right of men aged 50 years and over to a prostate specific antigen test.

(AQW 33602/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK National Screening Committee (NSC) has reviewed the evidence on screening men for prostate cancer. In view of the evidence available at present the NSC does not recommend screening because the potential harms from prostate cancer screening using the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test are likely to outweigh the benefits.

Although the NSC has advised against a prostate screening programme using the PSA test, they acknowledge that men without symptoms of prostate cancer may request a PSA test. The NSC has advised that an informed choice programme should be available to them.

In October 2009 the Chief Medical Officer issued HSS (MD) 43/2009 to all GPs, consultant urologists and consultant histopathologists in Northern Ireland. This letter provides details of the revised prostate cancer risk management programme (PCRMP). The PCRMP aims to ensure that men without any symptoms of prostate cancer and who are considering having a PSA test are given information about the benefits, the limitations and the risks associated with having the test.

Members of the Northern Ireland Rare Diseases Stakeholders Group

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the members of the Northern Ireland Rare Diseases Stakeholders Group.

(AQW 33633/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Rare Diseases Stakeholder Group (NIRD SG) is an ad hoc group established and chaired by the Department to help steer the development of the Northern Ireland Rare Diseases Implementation Plan. The group comprises representatives from the:

- DHSSPS policy directorates with responsibility for policy related to rare diseases;
- Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) which is responsible for the planning, commissioning and delivery of health services and support to those people who have rare diseases.;
- Public Health Agency (PHA); and,
- medical professions, universities and patient groups who are responsible for the planning, commissioning, delivery, research of rare diseases and the provision of support to those people who have rare diseases.

The current focus of the group is on health care related matters and it is expected that its membership will be extended to include other stakeholders who will contribute to non-medical aspects of the Implementation Plan.

Shortfall in GP Numbers

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the shortfall in GP numbers highlighted by the Put Patients First: Back General Practice campaign, whether he has given consideration to (i) increasing the funding which his Department allocates to the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency; and (ii) providing incentives for GPs who have left the profession to retrain and to support their period of re-induction.

(AQW 33636/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The Department is currently taking forward a workforce review of all the medical specialties across Health and Social Care. A priority area being addressed in this review is that of general practice. The outcome of this review will help to inform future funding allocations to the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency.
- (ii) The Health and Social Care Board has recently introduced a scheme to support GPs who wish to return to work in general practice. The scheme commenced as a pilot in 2013/14 and will be evaluated during the 2014/15 financial year.

Increase of Health Service Funding

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered increasing the percentage of Health Service funding from 7.96 per cent to 11 per cent, in line with recommendations made by the Royal College of General Practitioners in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 33637/11-15)

Mr Poots: I fully appreciate the commitment and contribution of General Practice in the delivery of healthcare here in NI. The issue of the overall funding allocation for GPs is clearly important but it must be considered both in the context of the current challenging financial climate and also the other elements of the General Medical Services Contract.

I have provided additional investment in the GMS Contract for 2014/15 with increased levels of funding in general practice with the highest uplift to the Contract across the UK and with further additional investment to the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF). This additional investment is aimed at supporting improved performance and patient care

A review of funding and workloads is currently being undertaken and its findings will be a key consideration for the 2015/16 GMS Contract negotiations within the context of available resources.

Symptom Management Treatments for Multiple Sclerosis

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the accessibility of symptom management treatments for multiple sclerosis, particularly (i) Sativex; (ii) Fampyra; and (iii) Botox, in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33647/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has responsibility for commissioning all drug therapies in Northern Ireland and currently commissions all National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) approved specialist multiple sclerosis (MS) drugs. Where a drug is not NICE approved clinicians can make an application for funding via the Individual Funding Request process. Such applications require a clear demonstration of clinical exceptionality and are evaluated via the established route.

- (i) and (ii): NICE has issued draft Clinical Guidelines "Management of multiple sclerosis in primary and secondary care" which refers to both Fampyra and Sativex but does not recommend either drug to

treat lack of mobility and spasticity for people with MS. The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) has not recommended use of either drug within NHS Scotland.

- (iii) Botox (botulinum toxin): Botox does not currently hold a UK license for treatment of MS. However it is used for bladder management and spasticity management where appropriate; some of the patients will have MS.

Expectant Mothers: Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many expectant mothers from the Omagh and Fermanagh areas have been sent to Altnagelvin Hospital to deliver their babies, in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 33657/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of expectant mothers from the Omagh and Fermanagh areas who have given birth in Altnagelvin Hospital, in each of the last two years, is given in the table below. It is not possible to determine whether these mothers were sent or chose to attend Altnagelvin Hospital.

Area of Residence	2011/12	2012/13
Fermanagh	12	29
Omagh	184	133
Total Deliveries	2,872	2,708

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Adults with Down Syndrome: Organ Transplants

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) children; and (ii) adults with Down's Syndrome have applied for organ transplants in each of the last eight years; and how many have received an organ transplant.

(AQW 33677/11-15)

Mr Poots: NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is the organ donation organisation for the UK that has responsibility for matching and allocating donated organs and managing the national organ donor register and transplant waiting lists.

NHSBT has confirmed that the information requested is not available as it does not record whether a patient has Down's Syndrome when listing them for transplant.

South West Acute Hospital: Staff

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why no doctors were available at the South West Acute Hospital to sign a death certificate on 26 May 2014 which resulted in a delay in the release of a deceased patient.

(AQW 33678/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is a legal requirement that a doctor who has treated a patient in the last 28 days for a natural illness that caused their death may issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD). A doctor who had not been directly involved in the patient's care at any time during the illness from which they died cannot certify the cause of death.

I am advised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust that while the normal full complement of medical staff was on duty on Monday 26 May 2014 in the South West Acute Hospital, the doctors on duty on 26 May might not have met the above criteria and as such, legally could not complete the form for particular patients.

Funding Allocated to the Condition Management Programme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding his Department has provided to the Condition Management Programme in each of the last three years; and to detail the (i) budget for this year; and (ii) proposed budget for next year.

(AQW 33712/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department does not provide funding to the Condition Management Programme (CMP). The CMP is funded and managed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and is delivered, on behalf of DEL, by healthcare professionals in Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Minister for Employment and Learning has advised me that following a review of the CMP by his Department, he concluded that the current model is not sustainable and that funding for the programme in its existing format will cease at the end of 2014/15. Officials from my Department are liaising with officials from DEL and other key stakeholders to explore potential options for the CMP after 2014/15.

Payroll Issues Affecting Health Service Staff

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to rectify as a matter of urgency the payroll issues affecting health service staff.

(AQW 33713/11-15)

Mr Poots: A range of measures has been taken to rectify the payroll issues affecting health service staff.

The new HRPTS system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and Trusts continue to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols. There is also on-going training and awareness work with managers who complete and submit timesheets, and work is well underway preparing for the release of a more robust electronic timesheet at the end of June 2014.

The BSO and Trusts have already implemented a range of measures to correct any errors – this includes running additional payment cycles to make good any underpayments and where this has not addressed the problem (for example hardship), then emergency payments have also been used.

In addition to this, my Department has approved further expert support for the HSC payroll functions over the coming months. This will provide additional resource to help with the familiarisation of the new HRPTS system and will also help staff develop solutions to staff queries. Looking forward, a range of continuous improvement measures will also be introduced to both stabilise and enhance services. This will include the consideration of moving all staff to monthly payroll cycles to improve efficiency and also reduce the opportunity for errors.

HSC organisations have also worked closely with the system supplier to identify those employees affected by incorrect National Insurance contributions and to make any outstanding payments to each member of staff. A corrective fix to the system to prevent this issue from recurring has been successfully developed and tested by the system supplier and implemented by payroll specialists from the HSC. As such, this issue has therefore been resolved.

Emergency tax codes were applied by the HMRC to a significant number of staff in the April pay run. The BSO and Trusts have therefore been urgently liaising directly with HMRC on behalf of HSC staff to investigate this issue and establish an appropriate resolution to it. HMRC has reviewed the tax codes for all affected staff and, where appropriate, have revised the tax codes in time for the May pay run. HMRC have confirmed that some staff will still remain on an emergency tax code, in line with normal business.

Lung Transplants

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the arrangements in place for lung transplants, including the allocation of lungs for transplant and how patients are prioritised.

(AQW 33715/11-15)

Mr Poots: The allocation of donated organs on a UK wide basis is a matter for NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) who have advised that at present lungs are allocated to designated transplant centres on a zonal basis. Currently, Northern Irish patients listed for lung transplants are referred for treatment at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Assessing donor lungs and selecting the most appropriate recipients is often difficult and requires detailed knowledge of the recipient. The transplant surgeon will use their clinical knowledge to assess both the donor lungs and potential recipients to find the best match, based on aspects such as the risks associated with the lungs and the severity of the patient's condition. If there is no suitable recipient in a particular centre, the lungs are offered to other UK centres. Whether the donor organs are accepted for use in transplantation is the surgeon's decision and will be based on the characteristics of both the donor and the potential recipient.

NHSBT is reviewing this approach to ensure that this delivers the best patient outcomes and will make the necessary changes if other approaches offer advantages to patients.

Sound Generated by Wind Turbines

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the comments made by Professor Alun Evans, Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology at Queen University Belfast at the Royal College of Physicians conference in Dublin on 22 May 2014, whether he will commission an investigation into the impacts of infrasound and low frequency sound generated by wind turbines and wind turbine arrays, on sleep, sleep deprivation and learning capacity in people living close to such facilities; and communicate with the Minister of the Environment on the planning impacts of any adverse findings in this regard.

(AQW 33753/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency is regularly asked by the Planning Service to comment on potential health effects of proposed wind turbine development. This response will often depend on the specific details of the proposed development. However, in general, the view of the Public Health Agency is that, provided established guidance and best practice in relation to placement of wind turbines and mitigation measures is undertaken, there is minimal to no risk to the health of the population associated with such facilities. This view is supported by the best current scientific evidence.

The basis for forming the above view is threefold:

- a) External advice from experts in Public Health England.
- b) Examination of the primary literature purporting a serious adverse health condition caused by wind turbines and finding its conclusions unsustainable.
- c) Consideration of independent reviews of adverse health effects of wind turbines which to date have failed to demonstrate that serious adverse health effects are caused by wind turbines, the most recent of which was the Report on Health Impacts of Wind Turbines (von Hünenbein et al, April 2013) from the University of Salford, prepared for the Scottish Government, which systematically reviewed the recent peer-reviewed literature and found no conclusive evidence of serious health conditions caused by wind turbines.

Antrim Area Hospital: Non-Essential Equipment

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33331/11-15, what measures are in place to ensure that ward managers at Antrim Area Hospital do not neglect the need to update non-essential equipment, such as headsets for listening to TV and Radio.

(AQW 33771/11-15)

Mr Poots: Ward managers are responsible for all aspects of their wards and are asked to prioritise patient care, treatment and safety.

Where concerns or issues are raised in regard to non-essential equipment, such as headsets, ward managers would be expected to address these whilst all the time continuing to prioritise patient treatment and care.

The need to maintain a stock of functioning headsets has been highlighted to ward managers at Antrim Area Hospital.

Antrim Area Hospital: Percentage of Fit for Purpose Headsets

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33331/11-15, what measures are in place to measure and monitor how fit for purpose headsets for listening to radio and TV in each of the wards in Antrim Area Hospital; and what is the current percentage of fit for purpose headsets in each ward in Antrim Area Hospital.

(AQW 33772/11-15)

Mr Poots: Unfortunately, information on headsets is not collected centrally. Ward managers at the Antrim Area Hospital are expected to monitor the headsets on their ward as part of the overall ward experience.

Where issues arise in relation to headsets, patients and their families may raise these with the ward manager who can order replacement sets as necessary.

By summer 2014 it is expected that all wards in Antrim Area Hospital will use disposable headsets.

Northern Regional College Tutors at Rathmoyle Daycare Centre

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33560/11-15, to outline the content of the classes provided by the Northern Regional College Tutors at Rathmoyle Daycare Centre.

(AQW 33778/11-15)

Mr Poots: Tutors from the Northern Regional College provided the basic skills course in Literacy, Numeracy and IT to meet the need of the individual service users at Rathmoyle Daycare Centre. Three service users completed Entry Level 3 I.C.T. from the OCR examination body.

Health Care Staff: Pay

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures have been taken to ensure that the pay glitch affecting health care staff is resolved.

(AQW 33779/11-15)

Mr Poots: A range of measures has been taken to rectify the payroll issues affecting health service staff.

The new payroll system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and Trusts continue to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols. There is also on-going training and awareness work with managers who complete and submit timesheets.

The BSO and Trusts have already implemented a range of measures to correct any errors – this includes running additional payment cycles to make good any underpayments and where this has not addressed the problem (for example hardship), then emergency payments have also been used.

In addition to this, my Department has approved further expert support for the HSC payroll functions over the coming months. This will provide additional resource to help with the familiarisation of the new HRPTS system and will also help staff develop solutions to staff queries. Looking forward, a range of continuous improvement measures will also be introduced to both stabilise and enhance services. This will include the consideration of moving all staff to monthly payroll cycles to improve efficiency and also reduce the opportunity for errors.

HSC organisations have also worked closely with the system supplier to identify those employees affected by incorrect National Insurance contributions and to make any outstanding payments to each member of staff. A corrective fix to the system to prevent this issue from recurring has been successfully developed and tested by the system supplier and implemented by payroll specialists from the HSC. As such, this issue has therefore been resolved.

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Construction of the New Hospital in Omagh

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the recent High Court ruling by Mr Justice Stephens, to outline the timescale for the completion of the construction of the new hospital in Omagh.

(AQW 33810/11-15)

Mr Poots: Due to a recent legal challenge, the construction of the new hospital has been delayed by approximately 6 months. However, following the High Court ruling by Mr Justice Stephens, the WHSCT are now in a position to proceed.

Construction will commence on site later this month with contract completion scheduled for July 2016. The hospital is expected to become operational in autumn 2016.

Health Service Payroll

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the precarious financial situation that many Health Service workers find themselves in as a result of payroll errors, how the outstanding issues surrounding the Health Service payroll will be resolved.

(AQW 33849/11-15)

Mr Poots: A range of measures has been taken to rectify the payroll issues affecting health service staff.

The new payroll system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and Trusts continue to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols. There is also on-going training and awareness work with managers who complete and submit timesheets.

The BSO and Trusts have already implemented a range of measures to correct any errors – this includes running additional payment cycles to make good any underpayments and where this has not addressed the problem (for example hardship), then emergency payments have also been used.

In addition to this, my Department has approved further expert support for the HSC payroll functions over the coming months. This will provide additional resource to help with the familiarisation of the new HRPTS system and will also help staff develop solutions to staff queries. Looking forward, a range of continuous improvement measures will also be introduced to both stabilise and enhance services. This will include the consideration of moving all staff to monthly payroll cycles to improve efficiency and also reduce the opportunity for errors.

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Department of Justice

Deportation on Completion of a Custodial Sentence

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33356/11-15, to clarify whether despite completing a sentence, a person recommended for or awaiting deportation is freed or resident in a community setting.

(AQW 33628/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Decisions on deportation including the issuing of warrants of detention pending removal (I.S.91s) are matters for the Home Office. The Northern Ireland Prison Service only holds individuals beyond their custody expiry date if those individuals have been served with such a warrant.

Prisoner Safety and Support Team for Vulnerable Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) desired; and (ii) average time between a referral and the instigation of action by the Prisoner Safety and Support Team for vulnerable prisoners.

(AQW 33630/11-15)

Mr Ford: All referrals to the Prisoner Safety and Support Team (PSST) are assessed on receipt. NIPS does not collate statistics on average time between referral and action. Where necessary, support measures or appropriate interventions can be put in place immediately. The PSST continues to work in partnership with other agencies to provide the appropriate support for vulnerable prisoners.

Unpaid Court Fines

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the release of figures in respect of unpaid court fines, what action his Department or agencies has taken to recoup outstanding fines; and to outline whether he will introduce legislation or classify the continued failure to discharge court-imposed fines as a criminal offence.

(AQW 33642/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service operates a fine collection service to secure fine payment without further court or enforcement action.

New fine default processes will commence in the Magistrates' Courts by the end of June. Defendants can pay their fine at any stage of default proceedings. However, if a fine remains unpaid a fine default warrant may be issued for enforcement by the PSNI. The enforcement of fine default warrants is an operational matter for the Chief Constable.

The non-payment of a fine already attracts a range of sanctions including imprisonment and I currently have no plans to create a specific and additional criminal offence for failing to discharge a court imposed fine.

However, I plan to provide courts with additional sentencing, collection and enforcement options in the Fines and Enforcement Bill, which will be introduced into the Assembly later this year. The Bill will contain proposals to enable fine payment through deductions from income or benefits and will create a new collection and enforcement service.

A public consultation on further enforcement options including the seizure of vehicles for non-payment, the removal of remission from any period spent in custody for non-payment and powers for collection officers to deduct money from bank accounts closed on 6 June.

Killyman Road Area: Excessive Street Parking

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33512/11-15, whether (i) he is aware that residents in a nearby private estate have employed a guard to ensure their parking spaces are not abused on court sitting days; and (ii) he will engage with Dungannon PSNI in relation to safety in the Killyman Road area due to excessive street parking.

(AQW 33643/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) Prior to the Member's question, I was unaware of this issue.
- (ii) I have been advised that the PSNI in Dungannon does not have any particular safety concerns regarding excessive street parking in the Killyman Road area.

Legal Aid Granted in each Court Division

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33196-11-15, to detail the legal aid granted in each court division for each year shown.

(AQW 33648/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not possible to provide the information requested as the information can only be extracted at disproportionate cost.

Cases not Committed: Preliminary Investigations' Findings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33196-11-15, how many cases were not committed for trial as a result of the Preliminary Investigations' findings; and how many of these cases were dismissed.

(AQW 33649/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of preliminary investigations involving mixed committal proceedings that did not proceed to trial as a result of the findings of the preliminary investigation, and their outcomes, is outlined below for the calendar years 2011 to 2013.

Number of mixed committals that did not proceed to trial, by outcome: 2011 to 2013P

Outcome of preliminary investigation	Year		
	2011	2012	2013^P
Withdrawn by the Public Prosecution Service	7	1	3
Adjourned generally	0	1	0
Not enough evidence to proceed at this stage	0	2	0
Key witness did not attend the preliminary investigation	0	0	1
Proceedings stayed	0	0	1
Total number that did not proceed to trial	7	4	5

Source: Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases involving offences under (i) Section 57 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; (ii) Section 58 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; (iii) Section 58A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; and (iv) Section 59 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, are currently in the (a) Magistrates Court; and (b) Crown court systems, broken down by court division.

(AQW 33659/11-15)

Mr Ford: The following table details the number of cases in the Magistrates' Courts by court division as at 27 May 2014. There were no cases in the Crown Court at this date.

Offence	Court Division			
	Ards	Belfast	Craigavon	Total
(i) Section 57 Sexual Offences Act 2003	0	0	0	0
(ii) Section 58(1) Sexual Offences Act 2003	1	0	1	2
(iii) Section 58(1)(a) Sexual Offences Act 2003	0	1	0	1
(iv) Section 59 Sexual Offences Act 2003	0	0	0	0
Total	1	1	1	3

Source – Integrated Court Operations System.

PSNI: Disclosure Obligations

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether he will instigate an investigation into why the PSNI did not meet its disclosure obligations in a timely and frank manner in respect of the aborted attempt to prosecute William Frazer over alleged flag protest incidents, causing him to be remanded in custody and remain subject to stringent bail conditions for over a year.

(AQW 33660/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to initiate such an investigation in relation to this case. It is the statutory responsibility of the Police Ombudsman to investigate matters relating to the conduct of the PSNI. Any complaint about the conduct of the PSNI should therefore be made to the Police Ombudsman and he will investigate the matter if he considers there to be sufficient grounds to do so.

Failed Attempt to Prosecute

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of the failed attempt to prosecute William Frazer over alleged flag protest incidents.

(AQW 33661/11-15)

Mr Ford: Mr Frazer was charged with a number of offences and it is not possible to attribute estimated costs to individual charges. One charge remains before the court. However, the following table details the estimated cost of prosecution and court costs as at 29 May 2014.

Cost Type	Estimated Cost £
(i) Prosecution ¹	768
(ii) Court (Judiciary and staff costs)	939
(iii) Facilities (e.g. courtroom accommodation)	335
Total	2,042

- 1 The total Public Prosecution Service cost is not yet available. An estimate of costs for counsel to date has been provided.

No legal aid claims have been received to date.

Preliminary Enquiries at Magistrates Courts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) whether he will introduce plans to abolish preliminary enquiries at Magistrates Courts in indictable prima facie cases where the defence have confirmed they will make no contrary submissions; (ii) whether hearings serve any purpose other than as a formality; and (iii) for his assessment of whether significant savings on Legal Aid of approximately £800 per hearing could be saved if non-opposed preliminary enquiries were abolished.

(AQW 33664/11-15)

Mr Ford: The forthcoming Justice Bill will include proposals to abolish the use of preliminary investigations and the use of oral evidence at preliminary inquiries, provide for the direct committal to the Crown Court of certain indictable cases where the defendant intends to plead guilty at arraignment, and allow for the direct committal to the Crown Court of certain specified offences.

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that cases are managed at the appropriate court level and to expedite the disposal of cases where defendants are pleading guilty. They are not designed to reduce costs and I do not envisage that there will be any significant impact on the cost of legal aid.

Cases: Section 4 of the Asylum and Immigration

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases involving, or relating to, Section 4 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004 are currently in the (i) Magistrates Court; and (ii) Crown Court systems, broken down by court division.

(AQW 33667/11-15)

Mr Ford: As at 28 May 2014, there are currently no active cases of this type in the Magistrates' Court or Crown Court.

Cases Involving Articles 59 to 64A

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases involving Articles 59 to 64A inclusive of the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 are currently in the (i) Magistrates Court; and (ii) Crown Court systems, broken down by order and court division.

(AQW 33691/11-15)

Mr Ford: As at 29 May 2014, there are currently three cases in Belfast Magistrates' Court and two cases in Belfast Crown Court.

Two of the Magistrates' Court cases relate to charges under Article 63 of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (the Order), the remaining case involves charges under both Articles 63 and 64.

One Crown Court case relates to charges under Article 63 and the other involves charges under both Articles 63 and 64.

Department for Regional Development

Illegal Landfilling

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 29942/11-15, (i) for his assessment of whether the retrospective planning application A/2010/0596/F to retain illegal landfilling at the former City Waste site comprises part of the unprecedented illegal waste disposal site referred to in the Mills Report as Mobuoy Road; (ii) whether this illegal land filling remains in place; (iii) whether Road Service's evaluation and his own Department's drawings indicate that this illegal landfill

lies directly in the line of the proposed A6 dual carriageway; and (iv) whether he wishes to revisit his advice to the Assembly that the line of the proposed A6 avoids the illegal landfilling.

(AQW 33421/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I would like to highlight that planning application A/2010/0569/F was a retrospective application to infill an area for the parking of lorries and empty skips. Planning history shows the infill was completed and lorry park was constructed before April 2009.

In respect of the specific issues you raised I would reply as follows:

- (i) The ground investigation for the new road, carried out in March 2010, did not reveal anything untoward in the vicinity of the lorry park.

On this basis, I am content that the infill and lorry park is not part of the illegal waste site referred to in the Mills Report.

- (ii) The lorry park remains in-situ.

- (iii) I confirm the lorry park lies directly in the line of the new road.

- (iv) I remain content that the discovery of illegal landfill at Mobuoy Road will not prejudice the construction of the A6 dual carriageway. At Mobuoy, the new road is aligned around the eastern periphery of the City Industrial Waste and Campsie Sand and Gravel sites, thus avoiding the illegal landfill.

Parking Offences: Decriminalised

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether all parking offences have been decriminalised; and if not, to detail which ones remain.

(AQW 33557/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As part of the processing of decriminalising parking offences, my Department and the PSNI are of the view that it is appropriate for certain offences to remain criminal offences enforceable by the police because of considerations of road safety or obstruction, but that provision should be made to enable my Department to take the powers to enforce these regulations. Such offences would include parking within 15 metres of a junction and parking within the limits of zebra or pelican crossings.

In these circumstances, any criminal prosecution by the PSNI would take precedence over any action by the Department, and therefore the two penalties/fines cannot be issued for the same contravention/offence.

Details of the parking offences which have not been decriminalised are provided in the table below:

Offence	Legislation
1 Parking a heavy commercial vehicle unlawfully (verge, footway, central reservation).	Article 30(1) Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995.
2 Misuse of a disabled persons badge.	
3 Parking so as to obstruct an access.	Article 4(5) RTRO in so far as it applies to Article 5(c), RRWO 1982.

Car Parking Offences

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are any parking offences that can be subject to a fine from the PSNI and traffic wardens.

(AQW 33558/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 33557/11-15.

Hazelwood Development on the Dromore Road

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the work required to allow the Hazelwood development on the Dromore Road, Irvinestown to be adopted by his Department.
(AQW 33571/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The work required to allow the adoption of the Hazelwood development includes rectification of surface defects, the inclusion of traffic calming measures and jetting of gullies.

A notice was served on the developer under Article 11 of the Private Streets Order 1984 on the 11 November 2013. The outstanding work has been programmed for completion by my Department's contractors during the current financial year. Upon completion of the outstanding works, formal adoption will take place and the incurred costs will be recovered from the outstanding bond.

Unauthorised Parking at Charging Points for Electric Cars

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to discourage unauthorised parking at charging points for electric cars.
(AQW 33579/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department introduced subordinate legislation in the form of The Off-Street Parking (Amendment No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 and The Parking Places on Roads (Electric Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 (as amended) when establishing parking bays at charge points for electric cars. This legislation makes it an offence for the driver of a vehicle, other than an electric vehicle, to use a parking bay designated for such a purpose either on the road or in the Department's car parks. This legislation is being enforced by Traffic Attendants with PCNs issued to offenders.

To further discourage unauthorised parking, my Department has introduced green surfacing, signage and branding of publicly owned electric vehicle bays and privately owned electric vehicle bays, where permission has been granted. This work is nearing completion and is providing a visible indication to other motorists that these parking bays are exclusively for the use by electric cars.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether an individual who has been issued with a Penalty Charge Notice from a traffic warden can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the PSNI for the same offence.
(AQW 33584/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 33557/11-15.

Taxi Drive-Offs from Belfast City Hall

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 32608/11-15, why traffic wardens do not provide the Driver and Vehicle Agency with any information relating to taxi drive-offs from Belfast City Hall.
(AQW 33644/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the course of carrying out their enforcement duties, Traffic Attendants record particular details such as, vehicle registration, type, make, colour, infringement location etc. The nature of business that any particular vehicle may be involved in, including taxis, is not recorded. Presently, there is no demand for this information and therefore it is not recorded.

Domestic Water Charging

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will consider bringing a recommendation to the Executive that domestic water charging be implemented.
(AQW 33673/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Executive has given a commitment that for householders it will ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government.

As decisions on water funding are cross-cutting, because of their significant public expenditure implications, the Executive has remitted issues and risks associated with the governance and funding of water and sewerage services to the Budget Review Group for detailed consideration.

Quantity of Drinking Water

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the quantity of drinking water (i) abstracted; (ii) treated; and (iii) distributed on a daily basis.

(AQW 33682/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: On a daily basis Northern Ireland Water abstracts and treats approximately 570 million litres of water and distributes on average 562 million litres of drinking water.

Water Mains

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total length of water mains.

(AQW 33683/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The total length of water mains owned and maintained by Northern Ireland Water is 26,976 kilometres.

Quality of Drinking Water

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the approximate number of tests carried out annually to monitor the quality of drinking water.

(AQW 33684/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During 2013 Northern Ireland Water carried out 386,477 tests to monitor the quality of drinking water. These included tests carried out for regulatory purposes under the Drinking Water Regulations and operational monitoring tests.

Integrated Transport

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his Department's work as part of the One Plan, particularly in relation to integrated transport.

(AQW 33707/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is a member of the One Plan Interdepartmental Coordinating Group and is committed to supporting implementation of the One Plan, particularly in matters relating to transport. This is reflected in the significant investment my Department is taking forward through Translink and Transport NI to deliver key transport projects which align with the One Plan.

Reflecting the key recommendations of the One Plan my Department set out plans to upgrade the railway track between Coleraine and Londonderry over three phases. You will be aware that the first phase has now been completed, with phase 2 estimated for completion in late 2016.

To further enhance regional connections to the North West, in July 2012 I announced my decision on the A5 Western Transport Corridor scheme. You will be aware of the successful legal challenge to the project which has impacted upon the proposed delivery timescale. I can advise, however, that the Executive remains committed to the delivery of this very significant infrastructure project.

The A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme is well advanced in terms of development. It went through Public Inquiry in 2012 and the Department is currently considering its response to the Inspector's Report. Progression of the project would, subject to final approval of the business case, be reliant upon funding being made available.

To enhance connections within the city in line with the One Plan, my Department continues to take forward traffic and car parking management measures. These have included:

- Traffic calming schemes totalling approx £110,000 at Rossville Street/Lecky Road, Rosstowney Road, Bards Hill Area, Hillfort Road and Springtown Road;
- Officials are currently drafting the necessary subordinate legislation for the provision of a Residents' Parking Scheme in the Bogside area of Londonderry, with the aim of introducing this scheme in 2014;
- Installation of a comprehensive Car Park Management System in the City by means of £300,000 of Department for Social Development (DSD) City of Culture funding;
- The Department has completed the extension of Drumahoe Park and Ride, at a cost of £290,000; and

You will also be aware, on 18 March 2014 I announced a new project to develop plans for an integrated transport hub on the site of the Old Waterside Station in Londonderry. Alongside these initiatives, officials within my Department continue to engage with ILEX and Derry City Council to examine further opportunities to support the delivery of the One Plan.

Department for Social Development

Foreign Nationals Resident in Northern Ireland: Benefits

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development how many foreign nationals resident in Northern Ireland are in receipt of state benefits, including child benefit.

(AQW 33213/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The payment of benefits in Northern Ireland is administered via IT systems which are owned and maintained by the Department for Work and Pensions. As these systems do not have the facility to record the nationality of claimants, the requested information is therefore not available.

In support of changes made to the Regulations introduced for European Economic Area nationals and for returning UK nationals claiming income based Jobseekers Allowance from January 2014, the Social Security Agency is currently gathering clerical information on the number of applications for income based Jobseekers Allowance from foreign nationals. Figures collected during January, February and March indicate that 667* foreign nationals (from the European Economic Area (EEA)) made a claim for income based Jobseekers Allowance. Of these, 419 were awarded income based Jobseekers Allowance.

Child Benefit matters are dealt with by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and consequently my Department does not have access to the data in order to provide an answer to that element of the Member's question.

- * The Department for Social Development's Analytical Services Unit is unable to provide the statistics that have been requested. The details provided have been taken from clerical data collected by Decision Makers during the dates stated. The management information provided is limited to standard reports with no facility to interrogate the system.

Affordable Warmth Scheme

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development what level of regulation will his Department build into the new proposed Affordable Warmth Scheme in order to ensure agencies providing high quality and value for money are used in the implementation of any works.

(AQW 33349/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Under the proposed Affordable Warmth Scheme, householders will be free to choose a provider to install approved measures. Householders may also contact their local Housing Executive

Grants Office to obtain the name of an installer. However, the list held by the Housing Executive is not an approved or recommended list.

All measures provided under the proposed Affordable Warmth Scheme will be subject to inspection by Building Control officers. All gas installations must be carried out by Gas Safe registered engineers.

My officials are working with the Housing Executive regarding the accreditation of other installers to consider the advantages of them being members of trade bodies such as the Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) or the National Insulation Association.

In addition, the Housing Executive will not make any payments in respect of approved measures installed until Building Control officers issue a formal approval. This will help to ensure that measures installed satisfy current Building Control regulations.

My officials are working closely with Housing Executive technical staff to determine the amount of the grant payable in respect of each approved measure delivered through the Affordable Warmth Scheme. There will be a grant maximum applied to each property. This is identical to the process used under the existing Warm Homes Scheme.

Housing Need Assessment Areas

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development to list the Housing Need Assessment Areas which lie wholly or partly within the North Belfast Constituency; and to detail the Common Landlord Areas within each Housing Need Assessment Area.

(AQW 33429/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has listed the Housing Need Assessment Areas (HNA) and associated Common Landlord Areas (CLA) for the North Belfast Parliamentary Constituency as set out in the table attached at Annex A.

Annex A

NIHE District Office	Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
Shankill *	Ainsworth/Woodvale	Ainsworth; Cambria/Woodvale; Twadell/Upper Woodvale
	Mid Shankill	Agnes Street; Lawnbrook; Mid Shankill; Tudor; Upper Shankill
North Belfast	North Belfast 1	Ardoyne; Carlisle/New Lodge; Cavehill; Cliftonville; Duncairn Gardens; Glandore & Dunmore; Carlisle Flats; Newington/Limestone; Oldpark; Torrens; Unity Flats; Upper Ligoniel; Whitewell/Fairyknowe;

NIHE District Office	Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
	North Belfast 2	Alliance; Ballysillan; Cliftondene; Fairhill; Gainsborough; Grove; Lower Ligoniel/Glenbank; Lower Oldpark; Mount Vernon Estate & Flats; Rosewood/Crumlin; Shore Road; Skegoniel/Fortwilliam; Somerton Road; Sunningdale; Upper & Lower Duncairn; Westland; Wheatfield; Whitewell/White City
Newtownabbey 1	Rathcoole	Rathcoole
	Rushpark	Rushpark
	Rathfern	Rathfern
	Bawnmore	Bawnmore/Old Mill
	Longlands	Longlands
	Abbeyville	Abbeyville
	Hightown	Hightown
Newtownabbey 2	Queens Park/Avenue	Queens Park/Avenue
	Glengormley/Glenvarna	Glenvarna

* The North Belfast Constituency boundary bisects the Ainsworth and Twadell/ Upper Woodvale CLAs. In addition, the Lawnbrook and Upper Shankill CLAs fall outside the North Belfast Constituency boundary.

District Council Area

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33118/11-15 to clarify what District Council area he means by “the City Council of Londonderry”.

(AQW 33499/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The District Council referred to in AQW33118/11-15 is the Council area covered by the City Council of Londonderry.

Grosvenor Barracks in Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on his plans to develop social housing on the site of the former Grosvenor Barracks in Enniskillen.

(AQW 33567/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Grosvenor Barracks in Enniskillen is part of a former MoD site that is currently in the ownership of DSD.

Part of the site has already been developed by Clanmil Housing Association. The site was developed in two phases with 10 rehabilitation accommodation units completed in April 2012 and a further 14 new units completed in April 2014.

There are no proposals to provide additional social homes on this location at this time.

Pensioners' Bungalows at Drumawhey Gardens, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans the Housing Executive has to transfer pensioners bungalows at Drumawhey Gardens, Bangor to a Housing Association; and to outline the timescales involved.

(AQW 33574/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are 6 Housing Executive bungalows in Drumawhey Gardens, Bangor, which have been selected for inclusion in the Stock Transfer Programme.

I am committed to ensuring that tenants in the programme receive the much needed improvements their homes need. This programme, which is overseen by the Housing Executive, is complex and requires a strategic approach.

I have therefore asked officials from the Department and the Housing Executive to review a number of elements in the transfer process to determine whether the programme in its current form is the best way to effectively deliver the desired outcomes for tenants.

The expectation is that the review will be completed in the next few weeks at which stage any revised approach and recommendations will be presented for consideration.

The intention is to make the programme more readily deliverable overall. If it is decided that the Stock Transfer Programme should be reconfigured, the Housing Executive will write to all of the affected tenants to clarify the timescale for their properties.

In the meantime the Housing Executive will continue to undertake normal response maintenance works to the properties in the Stock Transfer Programme, where necessary.

Pensioners' Bungalows at Drumawhey Gardens, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans the Housing Executive has to replace the wooden eaves and fascia of the pensioners bungalows at Drumawhey Gardens, Kilcooley Estate, Bangor.

(AQW 33575/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the Member to the answer I provided in AQW 33574/11-15. The Housing Executive will continue to undertake normal maintenance where necessary to properties in the Stock Transfer Programme but the replacement of eaves and fascia is not regarded as work of an urgent nature.

Rural Credit Unions

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will ask for the inclusion of support for rural credit unions in the next draft of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Rural White Paper - Action Plan.

(AQW 33577/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Recognising the important role Credit Unions play across Northern Ireland I have been working with representatives from the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions and the Irish League of Credit Unions to identify possible options to support their future development. As part of this work consideration is being given to those credit unions operating in both rural and urban areas.

As a future package of support for Credit Unions is unlikely to be the sole responsibility of my department, I have asked my officials to engage with other departments, including the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, to identify how the Executive can best provide support to Credit Unions including the possible inclusion of future support in appropriate action plans.

Community Care Grants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many Community Care Grants were (i) applied for; (ii) refused; (iii) granted, in full or part; and (iv) granted, in full or part after a review following refusal, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33600/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is set out in the Table below. It should be noted that any difference between the number of applications received and the number of refusals and awards is due to applications being carried forward from the previous year, applications being withdrawn or not decided at the time the count was made.

Community Care Grants

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
(i) Applications received	47,066	44,950	41,616
(ii) Refusals	23,802	23,902	21,452
(iii) Awards	23,822	21,341	20,121
(iv) Awarded after Review	4,412	4,462	4,393

Removal of Electricity Meters

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the policy for the removal of electricity meters in vacant Housing Executive properties; and who is responsible to reinstall the meters when the property is set for occupation.

(AQW 33620/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the electrical metering and associated equipment is owned by Northern Ireland Electricity/Energy providers and that this equipment would normally remain in a property between periods of occupancy. The electricity supply is a relationship between the supplier and the tenant.

Housing Executive policy is only to seek to inform any new tenant, at tenancy sign up, that they are required to register with an energy provider of their own choice.

Planned Maintenance Contractors

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQO 6191/11-15, for an update on the Housing Executive's negotiations with the Planned Maintenance contractors involved in the alleged overpayment of £18m.

(AQW 33714/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the parties have reached a position where it is anticipated that this matter will be resolved by agreement. This is subject to relevant approvals from the Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel being obtained.

Reposessed Houses

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development how many houses were reposessed in (i) 2013; and (ii) the first two quarters of 2014.

(AQW 33717/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department does not hold information on the number of houses possessed each year in Northern Ireland. However, the Department of Justice provides statistics on the number of writs and originating summonses issued, cases disposed and orders made in respect of mortgages in the Chancery Division of the Northern Ireland High Court. While these statistics are not a complete

representation of possessions in Northern Ireland, they are informative as a proxy of people at risk of possession.

The provisional figures show that:

- (i) In 2013 3,694 mortgage cases were received and 2,741 cases were disposed. A total of 2,812 final orders were made in 2013, of which 1,811 were Possession Orders.
- (ii) In the first quarter of 2014 there were 886 cases received and 669 cases disposed. A total of 703 final orders were made between January and March, of which 432 were Possession Orders. Statistics for the second quarter of 2014 are not yet available.

It should be noted that not all writs and summonses lead to the eviction of the householder. Furthermore, lenders granted possession orders by the courts have up to 12 years in which to enforce the order. Therefore, the number of possession orders granted in any given year may not translate into the same number of enforcements or evictions.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Investigative Strategy Group of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the function and work of the Investigative Strategy Group of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and what it has produced since it was established.

(AQW 33737/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the Investigation Strategy Group (ISG) was set up in February 2011 as a means of determining the appropriate way of investigating concerns, issues and/or complaints raised by third parties, which relate to potential misconduct on the part of employees or others.

The ISG comprises of relevant directors and representatives from the Housing Executive's Internal Audit, Corporate Assurance, Finance, Counter Fraud and Personnel departments. The role of the Group is to determine how investigations into issues raised should proceed and which department should take the lead role, dependent on the nature of the matter raised. The investigation is managed through the appropriate procedure, fraud or discipline, and the ISG maintains a watching brief until the case is closed. While the ISG does not conduct the actual investigation, details of active cases are forwarded on a quarterly basis to the Housing Executive's Audit and Risk Committee.

Any cases which fall within the remit of the Housing Executive's Whistleblowing Procedures and all cases involving suspected fraud are reported to my Department.

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 6 June 2014

(AQW 33342/11-15)

The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) has advised that, at the end of stage one of the pre-school admissions process, 16 pre-school places remained available in the Holywood area. At that time, 17 children had not received the offer of a pre-school place; seven of whom had applied after the closing date for stage one.

The SEELB has also advised that it has engaged a new provider for stage two of the process which will provide between eight and twenty additional pre-school places, depending on demand. Holywood Nursery School also applied for, and has been granted, temporary flexibility for an additional eight pre-school places for the 2014/15 academic year.



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